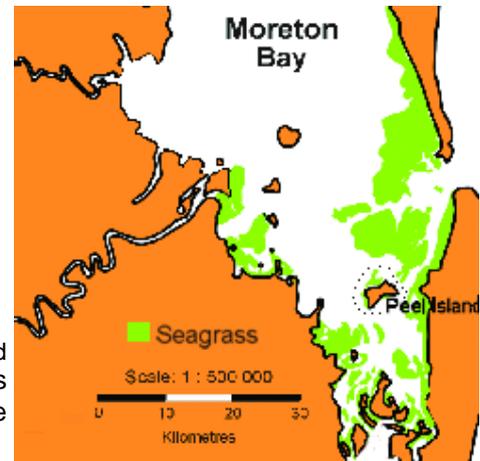




Seagrasses are flowering plants that evolved from a land (mostly dry) environment to the marine environment. They can live permanently submerged in 'sub-tidal' near-shore areas, with some species found to depths of greater than 40 metres. Some seagrasses can also be found in intertidal zones where they are exposed regularly at low tides, while others tolerate either permanent or tidal submersion.

Distribution of seagrass around Peel Island in Moreton Bay. (Results from Dennison et al. 1998 Marine Botany UQ)



Importance

Seagrasses is an important habitat providing feed for marine animals such as dugongs and turtles who graze on the seagrass meadows. The seagrass also functions as a nursery for juvenile animals, offering them some cover from predators.

The area seagrass meadows are found around Peel Island – on the western and northern side of the island – have been designated a Protected Zone*as part of the Moreton Bay Marine Park. This is in recognition of this being a feeding area fo dugong and turtles. Recent research has also found that Protected Zones also benefit both recreational and commercial fishers, allowing fish species to survive into adulthood before they move further out into the Bay.

Species

The main species of seagrass found around Peel Island is *Zostera capricorni*, also the most common species in Moreton Bay. It lives in both intertidal and subtidal areas up to 6 metres.

Image courtesy of Marine Botany, Centre for Marine Studies, University of Queensland



Potential threats

Seagrass, like land plants, relies on sunlight to photosynthesise. Problems arise with decreased light penetration due to increased turbidity and suspended fine sediments. Rivers and streams can transport high levels of silt, organic matter and pollution into the bay as a result of human activities upstream.

* **Protected Zones:** Boating and diving is allowed but no fishing or trawling, recreational bait gathering, recreational collection of fish, declared invertebrates or corals. No jetskis or similar motorised personal watercraft.

Reference

Centre for Marine Studies, 2003 *Moreton Bay Seagrass Species*, University of Queensland

Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service - Maps and more details of Moreton Bay Marine Park:
www.epa.qld.gov.au/media/parks_and_forests/mbzonemap.pdf