Join us to celebrate World Seagrass Day!

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 1 March the World Seagrass Day, acknowledging the urgent need to raise awareness of the global decline in seagrass ecosystems and take action to reverse it.



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A wide range of ecosystem services currently under threat

Seagrasses are marine flowering plants that are found in shallow coastal waters on every continent except Antarctica. Similarly to grass on land, they form meadows that provide food and shelter to thousands of marine species and sustain some of the world's largest fisheries such as the Alaska (walleye) pollock and the Atlantic cod (Unsworth et al. 2019). They improve water quality by filtering, cycling and storing nutrients and pollutants, and stabilise sediments, contributing to the resilience of

adjacent vulnerable ecosystems such as coral reefs.

By reducing wave energy, seagrasses also contribute to protecting coastal communities from destructive waves and flooding associated with storms. Moreover, they are highly efficient carbon sinks, storing up to 18% of the world's oceanic carbon (UNEP, 2020). This ability to absorb and store carbon makes seagrasses an important contributor to climate change mitigation known as "blue carbon".

Despite their importance, seagrasses are being lost at a rate of 2-7% annually (UNESCO/IOC, 2021). The main threats to seagrass globally are poor water quality, direct disturbance (e.g., coastal development, trawling) and climate change (heat waves, sea level rise, and ocean acidification). Loss of these ecosystems results not only in loss of critical habitats, but also in enhanced emissions of greenhouse gases that further exacerbate climate change.

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