



Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary
Advisory Council Meeting
January 11, 2011
U.S Fish and Wildlife Service
Savannah National Wildlife Refuge Visitors Center

Members Present

(Chair) Clark Alexander, Non-living Resources
(Vice Chair) Will Berson, Georgia Conservation
LT Brandon Fisher, U.S. Coast Guard SERFTC
Capt. Doug Lewis, GA DNR Law Enforcement
Joe Kimmel, NOAA SE Region Fisheries
Tim Tarver, Sport Fishing
Al Samuels, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement
Danny Gleason, Living Resources Research
Eric Robillard, GA DNR Coastal Resources Division
Mary Conley, Regional Conservation
George Sedberry, GRNMS Superintendent

Members Absent

Scott Harris, University Education
Venetia Butler, K-12 Education
Kellie Parr, Sport Diving
Wendell Harper, Charter/Commercial Fishing
Dorset Hurley, Sapelo Island NERR

GRNMS Staff Present

Sarah Fangman, ONMS SEGOM Program Coordinator
Becky Shortland, Resource Protection Coordinator
Jody Patterson, Administrative Assistant
Cathy Sakas, Education Coordinator
Gail Krueger, Outreach Coordinator
Todd Recicar, Marine Operations Manager
ENS Chris Briand, Vessel Operations Coordinator

Public Present

None

Welcome and Introductions

Council Chairman Clark Alexander called the meeting to order, welcoming members, staff and participants. Introductions were made and the agenda was reviewed with no changes.

Council Business

September 2010 Meeting Summary-A motion was made and passed approving the summary of minutes from September's Sanctuary Advisory Council meeting.

2011 ONMS Advisory Council Summit-George Sedberry addressed the upcoming National Sanctuary Advisory Council Summit to be held in Savannah this May. Budget limitations are potentially reducing the scope and size of the planned 3-day event, including a field trip to Sapelo Island and a reception at SCAD's River Club. The final agenda will be determined in the near future. There are new panel discussions on the agenda including "Sustaining our Sanctuary Communities" and "Sanctuary Site Evaluation List and Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning." Local and regional partners will be selectively invited for attendance. Advisory Council members are encouraged to attend.

Membership Charter Subcommittee report- Will Berson held a conference call with the working group to discuss issues and terms of council membership prior to charter renewal in 2013. Additional seats on the council were considered to further involve local communities and expand participation to individuals possessing skills and expertise that current seats don't address. Three new seats may be suggested, including two seats for "at-large" members. A follow-up conference call will solidify these recommendations for the next council meeting.

Recognition- George Sedberry recognized the many contributions made by Dr. Joe Kimmel, representative of NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, over the past 10 years while serving on Gray's Reef NMS Advisory Council. Dr. Kimmel is retiring from NOAA and will be replaced on the council by Dr. Jack McGovern.

January 2010 advisory council retreat follow up- George Sedberry addressed the status of action items established during the January 2010 council retreat.

-A friends group concept is still being considered, but no action has been taken. -

-A visitor's center working group was established with Venetia Butler chairing. However, additional fully engaging a working group should wait until the final study is received from the consultants.

-Op-ed pieces were requested of council members. Danny Gleason, Greg McFall, and Will Berson have a work in progress on climate change and marine protected areas. These op-ed pieces will be added to the quarterly programs reports; an email will be sent to council members a month prior as a reminder and call for contributions.

-A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page has been added to the website; however a one-pager has not been generated for distribution.

-The Rivers to Reefs education workshop has added an evaluation component to satisfy the Georgia Quality Teachers grant. An independent evaluator interviews

the participants during the workshop and reviews post-workshop lesson plans; it was determined to be a highly effective program and the teachers are successfully integrating the material into the classrooms.

-Communications with the sport diving community has been targeted through the dissemination of the “Best Practices” poster. Clark Alexander suggested a FAQs sheet for divers could be beneficial, too.

-A boater corps is still in development to assist in research missions and outreach.

-An update on Navy activities is still desired

-Pre-meeting materials for the council will go out in a timely manner

-Council seats have been filled

-GRNMS staff presented the research portion of the management plan review in April, resource protection in September and we continue that review with education and outreach this meeting.

Programs report and discussion-The programs report was reviewed without comment. Discussion concerning the need for a full-time research coordinator centered on the condition of the federal budget and the short falls expected at the site. ENS Chris Briand noted that NOAA Corps personnel are outside the GRNMS program funding and that perhaps the site could request an additional officer to help support our mission.

Meeting Dates- It was determined that the next council meeting will be held in the Savannah area, due to budget constraints, and will likely occur in late May.

Research Area Update-

Public comment-Final Rule/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): The 90-day public comment period for the proposed research area closed on December 13 with a total of 6 public comments, plus a few agency comments. Three public meetings were held but no members of the public attended. A Final Rule and EIS will be developed over the next couple of months for NOAA clearance.

Science Advisory Group: Dr. Clark Alexander gave an overview of the first Science Advisory Group meeting that was held in December. Participants scrutinized the draft research and monitoring action plan for the proposed research area.

Law Enforcement Working Group

Capt. Doug Lewis reported on GA DNR law enforcement activities within the sanctuary noting that budget cuts have reduced staff officers from 38 to 21. Al Samuels with NOAA OLE reported on compliance and enforcement actions to protect the endangered North Atlantic right whale during calving season. LT Brandon Fisher reported that the Coast Guard Cutter *Tarpon* conducted 5 hours (3 patrols) in the sanctuary in the last quarter with no vessels observed or boarded. Air Station Savannah reported 2 hours of over flights with no sightings or significant events. Station Brunswick had 2 scheduled patrols but both were cancelled due to weather. He reminded members that training is available at SERFTC.

