



## Seagrass Meadows

**For Prelims:** [Seagrass](#), [Carbon Sequestration](#), [Greenhouse gas emission](#), [Global warming](#), [Ocean currents](#), [United Nations Environment Programme](#), [Ocean acidification](#), [Gulf of Mannar](#), [Baltic Nations](#)

**For Mains:** Significance of Seagrass and Concerns Related to it.

**Source:** IE

### Why in News?

Scuba divers in Northern Germany are **extracting seagrass shoots to replant in barren areas**, aiming to **combat climate change** and **revive** these **ocean carbon sinks**.

### What are Seagrass Meadows?

#### ▪ About:

- Seagrass meadows are composed of **flowering plants that grow in shallow coastal waters**, forming dense underwater carpets that can cover large areas.
- They thrive in areas where sunlight can penetrate the water, allowing them to undergo [photosynthesis for growth](#).
  - Also, they typically grow in **sandy or muddy substrates**, where their roots can take hold and stabilize the plant.

#### ▪ Significance:

- **Carbon Sequestration:** Though they cover **only 0.1% of the ocean floor**, these meadows are highly efficient carbon sinks, storing up to **18% of the world's oceanic carbon**.
  - This helps **reduce greenhouse gas emissions and slow down global warming**.
- **Water Quality Improvement:** They also **filter pollutants from the water**, trap sediments and prevent erosion, thereby improving **water clarity and quality**.
  - This benefits both marine life and human activities such as **fishing, tourism and recreation**.
- **Habitat and Biodiversity:** They are among the most productive and diverse ecosystems on Earth, providing habitats and food for many marine animals, including **fish, turtles, dugongs, crabs and seahorses**.
- **Coastal Protection:** Seagrass beds act as natural barriers, protecting coastlines from erosion caused by **waves and tidal currents**.

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▪ **Concern:**

- According to “**Out of the Blue: The Value of Seagrasses to the Environment and to People**” report of [United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#), an estimated **7% of seagrass habitat is being lost worldwide each year.**
  - Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, **almost 30% of seagrass area across the globe has been lost.**
- The main causes of seagrass loss are:
  - **Coastal Development:** Construction of **ports and marinas** can destroy seagrass habitats or reduce their light availability.
  - **Pollution: Runoff of nutrients, chemicals and sediments** from agriculture, industry and urban areas can cause eutrophication, algal blooms and turbidity, which can smother or shade out seagrass plants.
  - **Climate Change:** [Rising sea temperatures](#), [sea level rise](#), [ocean acidification](#) and extreme weather events can stress or damage seagrass plants and alter their distribution and growth.

▪ **Seagrasses in India:**

- In India, the major seagrass beds exist along the **coastline of [Gulf of Mannar](#) and [Palk Bay](#) regions on the east coast, [Gulf of Kachchh](#) region on the west coast, the [lagoons of islands in Lakshadweep](#) in the Arabian Sea and [Andaman and Nicobar Islands](#) in the Bay of Bengal.**

▪ **Restoration Efforts:**

- Seagrass restoration has been attempted in various regions, such as the [Baltic Sea in Germany](#), [Chesapeake Bay in the USA](#) and the [Gulf of Mannar in India](#).