

Seagrass Meadows



are one of the most widespread coastal habitats on the planet.

Seagrasses are marine flowering plants and form extensive underwater meadows, creating complex, highly productive habitats. Seagrass meadows are found in shallow, sheltered coastal areas across 163 countries and territories.

There are around 70 seagrass species, with the highest number of species found across the Indo-Pacific Ocean. Based upon the data we have, it is estimated that seagrass meadows cover over 250,000km² globally.

Seagrass meadows provide a range of environmental, economic, and social benefits to people and planet.

Seagrass meadows provide habitat, food and shelter to thousands of species of fish, invertebrates, mammals, reptiles and birds. Through their diverse use as fishing grounds, they support the creation of jobs and provide access to food sources like fish and invertebrates. Their leaves help to purify water, reducing pollutants like heavy metals and harmful bacteria. Seagrass meadows trap carbon within the seabed and, if left undisturbed, can store this for millennia. Their large and deep network of roots extend throughout the seabed helping to stabilise our coastlines.

Seagrass meadows are impacted globally by human-induced and natural threats.

Since the late 19th century, around 1/5 of the world's seagrass meadows have disappeared. The causes of this decline are predominantly a result of poor water quality, caused by urban, agricultural, and industrial run-off, coastal development, direct physical damage, and the worsening impacts of climate change.

The conservation and restoration of seagrass meadows contributes to meeting multiple targets within 16 out of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals to create a sustainable future for people and planet.

There is an urgent need to develop and implement integrated policies and management strategies that recognise the multiple benefits of seagrass meadows.

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projectseagrass.org

