

**Meeting Summary**  
**Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary**  
**Advisory Council Meeting - October 26, 2022**  
**(On-Line Webinar)**

**Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC)**

**Attendees**

Peter Auster, Chair (Living Resources Research)  
Lauren Stefaniak, Vice-Chair (Univ. Education)  
Ralph Ainger (Citizen-At-Large)  
Rachel Bair (U.S. Coast Guard)  
Mark Carson (GA Dept of Natural Resources, LE)  
Michael Denmark (Citizen-At-Large)  
Rick DeVictor (NOAA Fisheries)  
Brittany Dodge (Sapelo Island NERR)  
Hermina Glass-Hill (Conservation)  
Jaime Gormley (U.S. Navy)  
Natalie Helbling (K-12 Education)  
Ben Hughes (NOAA Office of Law Enforcement)  
Kathy Knowlton (GA Dept of Natural Resources)  
Shelly Krueger (FL Sea Grant)  
Stan Rogers (NOAA Gray's Reef NMS)  
Jeff Soss (Sport Fishing)  
Michelle Taliercio (Sport Diving)  
Brock Woodson (Non-Living Resource Research)

**Primary SAC Members Absent**

Rachel Guy (Sapelo Island NERR)  
Chris Hodge (GA Dept of Natural Resources LE)  
Russell Kent (Conservation)  
Chris Sawyer (Citizen-At-Large)

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

Scott Kathey  
Elliott Lam  
Madison Monroe  
Ben Prueitt

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**Advisory Council Administrative Business**

Peter Auster called the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) Advisory Council (AC) meeting to order at 12:34 PM with the ring of a cow bell.

AC vice chair Lauren Stefaniak called roll, reported 26 members present and confirmed a quorum of 13 voting members present.

The Chair asked if there were any scheduling conflicts with the meeting and the order of presenting, hearing none, the meeting proceeded with the agenda as written.

The Chair thanked departing council members Michael Denmark (Sport Fishing, Citizen-At-Large, Vice-Chair, and Chair 2012-2022), Monique Gordon (K-12 Education), Bob Crimian (Conservation), LT James Bruce (USCG), LTJG Allison Rychtanak (USCG Alternate), and Graham Gaines (Sea Grant) for their service to the Gray's Reef sanctuary advisory council. The Chair recognized Michel Denmark and presented him with a certificate in recognition of his outstanding service to GRNMS as an advisory council member who served in two different seats and two officer positions over a ten-year period. The Chair also welcomed incoming representatives Ralph Ainger (Citizen-At-Large), Hermina Glass-Hill (Conservation), Natalie

Helbling (K-12 Education), Russell Kent (Conservation), Brock Woodson (Research, Non-Living Resources), Shelly Krueger (Sea Grant), and LTJG Rachel Bair (USCG). He invited each of the new members to make a few comments to introduce themselves to the council.

ACTION #1: Approve the meeting minutes for the March 24, 2022 meeting.

The Chair asked if any members had any suggested edits or corrections to the draft March 24, 2022 AC meeting summary. Kathy Knowlton suggested an edit to the March summary on page 14. The original draft stated, "Three actions discussed were time closures, area closures, and death-based restrictions." The proposed edit will change *death-based* restrictions to *depth-based* restrictions. She also suggested that members receive the draft meeting summary sooner after each meeting. Stan Rogers made a clarifying statement that the meeting summary is not a word-for-word transcript of the meeting, but rather an overarching summary of the discussions. The chair asked if any members had additional comments on the meeting summary and, hearing none, asked if anyone objected to approving the meeting summary by consensus. Hearing no objections, the Chair announced that the meeting minutes were approved with minor corrections. A quorum of nine voting members was present.

