



GRAY'S REEF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING – FEBRUARY 28, 2017

Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) Attendees

Rick DeVictor, Chair
Michael Denmark, Vice-chair
Peter Auster
Mona Behl
LTJG Jerry Brown
Mary Conley
LT Warren Fair
Pat Geer
Tim Henkel
Warren Hupman
Capt. Bob Lynn
Jene Nissen
Mark Padgett
Suzanne VanParreren

SAC Members Absent

Anna George, Secretary
Kevin Mitchell
Scott Noakes
Dustin Rhyan
Tim Tarver

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

Sarah Fangman
Marybeth Head
Chris Hines
Jody Patterson
Todd Recicar
Michelle Riley
Kim Roberson
George Sedberry
Becky Shortland

GRNMS Foundation

Vicki Weeks

Public in attendance

Paulita Bennett-Martin
Mandy Harvey (*GRNMS Volunteer*)
Alissa Johnson (*GRNMS Volunteer*)
Richard LaPalme (*Team Ocean Diver*)
Skye Mills (*GRNMS Intern*)
Buster Thompson
Sarah Wickman (*GRNMS Intern*)
Tom Wright
Larry Yawn (*GRNMS Volunteer*)

Advisory Council Business

Council chair Rick DeVictor called the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) Advisory Council meeting to order at 10:08am. He and Sarah Fangman welcomed members, staff and public in attendance. Following group introductions, Rick briefly reviewed the agenda and outlined the meeting objectives. The January 12, 2017 SAC webinar summary was unanimously approved with no changes.

Open SAC Seats

Chris Hines reminded the group that today (February 28) is the application deadline for the open citizen-at-large seat on the SAC. Chris also provided an update on K-12 seat on the council previously occupied by Emily Kroutil. The individual who was offered the seat had to withdraw due to a family emergency. Therefore, the seat remains open and will be recruited during the next recruitment cycle May 1 - 31.

GRNMS Sanctuary Advisory Council Charter Amendment

Chris Hines discussed a proposed amendment to the advisory council charter addressing diversity and inclusion. Draft text for the amendment was developed by the national office and has been reviewed by SAC members Mona Behl and Anna George. Their suggested revisions include rewording the first sentence of Item 2 to change the order, emphasizing that council and committee members should be representative of their communities, and adding an explanation of why diversity and inclusion are important. In addition to these changes, the larger group suggested the following changes to Item 5: reworking the first sentence, changing "intent" to "desire", and deleting "always".

Staff will incorporate SAC comments into the proposed amendment and review with the group during the next meeting. Upon agreement by the SAC, the revised language will then be forwarded to national office for approval. Once approved at the national level, the amendment will be submitted to the SAC for a vote to amend the charter.

Council Working Groups

Science Advisory Group (SAG) – Peter Auster provided a preview of the information that will be reviewed and discussed during the Science Advisory Group meeting scheduled for tomorrow, March 1, 2017. Sarah Fangman encouraged SAC members to attend tomorrow's meeting, if available. Agenda topics include project summaries, a 5-year report on the research area, a climate vulnerability assessment focused on species, habitats and communities, and species interactions, and addressing human impacts including patterns of use, current understanding of effects, how to detect and monitor effects, and thresholds and reference points. This information will be used to guide the continuing evolution of the GRNMS resource protection plan

Relative to the climate vulnerability assessment, Peter stated that a vulnerability assessment workshop will be conducted by the SAG this fall to identify potential impacts on key species and habitats and that the group may be ready to share their findings with the SAC this time next year. Peter stressed that this initiative should be undertaken in concert with other regional efforts and should link to fisheries. In keeping with Office of National Marine Sanctuary (ONMS) standards, data will be shared at a national level via a posting on the ONMS website. Mona Behl suggested that a social scientist be involved in the assessment process. The group agreed and this topic will be added to the SAG agenda for tomorrow (March 1) for further discussion. This position would be eligible for funding consideration through Georgia Sea Grant if the proposal is submitted through a Georgia educational institution.

