

Meeting Summary
Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary
Advisory Council Meeting – April 15, 2021
(On-Line Webinar)

Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC)

Attendees

Michael Denmark, Chair
Scott Noakes, Vice-Chair
Peter Auster
Paulita Bennett-Martin
LT James Bruce
Mark Carson
Robert Crimian
Rick DeVictor
Joseph Glenn
Monique Gordon
Jaime Gormley
Rachel Guy
Ben Hughes
Kathy Knowlton
Mark Padgett
Lauren Stefaniak
Suzanne VanParreren

Primary SAC Members Absent

Mona Behl
Carolyn Belcher
Colby Harris
Chris Hodge

**Gray's Reef National Marine
Sanctuary (GRNMS) Staff**

Stan Rogers, Superintendent
Alexi Archer
Scott Kathey
Elliott Lam
Justin Miyano
Ben Prueitt
Michelle Riley
Kim Roberson
Alison Soss

GRNMS Foundation (GRNMSF) Staff

Jody Patterson

Council Business

Chair Michael Denmark called the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) Advisory Council (AC) meeting to order at 12:30 PM.

Scott Noakes (AC Vice Chair) called roll in the absence of the Secretary and announced a quorum was present.

AC Chair Michael Denmark and GRNMS Superintendent Stan Rogers welcomed Ms. Jaime Gormley as the newly appointed AC representative for the U.S. Navy.

AC Chair Michael Denmark thanked AC members Mark Padgett and Scott Noakes for 6 and 9 years of service respectively on the council. Both members will be rotating off the council soon due to term limit provisions of the AC charter. The Chair noted that certificates of appreciation will be presented at the next AC meeting.

The Chair invited a motion to approve the minutes from the previous AC meeting.

Motion: Approve the meeting minutes for the February 5, 2021 AC meeting

Upon a motion by Peter Auster and second by Lauren Stefaniak to approve the minutes of the February 5, 2021 GRNMS AC meeting, the minutes (with no changes or objections) were approved by a roll call vote (9 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions). On April 9, the council Secretary emailed final draft minutes to council members for their review and consideration prior to this meeting.

Superintendent's Report

GRNMS Superintendent Stan Rogers presented a report summarizing recent and pending activities by GRNMS staff. He discussed operational adaptations in response to the Covid pandemic and identified the following office priorities for this year:

- Partnering with Gray's Reef Chapter of National Marine Sanctuary Foundation to identify an appropriate space and secure a lease for anticipated opening of a GRNMS visitor center store front in Savannah in spring 2022.
- Developing a sanctuary exhibit at Tri-centennial Park in partnership with Coastal Heritage Society to coincide with the visitor center grand opening. The tandem events offer an opportunity to significantly boost outreach in the heart of Savannah's downtown tourism district.
- Developing plans for construction and delivery of a new GRNMS research vessel (50+ feet) in the 2022-2023 time frame to support research and conservation activities by GRNMS and partners.
- Planning to host a three half-day Ecological Connectivity Expert Panel Workshop in late spring/early summer to determine what is needed to best conserve live bottom habitat across the South Atlantic Bight.
- Currently planning for R/V NANCY FOSTER GRNMS science mission this summer. The 2019 & 2020 missions mapped 100% of GRNMS using high-resolution sensors which will yield fine scale habitat maps once the data is rendered.
- Continuing use of GRNMS as a test site for underwater passive acoustic monitoring in partnership with the U.S. Navy. The hydrophone arrays have recorded natural and anthropogenic sound files that will be made available to the public.
- Continuing fish tagging and migration studies using underwater telemetry receivers that record tagged fish approaching within range of 16 receiver sites within GRNMS.
- GRNMS will be engaging the council over the next 4 years with several management plan review components, starting with the sanctuary condition (baselining) report in 2022. Management plan and regs review begin in 2023 2024. Final plan and any new regulations will guide GRNMS management over the next 10 years. The last management plan update was completed in 2014.

In response to questions by AC members Auster and Bennett-Martin about public and partner agency access to recorded sound files, Superintendent Rogers said that GRNMS hydrophone recordings are screened by the Navy prior to public release. Cleared files will eventually be posted to a public on-line portal for public and partner agency access. The terabytes of sound files will be archived at the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) and accessed through ONMS websites. Fish telemetry data collected by GRNMS is shared with the Florida Atlantic Coast Telemetry (FACT) Network and made available to regional researchers, including GA Dept of Natural Resources.