ACTION #2: Approve CY2023 AC Meeting Schedule

The Chair asked if any members objected to adopting the proposed advisory council CY2023 quarterly meeting schedule (January 11, April 12, July 18, and October 18) by consensus. The chair noted that the meetings would likely be in-person with a hybrid option. The GRNMS superintendent, Stan Rogers, noted that the addition of the hybrid option will allow for greater flexibility in attendance. Hearing no objections, the Chair announced that the CY2023 meeting schedule was approved. A quorum of nine voting members was present.

The Chair announced that there will be a system-wide meeting with the Advisory Council chairs on November 9, 2022. The meeting will consist of remarks from Director of Office of National Marine Sanctuaries John Armor, opportunities for collaboration, and updates on the restoring America the Beautiful process. The Chair notified the SAC that there will be 30 minutes of office hours with the director. He invited SAC members with questions to send them to him and that he would relay them, given the opportunity.

The Chair expressed the need to elect an Executive Officer for the AC and invited members to contribute nominations and/or consider serving. The deadline for nominations will be December 11, 2022; this will ensure that the council has a full executive committee for the year. Scott Kathey (GRNMS) invited any interested members to contact anyone on the executive committee - Peter Auster, Lauren Stefaniak, and Stan Rogers- to express interest. The Chair reviewed the role of the office and Scott Kathey explained that GRNMS staff provides substantial administrative support for more tedious tasks. The term is two years and a member can serve a maximum of two consecutive terms. No volunteers stepped forward and no nominations were made.

Scott Kathey noted that National Marine Sanctuaries Headquarters wants all sanctuary advisory councils to be able to hold hybrid meetings by the end of 2023. Scott Kathey explained the new

technology, the owl meeting system, that GRNMS is hoping to purchase to create an interactive and dynamic hybrid meeting. The intent is to ensure that everyone feels like they have equal participation whether it is online or in person. Scott Kathey mentioned that the January meeting will likely be held at the Ocean Discovery Center in downtown Savannah.

Scott Kathey reviewed the process by which any SAC member can propose an agenda item for an AC meeting (submission to the Chair or superintendent for approval).

## **Superintendent's Report**

GRNMS Superintendent Stan Rogers presented a report and PowerPoint slides summarizing recent and pending activities by GRNMS staff:

- He began by going over the 2022 Summer Research Expedition aboard the NOAA Ship NANCY FOSTER which was very successful. GRNMS staff and partners conducted a variety of scientific studies on the ten-day expedition. Over the past few years, GRNMS has been able to map over 50 sq-mi of benthic habitat in the South Atlantic Bight, and this year's NANCY FOSTER expedition mapped an additional 14 sq-mi area.
- GRNMS is concluding the SanctSound project partnered with the U.S. Navy. Stan provided an overview of the project and mentioned that the data will be publicly available through the SanctSound portal (<https://sanctsound.ioos.us/>). Gray's Reef currently has no deployed hydrophones collecting sound data since removal of the three project hydrophones but is taking steps to install a single hydrophone in the near future.
- Stan elaborated on another ongoing project at GRNMS: fish movement and migration monitoring. GRNMS maintains an array of 16 acoustic receivers to detect tagged fish within the sanctuary boundary. All data is provided to the Florida Atlantic Coast Telemetry (FACT) Network (<https://secoora.org/fact/>) to build a comprehensive picture of fish movements from Florida to Virginia.
- GRNMS has initiated a review of the status and trends of sanctuary resources for the condition report. This update of the condition report will include ecological indicators and socioeconomic and ecosystem service benefits. GRNMS staff and NCCOS partners are working diligently to complete this in the coming months. In the spring of 2023, there will be a status and trends workshop with subject matter experts to assess the indicators to inform the condition report – a prelude to development of a revised management plan.
- GRNMS has instituted a new five-year memorandum of agreement with the University of Georgia Skidaway Institute of Oceanography. The cooperative agreement between the University of Georgia and NOAA provides staffing and logistical support to GRNMS.
- Stan announced that GRNMS has signed a new five-year memorandum of agreement with Coastal Heritage Society. GRNMS will help deliver K-12 educational programs and work in collaboration with the new STEAM center focused on natural history. Coastal Heritage agreed to merchandise and staff the gift store at the Ocean Discovery Center.
- Stan shared his ideas for the future of GRNMS with the expansion of programs, impact, and reach. In order to do that, GRNMS will be getting a new 52' catamaran research vessel with a winter 2023 delivery date. The boat will drastically change how GRNMS conducts research, increasing capabilities and the tempo of research in the sanctuary.