Approaches to addressing human impacts will be utilized to update the GRNMS condition report. The condition report is a standardized "state of the sanctuary" report that is undertaken by every sanctuary approximately every 5 years. The report evaluates and grades the condition of the water, living resources, and habitat. The next report for GRNMS will begin within the next 2 years. This report informs the management plan review process. Peter pointed out that one of the key challenges in preparing the condition report will be how to integrate new issues such as human-produced noise, effects of fishing, and the effects of climate change, how to measure changes in these factors, and where to establish the threshold for concern. There was agreement that regional connectivity should be integrated into this work. The SAG would discuss ways to address these effects and report back to the SAC.

Law Enforcement Working Group – Captain Bob Lynn of Georgia DNR Law Enforcement reported that 5 patrols have been conducted since July 2016 within GRNMS, totaling 23 hours, including 2 vessel checks and 1 night patrol. No violations were detected. LTJG Jerry Brown reported that the US Coast Guard is currently conducting an average of 1 patrol per month within GRNMS. Some patrols are conducted by USCG vessels that are transiting near GRNMS on their way to other destinations. There were 13 patrols conducted in 2016, with 8 - 10 vessel sightings and 3 vessel boardings. Five patrols have been conducted to date in 2017 with 3 vessels observed.

LT Warren Fair of the US Coast Guard remarked that although no violations have been observed at GRNMS, illegal fishing practices appear to be on the rise in coastal Georgia and other members of the group made similar observations. As a follow-up, staff will obtain the penalty schedule for GRNMS and this topic will be included on the agenda for the next SAC meeting.

Sarah Fangman announced that a new NOAA Enforcement Officer, Ben Hughes, is currently in training and will soon be stationed in Savannah. She also informed the group that two large vessels caught illegally dumping oily waste have been prosecuted and GRNMS will receive a portion of the community settlement funds. The funds will go to the NMS Foundation which will distribute the funds. GRNMS will have input on how the funds are distributed in keeping with the language contained within the settlement.

Law Enforcement Letter – Rick DeVactor provided an update on the Law Enforcement letter discussed during the January 12 SAC webinar. A vote was taken following the discussion on January 12, during which the SAC unanimously approved a motion for the GRNMS SAC to sign on to the letter. This letter outlines law enforcement needs in national marine sanctuaries and monuments. Addressed to the incoming NOAA Administrator, the letter has now been signed by 9 of the 14 NMS Advisory Council Chairs. Once all sanctuaries have reached a decision on signing the letter, the national office will determine if the letter should be advanced. The letter is intended to draw attention to the law enforcement issues common to all sanctuaries. It contains background information on current enforcement approaches, outlines opportunities to employ emerging technologies to augment ongoing enforcement efforts, outlines ways that SAC chairs could help, and offers recommendations moving forward.

Recreational Fishing Working Group – Reporting on behalf of Tim Tarver, Sarah Fangman provided an update on the activities of the working group, which is charged with finding better ways to communicate and promote collaboration with recreational fishing interests, raise awareness of GRNMS, enhance compliance, and obtain more visitor use information. The group conducted their second meeting on February 15, 2017. Ideas discussed during the meeting include:

- Working with schools to develop fishing programs for children
- Presenting information on GRNMS to fishing clubs throughout Georgia and obtaining feedback from the fishing community
- Creating a video highlighting personal experiences with GRNMS to raise awareness of its value and importance and why it needs to be protected for future generations
- Blue Angler Certification for recreational fishing charters to confirm that best practices are being employed
- Creating a collection of artificial reefs outside GRNMS some of which would be designated for recreational fishing, some designated for commercial fishing, and some designated as a control

Staff will further investigate these ideas, after which the working group will meet to evaluate and prioritize and outline next steps. It was suggested that ample time (> 2 hours) should be allowed for this meeting.

The group recommended that GRNMS consider collaborating with other partners on this initiative, including the Georgia Sea Grant Coastal Stewards Program and the Marine Resource Education Program (MREP) program. Additional recommendations included inviting Amber Von Harten from the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (SAFMC) to attend the next meeting of the working group and establishing a diving working group in the future, utilizing the learnings for the recreational fishing working group to optimize the process.

