

Damage to Seagrass Beds

People boating near shallow waters and seagrass beds should be careful not to damage them. Swing moorings, anchors, propellers and bait digging all damage seagrass beds. Seagrasses are generally slow growing and may take years to regenerate.

Hawkesbury Seagrass needs your help!

- ❖ Boats cause major damage to the seagrass. You may not be able to see it, but anchors and propellers uproot, damage and can kill the plants.
- ❖ Power boats can disturb the sandy sea bed. This smothers the seagrass so it cannot breathe and grow.
- ❖ Pets running near the seagrass can disturb the animals and plants that live there.



top and bottom; underwater view of a propeller scar.
top right; boats cause major damage to sea grass

What can you do?

- ❖ Observe channel markers and seagrass marker buoys.
- ❖ Drive your boat in the deep channels - not over the seagrass.
- ❖ Tell others about it - family, friends, visitors.

Hawkesbury Seagrass

A unique environment



Further information

www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au
www.hn.cma.nsw.gov.au
www.estuary.hornsby.nsw.gov.au

Hornsby Shire Council

Natural Resources
Environment Division
296 Pacific Highway
Hornsby NSW 2077
Phone: 02 9847 6766



A Fragile Ecosystem

Seagrasses are part of our fragile estuarine ecosystems and can be easily destroyed. Many major estuaries in NSW have lost as much as two-thirds of their seagrass beds in the past 30-40 years.

Seagrasses are flowering plants that grow below the high tide level in the sheltered and shallow waters of our estuaries. They are generally found in soft sediments like sand and mud.

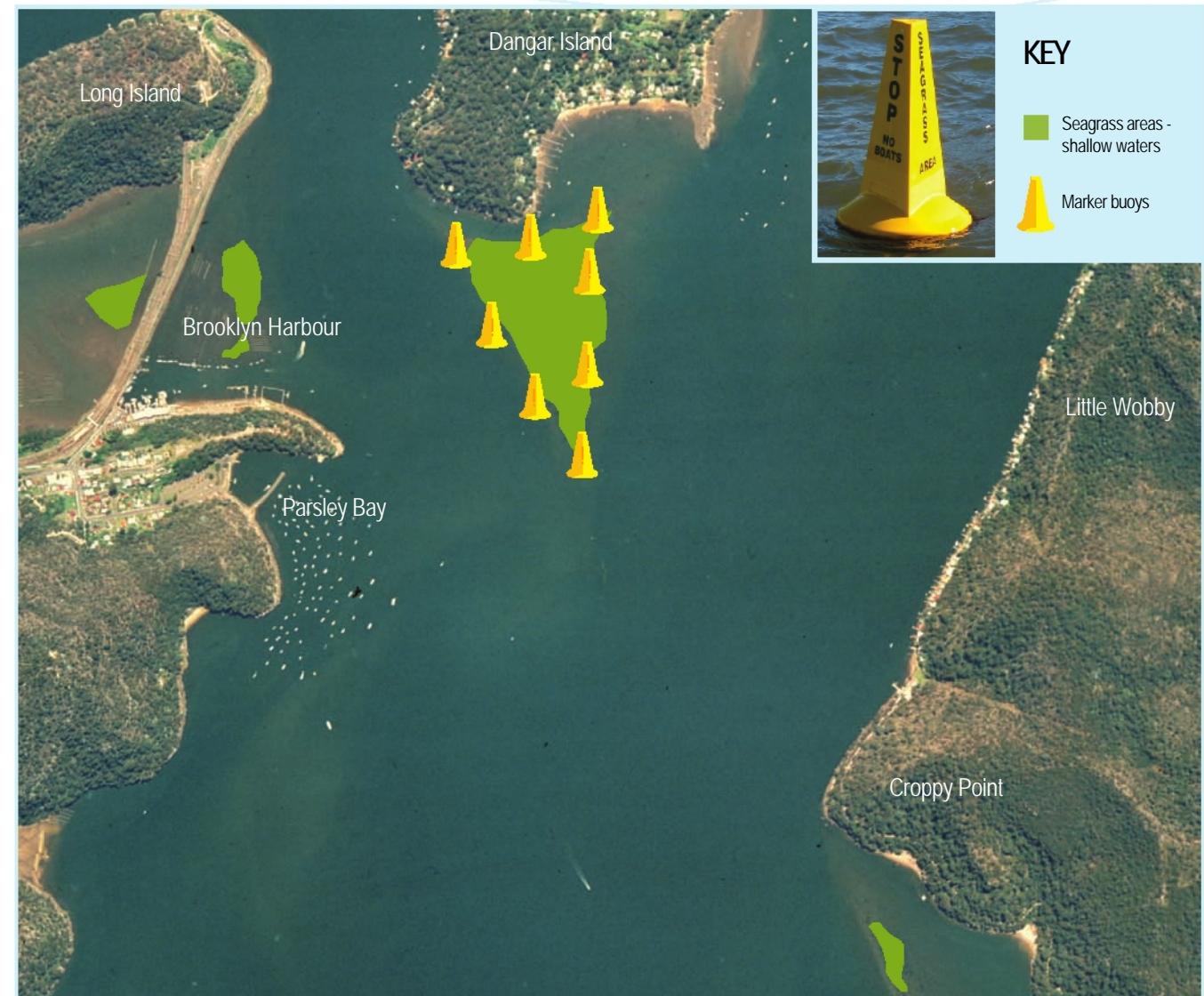
Local Seagrasses

There are three species of seagrass in the Hawkesbury River estuary, with one of the largest beds occurring just south of Dangar Island.

Eelgrass (*Zostera capricorni*) has narrow straplike leaves, 1-5mm wide and up to 50cm long. This is the most dominant species in this area.

Paddleweed (*Halophila ovalis*) has paired oval leaves, 5-20mm wide and 1-5cm long. You can see this in the shallow waters off Bradleys Beach on the southern side of Dangar Island.

Strapweed (*Posidonia australis*) is the largest of these 3 seagrasses with straplike leaves, 6-14mm wide and 30-60cm long.



Habitat for Fish

Seagrass beds are valuable fish habitats that support many coastal fisheries. They are commonly known as the nurseries of the ocean with fish using them to spawn and take refuge from predators.

Many fish species including bream, luderick, leatherjackets, snapper and sea mullet live in seagrass habitats for all or part of their life cycle. As a result, there is commonly a greater diversity and abundance of fish near seagrasses than in unvegetated areas.