Stan provided a quick overview of the status of the other vessels at GRNMS: RV Sam Gray will be getting an extension of life and the RV Joe Ferguson will be decommissioned. LT Justin Miyano left the position of Vessel Operations Coordinator and was replaced by LTJG Cassidy Ring.

- GRNMS dedicated the Gray's Reef Ocean Discovery Center, located at 340 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, in downtown Savannah on October 15, 2022. After the dedication, the facility had an open house from October 19-22. The building is closed again while staff develops programming, staffing plans, and exhibits; it will be open to the public in early 2023. GRNMS hired Emily Little as the Education and Outreach Coordinator to help with the development of the Ocean Discovery Center. Stan shared his hope for GRNMS to have broader community engagement and volunteer support with the opening of the Ocean Discovery Center.
- Stan mentioned that GRNMS is a leader in the South Atlantic Bight, advocating for a regional integrated ecological assessment and conservation and protection of important coastal and marine habitats and ecosystems. GRNMS wants to keep contributing towards the efforts of conserving marine habitats in the South Atlantic Bight.
- Stan elaborated on GRNMS priorities for FY23: acquire new Class III research vessel, map and characterize live bottom habitats across the South Atlantic Bight, achieve initial operating capacity for the Ocean Discovery Center, design and install new exhibits, facilitate the SAC 30X30 working group, complete the GRNMS condition report, develop the new science program, continue the monitoring of fish movement and migration, and install new hydrophones for acoustic monitoring.
- GRNMS and the SAC will continue to adapt and ensure the appropriate composition of members in the SAC and working groups to obtain input on issues that matter to the interested and affected public, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, industry, and state and federal governmental partners across the South Atlantic Bight. Stan postulated that we may want to convert the SAC Fishing Industry seat to a Tourism seat. Stan challenged members to engage with their constituents to garner support for programs and bring issues to the table.
- Lastly, Stan gave his perspective on the likeness form and shared that GRNMS and the AC will have more flexibility in recording meetings for records. These recordings will not be open access but can be obtained through a FOIA request.

Kathy Knowlton asked about the timeline for the acoustic receiver project and how long the receivers will be deployed. Stan explained that the receiver network will be an ongoing project for the foreseeable future as a long-term investment. He states that GRNMS staff will maintain the current array with hopes of expansion in the future. She also asked how GRNMS was able to broaden the program to the extent it has in the past year. Stan attributed the recent growth to diligent planning, support of staff, and determination. The new paradigm of GRNMS showcases the commitment to growth and community engagement that is going to come in the following years. Stan thanked the AC and the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries for the support of GRNMS.

Peter Auster asked who decided the mapping priorities for the research expedition on the NOAA Ship NANCY FOSTER. Stan explained that the priorities were determined by GRNMS science staff, NOAA scientists, and Georgia State Agencies. Priority areas were identified as those potentially with live-bottom or important special habitats. Peter Auster mentioned that there may be value in including academic partners when determining primary mapping areas. Stan offered to share the sanctuary's priority mapping areas with the AC.

Peter Auster asked about the acoustic tagging effort and if there are academic partners to expand the data collection. Peter encouraged GRNMS to seek input on the project from other academic partners to decide on priorities and use of resources.

Peter Auster also asked about access to the new research vessel for partners on a gratis basis. Stan explained that depending on the work, like joint work with partners, the sanctuary will grant sea days for use of the vessel. The vessel will also be available for grant funded operations.