Council Member Reports

NOAA Fisheries Update – Rick DeVactor updated the group on several issues, including a new regulation effective March 23 which mandates that black sea bass pots be marked so gear can be identified in the event of a right whale entanglement. Rick noted that the public comment period on the proposed action to establish 5 special management zones in the South Atlantic to protect spawning fish closes on March 6. The public comment period for the NOAA Fisheries regional action plan on climate change is open for public comment until March 23.

Rick stated that new regulations on cobia, hogfish and king mackerel are currently being evaluated and reminded the group that cobia closed on January 23 in federal waters for the remainder of the year. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) is working with the impacted states to develop a joint management plan to ensure

equity between all states. This plan should be completed by the end of this year. There was also discussion of the ongoing prohibition on red snapper. The consensus of the group is that many fishers believe that the stock has rebounded based upon their observations and the frequency of unintended catches of the species. Rick hypothesized that these are likely young fish and not large, mature fish and stated that a process is in place to determine if and when the season will open. Red snapper continue to die despite the closed fishery due to improper release techniques. George Sedberry stated that the SAFMC is evaluating descending devices to aid in the reopening of the snapper fishery.

It was suggested that GRNMS could be a welcome addition to a list of parties to be proactively consulted by NOAA Fisheries for comments on relevant issues.

GRNMS Speakers Bureau – Michael Denmark provided an update on Speakers Bureau activities. A fully completed slide kit is available for speakers and was distributed to the SAC during today's meeting via thumb drive. It is intended for use with a variety of groups ranging from civic groups to local fishing and diving groups. The slide kit is designed for a 14 – 18 minute presentation that can be tailored to the specific audience. Each slide contains detailed speakers notes. Based upon a suggestion from the group today, the speaker's notes will also be available as a separate handout that can be used by the speaker while presenting the slides.

New speakers will attend an orientation session. Other potential training opportunities were proposed, including having new speakers observe a presentation and training in a small group format where speakers present and offer critiques to one another. Additionally, it was recommended that a list of FAQs be developed so speakers are prepared to address the most commonly encountered questions.

Other recommendations from the group included adding the 360 dive to the slide kit, tracking each presentation (date, speaker, group, and number of attendees), having GRNMS Foundation information available at each talk, providing something physical that the attendees can take home, and incorporating information on GRNMS into other presentations SAC members may be giving.

Chris Hines will contact targeted organizations to gauge their interest in hosting a GRNMS speaker. Chris asked that SAC members forward any suggestions for additional target groups, especially any based outside of the coastal Georgia area. In response, Mona Behl invited GRNMS to speak at upcoming conference in Athens on May 1. Mary Conley and Suzanne VanParreren volunteered to help talk about GRNMS to groups in their areas and more volunteers are welcome, especially those with public speaking experience. Chris will send out a reminder note to the council in the next couple of weeks asking for target organizations for a talk.

As a follow-up from previous meetings, the tagline "Georgia's Amazing Underwater Park" was discussed. Two issues included whether use of term "park" is appropriate and the second is whether GRNMS should be "Georgia's" or the "Nation's." A survey was conducted on this issue and no consensus was reached nor is there currently consensus within the ONMS on this issue. One suggestion was to present GRNMS as an "underwater zoo and garden" instead of "underwater park."

Chris thanked Michael for spearheading this effort. Michael, in turn, thanked Jody Patterson for her efforts in developing the presentation and highlighted her role as the "booking agent" for each speaking engagement.

Anna George's New Position – Anna George has been promoted to Vice President of Conservation Science and Education at the Tennessee Aquarium.

Other -- Jene Nissen reported that the Navy is working on an environment impact statement of training and testing activities in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. GRNMS is included in the assessment area. The statement will be issued in June, followed by 60-day public comment period. New guidance will be enacted before the end of 2018. Jene will send a link to the SAC when the comment period opens.

Mona Behl thanked the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation for the recent grant to UGA. This grant will enable 840 4th graders in Georgia to experience the outdoors first-hand and will also fund the rejuvenation of aquarium displays including the GRNMS exhibit.