Chair Denmark reviewed AC voting protocols, clarifying that consensus is usually reserved for internal AC business (e.g. adjourn a meeting) while formal voting is used to approve AC recommendations and advice to the GRNMS superintendent or for other actions beyond the AC. He reviewed voting members of the council (constituency based) and non-voting members (typically agency representatives). All members are encouraged to participate in all discussions and share points of view, regardless of voting status. Stan Rogers added that for big topics, a written resolution is often preferred. Chair Denmark said that since AC meetings are not currently being recorded on video, roll call voting will be used to accurately record council decisions.

Advisory Council Recruitment

Chair Denmark discussed upcoming vacancies on the AC, term limits for some members, and re-application/competition eligibility for others. He explained the recruitment announcement and application process and strongly encouraged AC members to help identify prospective candidates for council membership, encourage application by qualified candidates, and explain the role and application process as appropriate. He then explained the role of the AC Executive Committee in reviewing seat applications and making recommendations to the superintendent.

Peter Auster noted that certain provisions in the recent ONMS likeness release requirements for AC members may discourage prospective applicants from serving, and asked the superintendent for a status update on revision of the form. Stan Rogers said staff will loop back to the AC Executive Committee on the status of a revised likeness form recently designed for AC members. Without signed forms from AC members, staff cannot post member biographies/photos on social media or record member comments/images at AC meetings.

Chair Denmark asked for member ideas about how to find and recruit candidates and called on several council members to share ideas:

- Peter Auster suggested that recruitment for GRNMS AC seats should extend nationally - not just regionally - and suggested members could leverage nationwide email listserves to which they belong to advertise AC vacancies.
- Paulita Bennett-Martin suggested approaching interested retired NOAA employees and outreaching to organizations in which she holds membership, such as Green Latinos and the Hispanic Access Foundation.

- Lauren Stefaniak suggested using GRNMS social media platforms to advertise vacancies. Stan Rogers confirmed that is already a routine outreach method and asked council members to share the announcement links with their networks.
- Rick DeVictor suggested tapping NMFS outreach specialists at St. Petersburg and Miami, FL to seek applicants for AC fishing seats. He said the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council members interact with working fishers and could spread the word.
- Joseph Glenn suggested approaching Captain Hunnicutt who operates charter boats at GRNMS for fishing/diving excursions and has shown interest in the past.

Advisory Council Charter Renewal & Next Full Council Meeting Date

Chair Denmark discussed the need to form an AC committee to review the current GRNMS AC Charter and determine if any changes are in order. The Executive Committee will form the core of the review group, and the Chair would like to add additional participants from the council for more diverse perspectives. May be an opportunity to consider new seat categories on the council.

Since the current charter expires October 19, the Chair suggested the council meet the fourth week of August to receive recommendations from the committee on any charter revisions, open the floor for discussion & changes, and vote on submission of any final recommendations to the GRNMS superintendent. AC submission of recommendations in August will afford NOAA sufficient time to consider and act on them prior to expiration of the charter in October. Discussion followed regarding several prospective meeting dates, and the Chair announced that the next AC meeting will be held 10 AM - 1 PM, Monday, August 23. The Chair anticipates a vote at the end of the meeting.

The Chair asked for a motion to form a sub-committee to review the charter.

Motion: Create a sub-committee to review the GRNMS AC charter - Monique Gordon submitted a motion, seconded by Mark Padgett, to create a committee to review the GRNMS AC charter.

The Chair asked for 2-3 volunteers to join the Executive Committee in reviewing the charter. Paulita Bennett-Martin, Suzanne VanParreren, and Lauren Stefaniak volunteered to serve on the committee.

The Chair restated the motion to have a committee review the charter. The committee would be comprised of the AC Executive Committee plus Paulita Bennett-Martin, Suzanne VanParreren, and Lauren Stefaniak. The Vice Chair conducted a roll call vote on the pending motion at the request of the Chair and reported that the motion passed with 10 Yes votes and 0 No votes. There were no abstentions.