Michelle Taliercio asked who manages the data from the acoustic receiver surveys for the FACT network. Stan reported that the GRNMS science team (Kim Roberson and Alison Soss) collects, processes, and delivers the data to partners. The data is processed internally and with partners to create products for use. Hydrophone data is available to everyone through the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information platform (<https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/>).

Kathy Knowlton mentioned that the previous Sports Diving Representative worked on the topic of mooring buoys at Gray's Reef. She asked for an update on the decision since it was last mentioned in 2019. Kathy Knowlton also asked for clarification on the transformation of the Sports Fishing seat to a Tourism seat; she endorsed the change and thought it was a great idea in terms of having a broader reach in the community. Stan explained that the vacant Fishing Industry seat is designed to include marine sectors beyond simply commercial fishing and charters - like fish houses and bait and tackle shops, focused on the wholesale and direct retail sectors of fishing. Scott Kathey elaborated that the original SAC seat was focused on charter and commercial fishing and was re-classified as a Fishing Industry seat in hopes of garnering more interest. Scott explained that because the sanctuary is only 22 sq-mi, there is not a lot of commercial interest, but with the addition of the Ocean Discovery Center and the number of tourists that pass through Savannah each year, the AC could capture and expand outreach to a broader community. He clarified that any re-classification of the Fishing Industry seat would require a change to the AC charter, and the SAC would be involved in that process. Stan expressed that there was a proposal to explore the mooring buoy topic; it is still an approved topic by the council but there has not been any discussion or movement. He claimed that motion may need to be reaffirmed if it is a topic that garners more discussion. The Chair proposed that the mooring buoy topic be added to the next SAC meeting agenda for deliberation and a potential SAC recommendation to the superintendent for the upcoming management plan.

The Chair mentioned that updated sanctuary AC member information is not on the current website and suggested that the AC meeting information be posted on the front page. The Chair

also remarked that the council has not received an update from the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Foundation for some time. Stan Rogers explained that the website is about to be replaced by a new format with fresh content, therefore only critical edits are being made to the old site to facilitate quicker transition to the new site. He also affirmed that the foundation is still active and the AC can invite them to come to the meetings and give updates on their activities. The Chair suggested a discussion on adding a Foundation seat to the council might be useful due to shared interests.

The council recessed from 2:23 - 2:37 PM.

### **Letter re: ONMS Likeness/Copyright Release Form**

Lauren Stefaniak reviewed the process that led to the draft letter to the ONMS director, John Armor concerning the likeness and copyright forms provided for SAC use. Lauren mentioned that there are two issues that are still prevalent in the likeness form. One issue relates to a clause in the form that states: "I hereby warrant that I have sole copyright ownership of any written copy, photograph(s), video, film footage, audio, and/or any information presented by me or provided to ONMS, or that I have obtained permission from the copyright owner(s). Further, I agree to indemnify ONMS in the event that it suffers liability or damages as a result of its use of any written copy, photograph(s), video, film footage, and/or any information referenced in this paragraph." Lauren explained that the form text fails to address the "fair use doctrine". She said that though ONMS attorneys have indicated that the fair use doctrine is implied, it is not explicitly acknowledged in the form. Lauren also states that the form suggests that any liability for future inappropriate use of the information by NOAA or an assigned party would fall on the original presenter (i.e. SAC member) and not the entity misusing the information.

Lauren explained that the broadness of the copyright clause in the likeness and profile form caused concern among members since it pertained to all SAC meetings, sub-group meetings, and all locations where SAC members are operating in official capacity.

The stand-alone copyright license form states, "I understand that a notice acknowledging copyright protection shall be placed on any use of the referenced Work(s)." The language is too broad in terms of ambiguity in who holds the copyright to works presented. Lauren explains that the AC is seeking clarity regarding the wording of the forms.