Public Comment

Tom Wright stated that there is concern about the increasing number of larger ships and the potential impact on the right whale population. In his opinion, it will not have much impact as it may be easier for whales to avoid larger, slower-moving ships. Tom reported that Sarah Fangman recently delivered a lunch presentation at the Propeller Club that was very interesting and impressive. He would like to see presentations to several other groups with which he is affiliated.

Interactive Session

Sarah Fangman, Chris Hines, and Becky Shortland facilitated an interactive session to evaluate the “So What?” of GRNMS. During this session, the SAC divided into 3 subgroups to evaluate the following issues:

- Has GRNMS affected ocean conservation or influenced what people think about ocean conservation?
- Did the sanctuary designation actually add any benefit?
- Would it matter if the sanctuary designation went away?
- Has GRNMS helped expand knowledge of live-bottom communities?

Each subgroup took notes on flip charts that are recorded in Appendix 1. The subgroups each reported out their discussions to the whole council. Discussions from the group was largely positive, with the significant contributions of GRNMS to scientific research and knowledge and the protection of the unique natural environment consistently cited as key accomplishments of the sanctuary. However, there is still significant work to be done to better demonstrate the value of GRNMS to the public-at-large and to encourage protection and conservation of ocean resources outside of the sanctuary. The communications arena is one area where efforts could be focused. In addition, it was suggested that social science approaches segmented by user group be utilized to better understand prevailing perceptions of GRNMS and how the sanctuary has influenced the general public and specific target audiences.

GRNMS Report

Volunteer of the Year – Sarah Fangman recognized and thanked the 2016 GRNMS volunteer of the year, Mandy Harvey, who is serving as the note taker for today’s meeting.

Buoy Camera Update – Becky Shortland reported that the camera is live and the archives should be available soon.

Soundscape and Other Research – Kim Roberson presented an update on 2016 field operations and plans for 2017. In 2016 there were 185 dives totaling 87 hours spent underwater. Kim thanked the researchers, students, and volunteer divers for their significant efforts. Documentation and removal of lionfish is an ongoing priority. There were only 5 lionfish sightings in 2016, but they were distributed over a wide area of GRNMS. The 2016 *Nancy Foster* research cruise included 113 sites, 294 dives, 151 hours underwater.

There are currently 17 telemetry receivers deployed at GRNMS. The array will be downscaled with some of the less-active receivers being removed. Receivers in key areas will be retained. The economy of the receivers is a key determinate in this process. Recommendations from the research team are welcomed. Peter Auster suggested that a new configuration of the array should be considered. This issue will be discussed further during the SAG meeting tomorrow (March 1).

Two hydrophones are currently in use at GRNMS. Each hydrophone is deployed for one full lunar cycle during each of the four seasons of the year. Sarah Fangman thanked Jene Nissen and Scott Noakes for their pioneering work on the soundscape of GRNMS. An acoustic inventory of GRNMS has been completed by Rachel Wang. Some of the

sounds from this survey have been integrated into the new mobile exhibit. It is not currently known if the results of the inventory will be published, but the group strongly encouraged publication.

Research priorities for 2017 include the RA synthesis report, connectivity, the *Nancy Foster* cruise, the climate vulnerability assessment, strengthening existing and creating new partnerships such as *Nancy Foster* scholars and Georgia Sea Grant opportunities.

GRNMS Vessel Status – Todd Recicar reported that the newly-upgraded *Joe Ferguson* will undergo sea trials this week, and will likely return to Savannah next week. Upgrades include a hard-top bimini, a larger swim platform, and increased sleeping quarters.

Communications Implementation Plan – Chris Hines reported that the communications implementation plan has been finalized. This plan is a product of the outreach and education program evaluation. The goals of the plan include increasing awareness and appreciation of GRNMS and enhancing local support for the sanctuary. Target audiences include the Savannah community, elected officials, travel and tourism leaders, boaters, fishers, and divers. The plan is based upon the behavior change model and includes a robust mix of communications tools. A decision-making matrix has been implemented to identify the most effective use of resources.

