

SA: Study helps solve the seagrass mystery

ADELAIDE, Feb 26 AAP - Reduced water quality has been blamed for the loss of seagrasses along the Adelaide coastline over the past 60 or 70 years.

A CSIRO study, involving 60 researchers, investigated the loss of more than 5,000 hectares of seagrasses along the coast since the mid-1930s.

Study director David Fox said it found that many years of near-continuous discharge of nutrient-rich and turbid wastewater had resulted in significant changes and degradation of Adelaide's coastal marine environment.

"This study has focused on the loss of seagrass -- mainly *Amphibolis* and *Posidonia* -- seabed instability and water quality degradation," Prof Fox said.

"Seagrass meadows are primary producers at the bottom of the food chain and they provide natural habitat for many species of fish, crustaceans and other marine animals.

"Taking the seagrasses out of the system causes a domino effect, where the seafloor becomes less stable and promotes a further loss of seagrass."

Prof Fox said moves to improve water quality over the past 10 years had improved the marine environment.

But he said large scale recovery of seagrass meadows required continued reductions in coastal discharge and a significant replanting effort.

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