Offshore Activities Working Group

As reported by Mary Conley, the council formed a working group to evaluate potential threats to GRNMS from agency and other activities, such as oil and gas exploration. The group was reminded that coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP) accounts for potential uses, analyzes the threat and defines the solutions for issues. It was suggested that the name of this subcommittee be changed to “Conservation Subcommittee” as it better encompasses the purposes of the group and similar committees at other sanctuary sites. Staff and council members should advise this group of hot issues or concerns to be defined and analyzed as they arise. Another conference call will be planned in the near future.

Management Plan Review-Education and Outreach

Gail Krueger addressed outreach initiatives, Cathy Sakas addressed education initiatives, and Jody Patterson addressed volunteer initiatives as defined by the 2006 Education and Outreach Action Plan to enhance public awareness, understanding and appreciation of the sanctuary. Following are the strategies included in the action plan and the status of each activity:

- **Strategy EO-1** Conduct public awareness programs consisting of the following activities:
 - Activity A- Conduct a public perception survey
 - This initiative has not been completed but is in development through headquarters staff.
 - Activity B- Develop a communications program
 - This is ongoing with media alerts, press releases, calendar items, website updates and targeting mailings.
 - Activity C- Develop wayside signage
 - Funding for signage dried up prior to development but interpretive signage for River Street and Hutchison Island are forthcoming.
 - Activity D- Continue to sponsor public festival
 - The GRNMS Ocean Film Festival is in its’ 8th year and 90% of participants surveyed say they feel more informed after attending.
 - Activity E- Maintain and enhance public awareness partnerships
 - Ongoing public awareness partnerships allow our continued participation in a variety of events where the sanctuary’s mission can be highlighted and explained. Partnerships with other agencies, organizations and groups continue to expand as opportunities arise. The volunteer coordinator actively seeks opportunities to engage in mutually beneficial activities for GRNMS, partners and volunteers as a means of public awareness and to empower citizens with scientific knowledge of the marine environment.

- **Strategy EO-2** Create and provide scholastic programs in Ocean Science Education
 - Activity A- Continue to sponsor GRNMS Student Ocean Council
 - There is no funding to continue this program.
 - Activity B- Continue Distance Learning Program

- This program continues through disbursement of DVDs, CDs, posters and curriculum materials which can be requested from our website.
 - Activity C- Develop Ocean Science Course
 - This has been completed and is awaiting upload to our website.
 - Activity D- Continue teacher workshops
 - Ongoing work with the following grant funded workshops: Rivers to Reefs, Gray's Reef Educator Cruises, Women in Marine Science, Sidewalks to the Sea, NABS Youth Education Summit (also supports our commitment to minority communities), and MATE ROV competitions and workshops.
- Strategy EO-3 Maintain existing and develop new sanctuary exhibits
 - Activity A- Renovate existing displays and develop new exhibits over five years.
 - Renovations to current exhibits are ongoing at the Georgia Aquarium, Fernbank Museum of Natural History, South Carolina Aquarium, Georgia Southern University Museum, UGA MECA, Tybee Island Marine Science Center and Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport. New exhibit in planning phase for Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve Visitors Center.
- Strategy EO-4 Increase outreach to minority communities
 - Activity A- Develop an outreach campaign
 - No funding is available to continue a radio campaign; no other action has been initiated.
 - Activity B- Develop minority serving institution programs
 - Ongoing participation as part of education activities with North American Black Scuba Youth Education Summit (NABS YES), Sidewalks to the Sea, and MATE Center iTEST programs.
 - Activity C- Continue SSU Intern program
 - No funding is available to continue this program.
- Strategy EO-5 Develop Volunteer programs to support sanctuary programs
 - Activity A- Provide materials to interested parties on development of Friends Group
 - There has not been any action in the development of a friends group to aid in financial support of GRNMS; although discussion of such has recently transpired with SAC members expressing support. Interest has also been expressed by volunteers and members of the community who wish to help with this venture, particularly as it relates to the visitors center and film festival.
 - Activity B- Develop a comprehensive volunteer plan/program
 - The development of a formal volunteer program has begun and is ongoing. In addition to public outreach opportunities at local events and festivals, we continue to seek projects that enable our constituents to experience hands-on stewardship activities and

scientific training in the marine environment to help support our mission.

1. Event Corps Volunteers- (totaling 374 hours in FY10)- Int. Boat Show, Ocean Film Festival, DNR CoastFest, MAREX Oyster Restoration, SkIO Marine Science Day, and Savannah Earth Day Festival.
2. Citizen Science Corps Volunteers- (totaling 982 hours in FY10)- participation in ROV workshops/competition, G.R.E.A.T. program, and Nancy Foster expedition. Additional opportunities to participate in NOAA's Phytoplankton Monitoring Network beginning 2011.
3. Team Ocean Diver Corps Volunteers- (totaling 458 hours in FY10)- participation in marine debris removal, fish count, habitat assessment, small boat operations and Nancy Foster expedition.

Recommendations and NMS Management Decisions

Ph.D. candidate and Nancy Foster Scholar Lauren Garske was unable to attend due to snow and ice in the Southeast. Gray's Reef was the last sanctuary for her to visit in her project to assess the role of scientific information in advisory council recommendations and ONMS management decisions.

NOAA Fisheries Service update

Outgoing NOAA Fisheries Service representative Joe Kimmel reported on pending actions affecting fishing in the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's jurisdiction. More information can be found at: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/>

Public Comment

None

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4pm.