The group recommended that there be a strategy in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan. To achieve this, it was suggested that an evaluation expert be engaged early in the process to outline measurement approaches and a social survey be conducted on a regular basis to gauge the efficacy of communications activities. In addition, GRNMS staff were encouraged to increase national exposure and to maximize resources available from the ONMS.

Gray's Reef Film Festival – Chris Hines reported on the 14th annual Gray's Reef Film Festival, which included two children's session on January 24 at the Savannah Theatre and January 25 at the Tybee Post Theater. The two feature nights of 3D films were on February 3 and 4 at the Trustees Theater. The Emerging Filmmakers competition on the afternoon of February 4 at the SCAD Museum and an afternoon of short films February 5 on Tybee Island at the Tybee Post Theater rounded out the festival lineup. A total of 1500 people attended the film festival, including 600 students at the children's session.

Mobile Exhibit – Chris Hines provided an overview of the newly completed GRNMS mobile exhibit, which debuted at the film festival. This interactive exhibit features several 3D creatures, a sample of the Gray's Reef soundscape, and a touchscreen that enables people to "take a dive" at GRNMS. The display, dubbed *Gray's Reef on the Road*, is currently on display at the Bull Street Library in Savannah until May. From there, it will move to the Wilmington Island Library and then to the Savannah History Museum in the fall.

360 Dive – Sarah Fangman shared the 360 dive concept with the group. The group viewed sample dives at GRNMS on their individual cell phones. Reaction from the group was overwhelmingly positive and it was suggested that the 360 dive be incorporated into the speakers bureau slide kit. Additional recommendations included creating an app to enhance user engagement and repurposing the content into video format accompanied by educational curriculum for classroom use.

GRNMS Foundation Update

GRNMS Foundation Executive Director Vicki Weeks showcased the launch of the 360 dive in a video segment shot during the film festival kick-off Founders Reception on February 2. The Foundation also hosted an after party for the film festival on February 4 and a wrap party on February 5. She reported that the National Foundation has a new executive director and will be working closely with the Department of Justice to ensure community settlements are appropriately distributed to the sanctuary system. Vicki asked SAC members to pass along the names of any potential sponsors to support Foundation efforts.

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) Strategic Plan

Sarah Fangman was part of the small team that was selected to develop the updated ONMS strategic plan. It is meant to be a very concise document, which was a challenge due to the complexity of the sanctuary system and the many differences between sanctuaries. The plan is currently being refined. Once these refinements are completed, Sarah will distribute the plan to those who are interested in reviewing.

Next Meeting

The next two SAC meetings take place via webinars on April 27 at 1:00pm (*Note: the time has changed to 3pm*) and on June 28 at 1:00pm. Proposed topics include review of the revised diversity and inclusion amendment to the charter, a report on the March 1 SAG meeting, and a review of the penalty schedule for GRNMS. Additional suggestions for meeting topics can be emailed to Chris Hines.

Public Comment

Richard LaPalme congratulated the GRNMS staff on how much progress has been made recently. He is very impressed with the mobile exhibit and proposed that the exhibit could migrate to permanent installations with the support of corporate sponsors. In particular, he would like to see a GRNMS exhibit at the North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores. Richard indicated that he tunes into the buoy camera almost every day and wishes that the public could get condition reports for GRNMS via diving and fishing forums and/or Twitter.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:11pm.

Appendix 1 - Interactive Session Notes

- Question 1: Has GRNMS affected ocean conservation or influenced what people think about ocean conservation?
- Question 2: Did the sanctuary designation actually add any benefit?
- Question 3: Would it matter if the sanctuary designation went away?
- Question 4: Has GRNMS helped expand knowledge of live-bottom communities?

