



GRAY'S REEF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING – OCTOBER 4, 2018

Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) Attendees

Michael Denmark, Chair
Scott Noakes, Vice-chair
Mona Behl, Secretary
Peter Auster
Mary Conley
Robert Crimian
LT Anthony Gallegos
Joseph Glenn
Colby Harris
Tim Henkel
Warren Hupman
Captain Bob Lynn
Jene Nissen
Mark Padgett
Tim Tarver
Suzanne VanParreren

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) and Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) Staff

Jody Patterson
Michelle Riley
Kim Roberson
Becky Shortland
Lisa Wooninck
Elliott Lam

SAC Members Absent

Rick DeVictor
Anna George
Ben Hughes
Monique Gordon
Carolyn Belcher

Public in Attendance

Dr. George Sedberry
Tom Wright
Bob Munson
Hal Sims
Jim Brunner
Hal Waters

Council Chair Michael Denmark called the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) Advisory Council meeting to order at 10 AM. He introduced Lisa Wooninck, Acting Superintendent of GRNMS, and welcomed her to the Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) along with Elliott Lam, State Program Manager. Michael and Lisa then welcomed members, staff and public in attendance. Following group introductions, Michael reviewed the agenda and outlined the meeting objectives. The summary of the July 25, 2018 webinar was approved with no changes.

Council Business

SAC Member Recruitment Update – Becky Shortland introduced several new SAC members and welcomed them to the meeting. The new members are: Joseph Glenn (sport diving seat), Colby Harris (sport fishing seat), and Bob Crimian (conservation seat). The following seats remain open: commercial/charter fishing and conservation (2nd seat). The 2nd citizen-at-large seat will be open this winter, so recruitment for all three seats will be combined. A new member orientation will be arranged for later this year. Michael Denmark asked that council members share these seat recruitments with qualified contacts.

Status of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) and Review – Becky Shortland provided an update on the status of the PEIS being developed by BOEM for the Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The draft PEIS has not moved forward and we are standing by to review this document and to offer comments as necessary. Mark Padgett noted that the council will want to consider comments for GRNMS to submit in reaction to proposed activities, if any.

Post-hurricane Assessment – Scott Noakes discussed various GRNMS strategies to assess the condition of GRNMS following a hurricane relative to structural damage, silting, and overall water quality. Scott Noakes indicates that post-hurricane Matthew and Irma observations have not resulted in structural damage at GRNMS. Biological studies around benthic communities show some impacts to invertebrate recruitment tiles placed by Georgia Southern University (GSU). Natural variability was noted by Peter Auster who has conducted research at GRNMS since these weather incidence. Citizen science opportunities to collect variabilities were recommended for additional data collection around post-hurricane assessment. Joseph Glenn noted that he has many GSU students that would support this activity. A rapid assessment plan for GRNMS was recommended by Tim Henkel. Mary Conley noted the recent climate change vulnerability study speaks to recommendations and concerns about hurricane impacts. Scott Noakes noted that Matt Kendell with ONMS conducted ledge measurements in the past that could be used as a baseline. Tim Henkel suggested the Science Advisory Group tackle this assessment. Partnership building with dive shops for citizen science projects was also recommended by Mona Behl. Peter Auster noted that staff and funding resources available are limited to develop a plan.

Lisa Wooninck noted that creating an informed dive community is a different purpose than collecting data from the public so we need to be clear what the purpose of a citizen science program would be. Mary Conley noted that post storm assessments are important. Michael Denmark asked if staff would present that Rapid Climate Assessment for the SAC to review that may shed light on hurricane impacts. He also asked new Joseph Glenn to explore the idea of advanced divers supporting GRNMS. Peter Auster indicated more data collected with a focused purpose will help determine impacts from user groups and natural impacts.

SAC Action Plan – Becky Shortland revisited the SAC Action Plan. This action plan, developed in 2017, is a product of the SAC questionnaire that was completed by 13 SAC members in July/August of 2017. The initial plan was reviewed during the November 2017 SAC webinar, where several recommendations for refinement were made, and the document was updated accordingly. Elliott Lam questioned what it means to continue focusing on proposed activities and Warren Hupman indicated that it is intended to keep council members engaged on these topics. Mary Conley asked if there is a certain question that the SAC can help answer. After discussion, it was decided that GRNMS staff will suggest revisions to the action plan based on priorities. The proposed, revised plan will be circulated to SAC members for their input.

Council Working Groups

Law Enforcement Working Group Update – Representing USCG Sector Charleston, LT Gallegos reported that Fish Attraction Devices (FADs) are being used in Charleston to attract fish and causing marine debris. He asked that staff report refuse to USCG if encountered. Overflights during future tournaments may be conducted by USCG Auxiliary. Michael Denmark asked fishing representatives to make mention to constituents about these activities. Discussion about marine debris followed. Mona Behl suggested facilitating private sector use of plastic pollution in manufacturing carpet (Shaw Industries). Micro plastic sampling is not currently being conducted but research

coordinator Kim Roberson indicated that this is a study that we hope to focus on in the future. Peter Auster noted that micro plastics are a part of a larger plastic pollution issue but we shouldn't assume it's a priority issue in GRNMS. Jene Nissen reported that the Navy is discussing the issue of micro plastics and potential solutions. Michael Denmark suggested that he is interested in having a presentation to the SAC in the near future on marine debris. Mary Conley notes the SAC conservation working group 2011 report that investigated threats to GRNMS including marine debris.