The Chair said that he will circle back to the charter review committee members about the schedule and logistics for a GoToWebinar meeting, and asked the committee members to read through the council charter and identify any elements for prospective revision/update. The Chair will send the committee members an agenda as soon as a

proper date is identified for the initial meeting. Any recommendations by the committee will be submitted to the council at its August 23 meeting for consideration and a vote on sending any final charter revision recommendations to the superintendent and ONMS director.

The Chair announced a 10-minute break at 1:48 PM, and the council went into recess.

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Presentation

The Chair reconvened the meeting at 2 PM. He reminded the council that the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Working Group [formed at the April 2020 council meeting] had been tasked to consider how to improve recruitment of diverse applicants for the council. He remarked that greater diversity and additional perspectives strengthen a council and yielded the floor to Paulita Bennett-Martin to kick off a presentation by the working group.

Paulita Bennett-Martin identified her fellow working group members as Mona Behl and Suzanne VanParreren, with GRNMS staff support from Kim Roberson. The group met several times to discuss the 4 terms, determine how they apply to the advisory council, and how best to prompt interactive discussion among council members on this issue. She outlined 3 goals for the ~25-minute presentation:

- foster a shared understanding of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion
- discuss the advisory council's role in advancing JEDI
- facilitate information exchange and sharing of resources among council members through interactive exercises

The team hopes that council deliberations on this topic will establish a culture of acceptance and belonging and ultimately lead to a shared answer to the question, "Why does JEDI matter to the advisory council?". Paulita presented multiple slides, interspersed with group on-line polling opportunities, to explore the terms justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Various council members discussed impressions and the meaning of JEDI. Paulita closed by noting that diversity is not something you do, rather it's something you achieve.

Paulita suggested the following potential actions for promoting JEDI within the council:

- Create a JEDI resource folder that provides tips and information about applying the JEDI lens when conducting AC business
- Consider how to apply a JEDI lens for the AC recruitment process
- Consider how to apply a JEDI lens for the AC charter review process

Stan Rogers commented that enhanced public/constituent participation in AC meetings and deliberations presents an opportunity to exercise JEDI principles and encouraged AC members to promote public/constituent participation in the advisory process through meeting attendance and enhanced interaction with AC members.

The Chair commented that he will ask council members at future meetings to share how they have recently interacted with their constituents about marine issues of interest to the public and/or the advisory council. He commented that a strong bond with constituents and a listening ear will be invaluable as the AC develops recommendations during the upcoming GRNMS management plan review.

Executive Order on Climate Change Response - Advisory Council Engagement

The Chair yielded the floor to Vice Chair Scott Noakes to lead an agenda item about the council's role vis-à-vis the January 27 executive order by President Biden regarding climate change policy and response. The Vice Chair outlined the President's 30x30 initiative to conserve 30% of marine and terrestrial resources by 2030 and asked GRNMS staff to provide an overview of the order relative to prospective input by the advisory council.

Scott Kathey (GRNMS AC Liaison) noted that sections 216(a) and 216(c) of the executive order each direct NOAA to collect ideas from a wide variety of stakeholder groups regarding how to achieve the 30x30 goals. Section 216(c) was an immediate effort to gather a quick snapshot of constituent ideas through a short comment period published in the Federal Register that closed April 2. Since the GRNMS AC had no scheduled meetings within the 60-day comment period, there was no opportunity for the council to submit a corporate response before the deadline. Though section 216(a) directs federal resource trustees to create an initial strategy report by April 27, NOAA and other federal agencies will continue to poll a diverse array of constituents over the coming months to refine and build out suggested strategies for encouraging broad participation in accomplishing 30x30 conservation goals.

Scott Kathey noted two aspects of the executive order that may be of interest to the council:

- NOAA must prepare a report that proposes guidelines for determining what qualifies as marine "conservation". The AC may wish to provide input on that point (e.g. whether marine conservation should include only biological resources or archaeological resources as well).
- The AC may wish to recommend certain metrics for measuring progress toward achieving the 30x30 goals.

Upon submission of the initial report to the National Climate Task Force by April 27, as required by section 216(a) of the order, NOAA will have a better idea of the kind of input it needs from ocean constituent groups. The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) will then schedule a webinar for all AC chairs, sanctuary superintendents, and AC coordinators to provide guidance about how to best advise the agency on this topic.