Stan clarified the types of members within the AC. There are government seats which are filled by individuals operating in an official capacity for government agencies and there are voting members who are participating in a personal capacity. The Chair gave an example of how the document could be misconstrued and proposed a direct discussion with NOAA legal counsel.

Scott Kathey indicated that there were some corrections needed for grammar and diction within the document, prior to finalization for signature and submission to the superintendent.

### **ACTION #3: Letter Approval**

The Chair asked if any members objected to a proposal that the Chair submit to ONMS Director John Armor the letter before them (with some additional non-substantive edits for grammar and diction) as a reflection of the council's views regarding the Copyright and Likeness release forms used by the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries for SAC-related business. Hearing no objections, the Chair announced that the proposal to send the letter was approved by general consent. A quorum of nine voting members was present.

### **SAC Working Group and Subcommittee Administration**

Scott Kathey reviewed the differences between AC Working Groups and Subcommittees (i.e. subcommittees are comprised of AC members only, while AC Working groups include AC members and external members). Working groups are also designed to address specific issues for a time certain and report back to the AC, whereas subcommittees may be standing subunits of the AC.

Scott Kathey listed the current subcommittees- Executive Subcommittee and JEDI Subcommittee- and the current working groups- Law Enforcement Working Group and 30X30 Working Group.

#### ACTION #4 Disband the Law Enforcement Working Group

The Chair asked for comments or questions regarding a proposal to disband the Law Enforcement Working Group since the group had no current actionable assignment. Stan clarified that Law Enforcement will continue to advise GRNMS directly about strategies, trends, and management. The previous structure was an indirect way of advising the superintendent and staff about issues in the sanctuary. The Chair asked if an enforcement report would come from Stan Rogers as part of the Superintendent report. Stan explained that there would still be a Law Enforcement seat on the council that can report the information during member comments. The proposal would only eliminate the working group, and would not change current enforcement reporting to the council.

Michael Denmark asked if anyone recalled what the original charge of the Law Enforcement Working Group was and if they had met that objective. Scott Kathey reported that there was no record of an original charge in the administrative record. Scott explained that the original formation of the group was intended to gather law enforcement personnel to advise the sanctuary, and the working group was not the correct format for that information. Scott Kathey reminded the group that the science advisory group was disbanded in March 2022 for similar reasons.

Mark Carson mentioned that the last time he attended a Law Enforcement Working Group meeting, the members discussed GRNMS anchoring issues and marker buoys for the sanctuary.

The Chair asked members of Law Enforcement if disbanding the working group would change their desire in participating on the SAC. Ben Hughes responded with a succinct no. He stated

that they will still inform the SAC on any issues in Gray's Reef and work with staff to address compliance and enforcement issues.

The Chair asked if any members objected to the proposal to disband the Law Enforcement Working Group since the group had no current, actionable assignment from the SAC. Hearing no objections, the Chair announced that the proposal to disband the Law Enforcement Working Group was approved by general consent. A quorum of nine voting members was present.

Rick DeVactor reviewed the background of Presidential Executive Order 14008, tackling the climate crisis. Rick stated the role and purpose of the 30 X 30 Working Group is to determine if any regional marine management and scientific actions related to Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) would further the intent and provisions of Presidential Executive Order 14008. The working group will define the scope under direct relationship to natural resources and habitat conservation at GRNMS (such as connectivity, life history, habitat); document related activities and initiatives other organizations are currently conducting in the Southeast Region; propose how GRNMS program could engage with other organizations to advance the EO; and submit a final recommendation to the AC for supporting activities and/or initiatives related to GRNMS.

Rick DeVactor was named chair of the working group at the March SAC meeting. Members of the working group include Peter Auster, Michelle Taliercio, Chris Sawyer, and Mary Conley (a non-SAC member). Rick DeVactor expressed that other individuals may be asked to come and present to the working group and contribute to the process without being official members of the group. He provided an overview of the first 30X30 Working Group meeting, stating that it was very successful and that there is a lot of work to be done.