Captain Bob Lynn of Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Law Enforcement Division reported on patrols that have occurred under the 2018 Joint Enforcement Agreement. He noted that sanctuaries are a priority.

Recreational Fishing Working Group Update – Tim Tarver provided an update on the recent activities of the Recreational Fishing Working Group, which is charged with finding better ways to communicate and promote collaboration with recreational fishing interests, reduce catch mortality, raise awareness of GRNMS, enhance compliance, and obtain more visitor use information. Tim also reported that GADNR has deployed extensive materials at DRH Reef, which is located just 5 miles from GRNMS.

Becky Shortland reported that the partnership with American Sportfishing Association and their FishSmart Program in particular is developing very well. FishSmart (<http://www.fishsmart.org/>) is a program that promotes best fishing practices for anglers and that their goals are in line with the goals of the Recreational Fishing Working Group projects. GRNMS will be a partner in the effort to reduce release mortality of fish with FishSmart, GADNR, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) and others.

Visitor Use Working Group Update – During the March 2018 SAC meeting, the group decided to investigate the possibility of organizing a Visitor Use Workshop that would bring together relevant experts, sanctuary representatives, and other interested parties to seek methods for gathering visitor use data. Since that time, the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) has identified this need as a national priority. ONMS is contracting for a study of existing and non-traditional methods for visitor detections that should be followed by a pilot study. There is a possibility that GRNMS may be involved in the pilot study expected to start in 2019. The National Park Service is also a partner in this contract. Peter Auster noted that the effect on resources of visitor use is not addressed.

Council Member Reports

In his absence, Becky Shortland reported for Rick DeVictor. Rick is attending the SAFMC meeting. He reported that the Snapper Grouper Committee yesterday discussed Regulatory Amendment 29 that would consider requiring a descending device be onboard when you possess a species in the snapper grouper management unit. They are still discussing whether to require for commercial, for-hire, and/or private recreational fishermen. The Council is scheduled to approve the amendment in the first half of 2019 and then it would go to NMFS for rulemaking so this will take some time. And there will be public comment periods along the way.

GRNMS Report

NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster* Research Cruise Preview – The 2018 GRNMS research cruise aboard the *Nancy Foster* took place July 29 – August 8. Kim Roberson and Peter Auster provided an overview of some of the many research projects that took place during the expedition, including studies by a number of university and federal partners. Research expedition logs are housed on the GRNMS website and detail the 8 research days, 12 plankton tows, 70 CTD scans, 250 linear miles of seafloor surveys, 277 mission dives, and 436 water samples among other studies. Mona Behl offered support from GA Sea Grant in requesting ship time on board the NOAA Nancy Foster. Sea Grant is also capable of supporting outreach products created by students that showcase the site and research. Peter Auster presented a selection of his VR video collected at GRNMS to observe predator-prey interactions during a concurrent research project this summer.

Following the completion of the expedition, the *Nancy Foster* transited to Savannah and docked on River Street, where over 250 middle school students toured the ship will be conducted on Thursday, August 9. The student visits garnered coverage from all 4 of Savannah's local television station, as well as a front page writeup in the *Savannah Morning News*.

GRNMS Foundation Update

Lisa Wooninck reported for Cathy Sakas on A Fishy Affair, the signature fundraising event for the GRNMS Foundation. A total of \$20,000 was raised to support GRNMS. The Foundation board seeks to fill the Executive Director seat soon with a film festival planned for February 2019 at the Landings Plantation Club.

Next Meeting

Michael Denmark and Lisa Wooninck led a discussion about the format and scheduling for future meetings. Future SAC meetings may include telepresence option for face-to-face council meetings where some members may not be able to attend. A minimum of two in-person meetings per year was suggested by Mary Conley who doesn't think we need two webinars in addition. The working groups are also meeting via phone and in-person. Mark Padgett doesn't think we need to schedule more than two face meetings but leaving it open as needed. Peter Auster suggested making participation attractive to new council members to help balance feedback and engagement. Staff will take the council's suggestions and propose future meetings. The next meeting is TBD.

Public Comment –

Tom Wright noted activities that may be of interest to GRNMS including recognition of the USCG's role benefiting Savannah and developments at the Savannah Maritime Association. Noting that communications are important, Tom inquired about basic GRNMS information for public awareness. Michelle Riley noted that there is a one-pager available.

Bob Munson noted that he enjoyed the meeting and looks forward to engaging with us in the future.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:48 PM.