Scott explained that the 30x30 planning effort is still very new, and the AC has a comfortable amount of time to consider if and how it wishes to respond.

Questions and discussion followed related to measuring the baseline for the current marine conservation regime in the U.S. and what types of activities are included in that

baseline (i.e. What qualifies as marine conservation and what relative weight values should apply between strategies and between regions?). Discussion also ensued about how to provide equitable habitat protection initiatives for places like GRNMS when competing with large tracts of remote ocean habitat in the Pacific.

The Vice Chair noted that there is significant interest by council members for submitting a response to NOAA regarding the 30x30 initiative and said the Executive Committee would like to stand up a special committee to develop ideas for a response once ONMS provides guidance to AC chairs following submission of the initial strategy report to the Climate Task Force. He asked anyone wishing to serve on that future committee to send him an email over the next week expressing their interest and any thoughts they have on the issue. He commented that, the AC will likely draft a letter with recommendations on the matter to ONMS through the GRNMS superintendent.

Peter Auster asked if others can listen-in to the planned webinar for AC chairs as silent audience participants. Stan Rogers said that GRNMS staff will pose that question to ONMS organizers and provide an answer to the advisory council. Scott Kathey said that he will also ask ONMS staff if the session will be recorded and made available to non-participants. Peter Auster also suggested that if AC members can view the meeting real-time, they could text Michael Denmark or GRNMS staff attendees with questions or comments to share with presenters and participants.

Call for Council Member Updates - The Chair asked if any AC members had any updates to present to the council.

Mark Carson reported that GA Department of Natural Resources (GDNR) conducted multiple law enforcement patrols within GRNMS over the preceding 12 months and that encounters were higher than normal. Officers detected violations for undersized black sea bass and illegal anchoring.

Rick DeVictor reported that National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is working on a series of amendments to change annual catch limits in snapper/grouper fishery management plans, having recently received stock assessments for 55 species in the snapper/grouper complex. The 500-page stock assessment report is currently available on-line. Descending devices are now mandatory for recreational and commercial fishers, and charter boats in SE region with a federal permit must now report on-line weekly through one of two approved on-line apps.

Lauren Stefaniak reported that the university lesson plan she developed last fall using a GRNMS dataset garnered very positive feedback from students, as reported by 4 professors who used the plan. Approximately 4 professors will use the lesson this semester.

Joseph Glenn reported that the mooring buoy project is still in development. He has been talking with local boat captains, and he and Captain Hunnicutt have been scouting

potential mooring locations within GRNMS. He wants to collect more information about logistics, cost, permitting requirements, etc. before presenting a proposal to the council.

Mark Padgett reported that he has been evaluating potential partnership opportunities between GRNMS and the growing eco-tourism industry in coastal Georgia to share information about GRNMS with their customers. He suggested that GRNMS explore collaboration with Georgia Sea Grant to incorporate GRNMS messaging into Sea Grant's course curriculum for its "Coastal Awareness & Responsible Eco-Tourism" certification program - a 4-week course for eco-tourism operators to enhance conservation messaging to their customers. He also suggested consideration of adding an eco-tourism seat to the AC.

Since this was his last AC meeting before rotating off the council, Mark expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve on the council and also expressed his admiration for the sanctuary advisory council system.

Public Comment - The Chair asked if any member of the public wished to address the council. The webinar organizer (Ben Prueitt) explained twice, for any attendees present, how to share a comment or submit a question through the GoToWebinar meeting app. After a total pause of 2 minutes, the organizer stated that no comments or questions from public attendees appeared in the chat box and no one activated the "raise hand" feature for an opportunity to speak. The Chair then closed the public comment period. [Note: The scheduled time for public comment on the agenda was 3:40 PM, but due to early completion of earlier agenda items, the floor was opened for public comment at 3:18 PM. The posted meeting agenda and public announcements noted that all agenda times were subject to possible adjustment.

Adjournment - The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:22 PM for a total meeting duration of 2 hours and 52 minutes.

Next Meeting

The next scheduled AC meeting is Monday, August 23, 2021, 10 AM - 1 PM (ET).