

NOAA Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Condition Report Addendum Summary Points June 8, 2012

A [2012 Addendum](#) (1400kb) to the original [2008 Gray's Reef Condition Report](#) (1893kb) finds that for certain sanctuary resources conditions have improved, particularly in areas that have been directly impacted by specific management actions. It also reports numerous areas in which recent research has improved confidence in ratings of status and trends.

Water quality remains rated as "good;" additional data collection about oxygen, temperature and salinity confirms that conditions do not appear to be changing.

Since the original 2008 report, the abundance and distribution of habitats used by sanctuary life has been upgraded from "good/fair" to "good," and the status of biologically structured habitat is also now rated as "good" (previously it was rated as "undetermined"). These rating changes are attributed to additional studies conducted since the earlier report and management actions that recently went into effect that prohibit anchoring, thereby removing this pressure as a potential damaging agent to live-bottom habitat. Habitats are generally considered to be in near-pristine condition, although localized impacts do result from certain human activities.

The status of "environmentally sustainable fishing" has been upgraded from "fair/poor" to "fair." Conditions appear to be improving, as recent data show increasing abundances of black sea bass and red snapper. The ratings for keystone species have also been upgraded from "fair" with a declining trend to "good/fair" with an improving trend. This is primarily the result of recent management actions that include banning spearfishing in the sanctuary. The establishment of a research area in the sanctuary will also allow scientists to further evaluate the impact of bottom fishing on keystone species.

The 2008 report cited anchoring, recreational fishing and spearfishing as significant human pressures on the living marine resources of Gray's Reef, and noted that snapper and grouper are being overfished both within the sanctuary and throughout the region. The sanctuary made management and regulatory changes with implementation of the 2006 management plan, establishing a no-anchoring rule and restricting fishing to rod and reel and handline fishing gear. Spearfishing was prohibited in 2010. In addition, a research (control) area was designated in late 2011. The research area will allow the sanctuary to track changes in sanctuary resources, address research priorities, and improve management responses.

Click [here](#) to download PDF of the **2008 Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Condition Report** (1893kb) and click [here](#) to download a PDF of the **2012 Addendum** (1400kb) from the Gray's Reef Website.