Stan added that the 30X30 effort by the SAC is a FY2023 priority for the sanctuary and can help inform the sanctuary of future options for consideration during the sanctuary's upcoming management plan review. Scott Kathey mentioned that the terms of reference for the group is a valuable document for subcommittees and working groups. Scott Kathey explained that the White House wanted input from coastal communities in order to achieve the goals of the executive order. The Chair and Rick DeVactor encouraged any SAC member with questions or interest in joining the working group to reach out to Rick.

The Chair mentioned that the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) subcommittee has had several members depart the SAC and Mona Behl will be leaving her role soon. The Chair reviewed the conversation regarding the JEDI subcommittee from the meeting in March 2022. The original intent for forming the JEDI Subcommittee was to host a council discussion about JEDI principles to help develop an organizational culture of keeping diversity and inclusion "top-of-mind" during the normal course of business; the principles should be applied at the beginning of all projects and not as an afterthought.

The Chair proposed that the JEDI subcommittee and discussion be an action item at the next AC meeting. The Chair elaborated by stating how the AC moves ahead with the discussion,



what terms of reference might be for the reorganization of the group, and potential goals are all topics that need to be considered.

Stan Rogers states that diversity and inclusion is something the council should live and breathe; it is a tenant of operation. Training, workshops, and specific engagement opportunities could all be utilized to achieve this goal. One of the goals of the Ocean Discovery Center is to foster community and add to the equitability of participating in sanctuary events and decisions.

Jeff Soss stated that the Ocean Discovery Center is a good way to utilize public input. He suggested that the AC may want to include advertisements to the public to participate in meetings at the ODC to capture some of the community that may not be aware of the council otherwise.

Kathy Knowlton stated that it would still behoove the council to talk about the language used in JEDI and actively participate in activities that would increase the knowledge base for the topic. She mentioned that it should be an ongoing process.

The Chair stated that it would be advantageous to develop a set of objectives that ultimately reach out to under-represented groups to make Gray's Reef relevant to everyone. The Chair mentioned that it is a good idea to start at the beginning to make sure that everyone understands the principles and how important they are. Stan Rogers reminded everyone that the 30X30 Working Group is addressing the issue of access directly.

### **2023 SAC Priorities and Work Plan**

The Chair stated that the last action plan for the council was created for the 2020-2022 period. The Chair asserted that the plan was overly ambitious due to the unexpected impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chair explained that we would like to refresh the last action plan and amend it to show the current goals of the AC and have it fall in line with GRNMS priorities. The timeline for the plan will be determined based on the scope of the activities. Lauren Stefaniak pointed out that despite the challenges with COVID-19, the AC was able to complete some of the action items from the previous work plan. The Chair asked if there were any questions on this topic and hearing none called the council to recess.

The council recessed from 3:50 - 4:00 PM

### **Public Comment and Potential SAC Member Discussion**

There were two members of the public present

A member of the public, Melissa Morrow, asked how we can get aquariums to promote public awareness of Gray's Reef. She stated that most of the public gets exposure to marine conservation efforts through aquariums. She posed the question: How can we better get aquariums involved throughout the country as a resource for public awareness?

Lauren Stefaniak suggested one way would be to have tanks or displays dedicated to live-bottom reefs and their organisms to diversify the types of reefs the public gets exposed to. She acknowledged the potential difficulty and limitations of producing this type of display, like feeding mechanisms for the organisms.

Michael Denmark added that the general public tends to think of tropical coral reefs as the norm and are not exposed to the diversity and complexity of these habitats. He stated that it would be interesting if an aquarium could replicate a live stone outcropping to promote the diversity of reefs.

Stan Rogers agreed that looking at programming and exhibits in aquariums is one way of interacting with the public. He stated that the voice and platform of zoos and aquariums are huge and they have a duty to convey and interpret conservation messages. They can be involved by facilitating dialog through guest lectures, workshops, campaigns, and events that draw attention to the ocean. Beyond tanks and living creatures, there are other ways to engage.