GROUP 1

Question 1

- Yes, put in regulations to preserve live-bottom habitat
- Yes, protecting fish from being removed
 - Spill-over effect
 - No spearfishing
- Helped to increase the knowledge of this kind of marine community
- Conservation in general is helped by the existence sanctuaries, locally and nationally
- Serves as a research and learning area that lets us increase our general knowledge that will later allow us to work to protect a certain place
- It is the only place that allows us to talk about offshore environments in more terms than just fisheries in Southeast
- Regulations influence people and enhance the fisheries of those areas
- Protection, science, and education outreach

Question 2

- Brings scientists and research together
- Is it being used to further our knowledge in science world
- Has it been used to alter management
- Part of a network (connectivity)
- Challenges in size, especially for migratory creatures (science)
- It is young and small (research area) +all
- Learning and applying research to address issues
 - Brings in resources that would not have come
- Differing perspectives and community involvement are brought together due to designation
- Council adds a sense of accountability
 - Utilized input – no other entity does
- Protects large piece of live bottom
- Gives you the opportunity to weigh in on any conservation issue that could potentially affect the sanctuary – large voice!

Question 3

- Yes because you will lose managers
 - Benefit in knowing something is being protected
- Prevention is more effective and cheaper – sanctuary designation allows for this
- Lose baselines and connection and the long term ability to do science – removes/prevents history
- Lose the ability to communicate this type of habitat
 - Gives it a known place
 - Gives it weight
- Some don't go because it is a sanctuary (fishermen)
- Scared they will violate regulations they didn't know existed
- Would rather go to a similar habitat elsewhere
- Some may be violators anyway and would rather get lesser violations elsewhere

Question 4

- How much to be determined
- Yes

GROUP 2

Question 1

- People think it's been closed too long
- Has affected conservation positively but public opinion is mixed
- GRNMS is "forced conservation" may have impacted "Voluntary" conservation to a small degree via education
- Knowledge gained through research at GRNMS could impact conservation in other ocean environments
- It's challenging – "out of sight, out of mind"
- Behavioral changes are slow
- Need to understand the reason for regulations
- Education: personal value drives understanding
- There's still a lot of work to be done

Question 2

- Yes: "sanctuary" means "off limits" which results in decreased visits. Also signifies "sacred" which can improve behavior
- Yes: more \$ and other resources deployed due to designation
- Yes: value of scientific research, but harder to answer on a non-scientific/public perspective
- Present as a benefit to fishing – "a breeding ground" – can help explain regulations
- Perception (pre-designation) that access and use would be negatively impacted

Question 3

- Would be a detriment to the area
- Increase traffic and use
- People would not take care of it on their own
- Designation may make GRNMS seem different
- Yes, would lose funding, research opportunities, etc.

Question 4

- General public still pictures "FL keys-type" underwater landscape when they hear "Reef"
- Expand access to increase visits (dive moorings) or wait until visits increase to install moorings?
- Knowledge gained over the history of GRNMS provides opportunity to educate

GROUP 3 – Tim Henkel, Suzanne VanParreren, Pat Geer, Peter Auster, one more?

Question 1

- Involvement in community events
- Advisory council has large conservation impact
- Sanctuaries have an indirect impact on conservation
- Outreach and education through activities raise awareness
- Social sciences
- Helping us understand
- People's values
- Provides a window
- Images relay the vulnerability (Go Greg!)
- Intrinsic value
- Balance between recreation and conservation

Question 2

- Minimizing the impact on the resources
- All species have a value – interconnected
- More evidence needed on benefits to resources
- More attention on previous threats and why it was designated
- Current threats need to be understood
- Contrast of inside/outside the sanctuary
- Regulations have helped keep it pristine
- Resources would go away if it was not designated
- Oasis in the ocean

Question 3

- Anglers would be happy to see it go away
- Anglers find it worth it to travel out to the site
- "Right to fish" slowly changing
- Anglers want first opportunity
- No one to tell the story
- ROI very high
- No central organizing unit if GRNMS did not exist
- Experience for research students
- Huge impact for partner organizations

Question 4

- Fisheries studies say yes
- Depends on the audience
- Not to general public
- Hard to explain diversity
- What is in it for me?
- Commerce and medicine – humanity
- We need more ecosystem knowledge so it's valuable to protect (science)
- Endangered species act – important functions?
- Focus on more education with Gray's Reef as an example