



TOWNSVILLE WATERWAYS SCORE A B-GRADE REPORT CARD

MEDIA RELEASE

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Townsville's waterways have received the equivalent of a B on the fourth annual Report Card produced by the Dry Tropics Partnership for Healthy Waters.

The Report Card provides a snapshot of the condition of the region's waterways from Crystal Creek to Alligator Creek, including marine environments.

Diane Tarte, Chair of the Dry Tropics Partnership for Healthy Waters, said while the B or 'good' mark is a positive one, the Report Card also indicated plenty of room for improvement.

"As the biggest urban community on the doorstep to the Great Barrier Reef, it is important that the Townsville community plays its role in protecting our Reef and local waterways," said Ms Tarte.

"The Report Card makes it easy for Partners and the public to understand the health of our waterways by clearly identifying which areas are in a good or fair condition, and which need improvement and monitoring.

"Equipped with this information, we can make informed decisions on how to take collective action to improve the health of waterways most in need of attention."

"This year's top performing waterway and the only one to score an overall A for any health indicator (water quality) was the Ross Basin Estuaries," said Ms Tarte.

The Black Freshwater Basin and Black Basin Estuaries also fared well, both receiving overall Bs for all available indicators. Notably, three indigenous fish species were recorded in the Black Freshwater Basin for the first time – the Giant Mottled Eel, Greenback Gudgeon and Scaleless Goby.

The site most in need of improvement is the Ross Freshwater Basin, which scored Cs for habitat and hydrology, and biota (fish species). None of the sites on the Report Card received a D or E score.

In marine environments, recent high sea surface temperatures had a notable effect on coral condition, particularly in the Cleveland Bay Inshore.

"The heartening news is that juvenile coral in the Offshore Marine area scored an A at 14 out of 16 sites," Ms Tarte said.

"There was also increased coral cover and larger seagrass meadows in Cleveland Bay Inshore, suggesting continued recovery from the 2019 floods and seagrass was also recorded in deeper areas of the Bay that hadn't been recorded previously."

Townsville Mayor Jenny Hill said the results were proof of the good work being done across the Townsville community to encourage healthy water practices.



“It is reassuring to see the work being done on the ground to improve our region’s waterways is having a positive impact,” said Mayor Hill.

“As a partnership, we have taken a range of measures to improve the region’s water quality, including installing more than 40 stormwater litter traps, improving wastewater management, and helping to educate the community on what they can do to help protect our water ways.

“While water quality is clearly improving, it is important we continue our focus on this area to protect one of our region’s most important assets, our local waterways and inshore Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.”

Members of the Partnership have also collaborated on an interactive ARC GIS StoryMap about seagrasses in Cleveland Bay. The Port of Townsville led the development of the StoryMap, titled *Guardians of the Bay*, with the aim of collating data collected by JCU TropWATER since 2007.

Port of Townsville Chief Executive Officer Raneë Crosby said it was great to be able to present the data in an easy-to-navigate StoryMap.

“By making our seagrass data easy to access and fun to digest, we can empower the public to better understand the changing nature of seagrass and why it is so important in supporting a healthy marine environment,” said Ms Crosby.

“This StoryMap is the first of many that the Partnership will develop and an excellent example of how we can all work together to deepen our understanding of the entire catchment, identify important priorities for our region’s waterways, and amplify positive change through collective action.”

The Partnership is also planning to release a new Management Response Report in the coming months along with some new scientific communication products.

The full 2020-21 Report Card is available at: <https://drytropicshealthywaters.org/2021-report-card>

Both the Queensland and Australian Government provide funding to the five regional waterway report card partnerships within the catchments of the Great Barrier Reef, including the Dry Tropics Partnership for Healthy Waters. The Dry Tropics Partnership for Healthy Waters is also supported by its industry, local government, community and other Partners, including the host of the Partnership, the Port of Townsville.

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About the Dry Tropics Partnership

Launched in 2017, the Townsville Dry Tropics Partnership is a collaboration between community, industry, science, and government in the Townsville region. The Partnership is one of five regional partnerships within the Great Barrier Reef catchment that produce an annual report card. The report cards are designed to inform the community on the condition of waterways and the marine environment. The Partnership also uses the Report Card as a tool to highlight waterways in a poor condition to guide future management planning and investment towards improving these waterways.

Data for the 2021 Report Card is drawn from a range of monitoring programs undertaken by our partners. Most of the data was collected between July 2020 and June 2021.

For more information and to download the full Report Card, visit drytropicshealthywaters.org.au or contact the Executive Officer eo@drytropicshealthywaters.org