Peter Auster mentioned that there has been a history of traveling displays and panels from the sanctuary, but having something more concerted within the various national marine sanctuaries would be useful. It would be to display the national network of protected areas. He mentioned that the idea would be to have a mobile display that highlights the details of all the sights and exposes the public to the full range of what is represented in the program.

Scott Kathey stated that he sent an email to the SAC regarding a video that was produced by the Aquarium Conservation Partnership that represents 26 members across the nation that congratulates NOAA on the 50th Anniversary of National Marine Sanctuaries Program. The first site that was mentioned was Gray's Reef and it showed a new exhibit that is on display at the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta. GRNMS is building relationships and ties with the Georgia Aquarium.

Stan Rogers explained that GRNMS has met with the Georgia Aquarium to engage in collaborations on various programs: scientific research, education, diving programs, and sanctuaries exhibits. GRNMS has also met with the South Carolina Aquarium in Charleston to include Gray's Reef exhibits.

Jeff Soss commented that the virtual reality dives would travel well to other aquariums if they have the capabilities. He stated that it would potentially be an easy accomplishment for all sanctuaries to achieve.

Stan Rogers reaffirmed that the technology and data for the virtual dives would be easily exportable to other partners. He emphasized the public's positive reaction to being able to virtually dive in the reef thanks to Peter Auster and other videos that GRNMS has access to.

Kathy Knowlton asked if the virtual reality coverage shows the diverse changes of the bottom of Gray's Reef to demonstrate how rare the habitat is. She suggests that any visiting diver take five minutes of VR footage in exchange for use of the new research vessel.

Stan Rogers mentioned that an initiative of GRNMS could be to partner with local dive clubs and give them specific missions to participate in data collection. Citizen science groups and aquariums can empower groups to be a part of the sanctuary's mission. One of the conversations with Georgia Aquarium involved leveraging their significant dive capacity.

Michelle Taliercio commented that she was able to take out a group of divers to the reef this year and encouraged everyone to try and get out there. She mentioned that almost all of the divers she worked with have their fish identification certifications, shark conservation dives, and are interested in citizen science. She said they would love to share their footage.

Kathy Knowlton mentioned that the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is ready to help because they are developing a customizable citizen science app. Julia Byrd would be a great asset to understanding the basics of designing a citizen science program and receiving regional input.

The Chair mentioned the reef survey program that was used for the 2008 condition report. There was a lot of participation and it gave individuals a mission.

Natalie Helbling explained that she is going to be using VR goggles at a STEM night next week. A lesson that would tie into using the VR goggles could involve students going on a virtual dive and then having a discussion in the classroom about species richness and abundance. She suggested that if the ODC wanted to have a rent-out program for the VR goggles it would be a great addition to reach out to schools.

Peter Auster mentioned that he had a lot of VR videos and data. He encouraged anyone who is interested to reach out to him.

Stan Rogers stated that GRNMS has content available and is processing other recordings to expand the library of 360 pictures and videos available. There are plans for headquarters to come and collect more data in the coming year. Regarding citizen science and multiple projects, Stan stated that there needs to be collaboration among organizations for data collection.

Jeff Soss suggested that time be set aside for furthering this discussion. The Chair agreed and suggested that it become an action item at the next meeting.

The Chair asked if there were any more comments from members of the public. Hearing none, the meeting continued with SAC member comments.

### **SAC Member Comments (primary members only)**

Natalie Helbling stated that it would be great to incorporate Spanish translation into the exhibits at the Ocean Discovery Center because of the large Hispanic population in Savannah. She mentioned that she would be willing to help with that effort. Natalie suggested a QR code that could be scanned for text translation as a great starting point.

