

Sea Wrack

Fact sheet

Sea wrack on foreshores

The term sea wrack is used to describe naturally deposited organic materials, such as detached seagrass and seaweed washed ashore. You may have seen it washed up along your local beaches or foreshore, particularly in winter months.

The production and transport of sea wrack is a natural process and it is important to the local environment and communities. Live seagrasses are important for many reasons because they:

- Help filter the water.
- Take carbon dioxide out to the atmosphere.
- Generate essential oxygen.
- Create habitat for fish.



Wrack build up at Callala Bay, April 2022.



Shorebirds foraging on sea wrack along the coast (from: University of South Australia, 2021, Conserving coastal seaweed: a must have for migrating sea birds)

It is natural for seagrasses to shed their leaves. Once washed ashore, the wrack:

- Provides food and habitat to many species in the marine and coastal environment.
- Provides protection from beach erosion.
- Is used by organisms in the sand.
- Is of great importance to coastal birds who utilise wrack for food and habitat.

However, it can be an inconvenience when too much wrack builds up in certain areas such as harbours, boat ramps, or popular beaches. Excessive wrack build up can also result in oxygen depletion and bacteria growth. This can lead to a “rotten egg” foul odour on the beach where it builds up. Large piles of wrack build up can make it difficult to access the water and can make it difficult to launch or retrieve boats.

What can be done to manage sea wrack?

Generally, the natural process of wrack production and build up should be allowed to occur without intervention. Wrack builds up naturally and then washes away off beaches based on seasonal marine conditions. This material eventually breaks down and is recycled back into the system.

People are allowed to remove up to 20 kilograms of wrack from beaches or the intertidal zone per day for personal use without a NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Fisheries permit. This can be used as a great garden fertiliser or compost material.

However, within Marine Parks such as Jervis Bay, removal, or collection of seaweed from beaches is not allowed in [sanctuary zones](#).

More information on seagrasses is provided [online](#) by NSW DPI.



Living seagrass; Posidonia Australis in the marine environment (from: NSW Department of Primary Industries, threatened species list. Photograph: D Harasti)



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