Lauren Stefaniak reiterated that when Peter Auster goes to the SAC Chairs meeting, he could raise the idea of sharing datasets across the sanctuary system. Peter Auster reaffirmed that it was on his list of discussion topics. Lauren proposed the creation of static, 2-dimensional displays that can be shipped to different places as a useful means of increasing name recognition. She mentioned that she would be happy to facilitate this idea as the University Education seat. Peter Auster agreed that it would be a good idea to have these displays, but there would have to be a shipping budget.

Stan Rogers followed up on the pop-up banner discussion by acknowledging how effective a display can be. These ideas are inexpensive, but can increase recognition across the country.

Ben Hughes told the AC that he has done two recent patrols around Gray's Reef, one with NOAA Office of Law Enforcement and one with Georgia DNR. On the patrol with DNR, there were 3 violations from charter vessels. One did not have a charter permit, one did not have turtle release gear, and the third did not have turtle release gear and had an undersized Black Sea Bass on board. In another case, someone was caught with 12 undersized black sea bass from Gray's Reef.

Michelle Taliercio mentioned that there is a website with 360 degree images of Gray's Reef. Michelle thanked Kathy Knowlton for addressing the mooring offshore. It is an issue that she wants to pursue. It would be beneficial to diving captains because of currents and safety with managing divers. She would love to connect with whoever has information on that and move forward with the process. Michelle extended an offer of taking out some of the AC members as divers to Gray's Reef.

Jeff Soss asked Ben Hughes if NOAA Law Enforcement takes precise coordinates whenever violations are observed. He would be interested to see if any damage could be documented in the violation coordinates for education and outreach purposes. Ben Hughes assured Jeff Soss that the officers take precise coordinates and explained the process for collecting that information.

Jeff Soss asked if a citizen science working group would be beneficial to the sanctuary or if it was a program already in place. Stan Rogers explained that GRNMS staff are limited in capacity right now due to the opening of the Ocean Discovery Center and condition report preparation. Though the sanctuary is interested in citizen science and welcomes ideas, there is no comprehensive plan in place right now. Stan presented the option of a formal recommendation, that can then be directed by the AC to address something specific.

The Chair mentioned that reengaging with the recreational fishing community to convey research questions was a topic of discussion he was supposed to address. He was waiting for new SAC members to join the discussion. The Chair suggested a working group or a discussion dedicated to that topic. There are a number of citizen science activities that could be relevant to Gray's Reef in regards to recreational fishers. The Chair stated that the AC could create a list of recommendations or resources to present to Stan Rogers. Scott Kathey recommended that it could be a prospective work plan item. Jeff Soss thought it would be an engaging topic of discussion for the January meeting.

Rick DeVictor thought having a discussion with Julia Byrd would be advantageous. He suggested that having Julia Byrd come and talk with the SAC about the citizen science programs could be a great first step.

Brock Woodson echoed the same line of thought on the community based science efforts. He mentioned that he sees a lot of opportunity with the nonliving resource science in this effort. Brock expressed that his graduate student, Frank, is working with Gray's Reef data looking at signal reception based on changing environmental conditions. The information gathered from this project could provide valuable information on how to reconfigure the acoustic receiver array. Catherine Edwards also co-advises this student.

Jeff Soss mentioned that he was going to start a Facebook group because a majority of the communication between fishers and divers in the area occurs on this platform. He invited anyone who was on Facebook and interested to join the group. It will be a non-official group without NOAA logos.

Ben Hughes asked to be involved with the mooring buoy conversation, if it occurs.

### **Closing Remarks**

The Chair thanked everyone for their engagement and participation in the meeting.

Stan Rogers thanked everyone for the roles that they hold in helping to manage the sanctuary. He stated that if anyone ever has any questions, feel free to reach out to staff members or himself directly. He expressed that GRNMS staff is here to make the AC council successful and hope that they in turn can help the sanctuary be successful.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:52 PM for a meeting duration of 4 hours and 18 minutes.