



**Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary
Advisory Council Meeting**

May 20, 2014

10 Ocean Science Circle
Skidaway Island, Georgia

Advisory Council Members Present

Rick DeVictor, NOAA Fisheries SE Region (Chair): via conference call

Michael Denmark, Sport Fishing (Vice-Chair)

Anna George, Conservation (Secretary): via conference call

Peter Auster, Living Resources Research: via conference call

William Cliett, Citizen-at-large

Mary Conley, Conservation

Pat Geer, GA DNR CRD: via conference call

Chuck Hopkinson, Sea Grant: via conference call

Emily Kroutil, K-12 Education

Christine Laporte, Citizen-at-large: via conference call

Doug Lewis, GA DNR LE

Jene Nissen, US Navy: via conference call

Scott Noakes, Non-living Resources Research

Randy Rudd, Sport Diving

Al Samuels, NOAA OLE

Members Absent

Tim Goodale, University Education

Warren Hupman, Charter/Commercial Fishing

Suzanne VanParreren, Sapelo Island NERR

LT Mike Mastrianni, USCG SRFTC

ONMS and Gray's Reef Staff Present

Sarah Fangman, Acting Deputy Superintendent & Research Coordinator/SEGoM
Region Program Coordinator

Jody Patterson, Administrative Assistant & Volunteer Coordinator

Amy Rath, Outreach and Communications Coordinator

George Sedberry, Acting Superintendent & ONMS SEGoM Region Science Coordinator

Becky Shortland, Resource Protection Coordinator

Cathy Sakas, ONMS Maritime Heritage Program

Public Present

Cate Cigeure, USCG Sector Charleston
Clark Alexander, Skidaway Institute of Oceanography
Jason Patlis, NMS Foundation: via conference call
Tom Wright, Savannah Maritime Association

Welcome and Introductions

Council Chairman Rick DeVictor called the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) Advisory Council meeting to order. He welcomed members present and those joining via conference call, GRNMS and Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) staff, and the public in attendance. Introductions were made and the agenda reviewed with no changes.

Council Business

Meeting summary – The meeting summary from the February 2014 council meeting was forwarded to the members for review prior to the meeting. A motion was made, seconded and passed to approve the summary.

Membership - Applications are being accepted for a citizen-at-large representative on the Sanctuary Advisory Council through June 30, 2014.

National SAC Summit - The annual Sanctuary Advisory Council Summit meeting is scheduled to take place in Galveston, TX on June 2-4, 2014 with GRNMS SAC Chairman Rick DeVictor attending. He will provide an overview to the council at the next quarterly meeting, anticipated for late summer or fall. A Doodle poll with dates and location options will be forwarded to council members for input.

GRNMS Soundscape – The topic of noise and natural sound in GRNMS was discussed during the February SAC meeting. The discussion led to the recommendation for development of a letter from the Council to ONMS Director Dan Basta. The letter asks that ONMS investigate the feasibility of implementing a program to characterize and monitor natural and anthropogenic sound in GRNMS. The letter has been drafted and further developed by email communication and is ready for final review and approval. Discussion followed on current acoustic activities.

Scott Noakes placed a hydrophone in the Sanctuary for a four-day recording and hopes to deploy another for a 30-day period. Peter Auster referenced the National Park Service study classifying variations in anthropogenic sound verses natural which he suggests could be ground floor work for a GRNMS study. Jene Nissen noted that the Navy does a lot of this work and asked if there was a species dependent plan for the frequency ranges that the hydrophones will record. Nissen also stated that the collection is easy but the analysis is time-consuming and expensive.

George Sedberry replied that Sanctuaries are ideal sites for collecting this data and that GRNMS can provide the vessel support and data analysis. Peter Auster commented that he is working with Stellwagen Bank NMS to record all noises for later analysis. Chuck Hopkinson expressed concern over the experimental design of the study and asked what

are the natural noises of the South Atlantic Bight and where does the Sanctuary fit in? George Sedberry replied that the purpose is to record all sounds in GRNMS, using the site as a model, and ground truth with other data sources.

Bill Cliett offered that it could be possible to differentiate between types and speeds of vessels as a means of observing vessel traffic. Mary Conley offered that the point needs to be made that the Sanctuary would be a part of a larger network measuring a suite of sounds at various sites and we see this as an opportunity for baseline collection of a broader area of soundscapes to be considered in a comprehensive plan regarding sound and ocean noise pollution.

A motion was made to approve the recommendation letter with some modifications and subsequent review by council. The motion was seconded and approved.

Law Enforcement Working Group Report

Reporting for LT Mike Mastrianni, Cate Cigeure noted that five Coast Guard cutters made a pass through the Sanctuary for a total of 11 hours of patrols with no vessels observed.

NOAA Office of Law Enforcement's (OLE) Al Samuels noted that he is now back in the field after serving as acting supervisor for the past four months. He will be attending Turtle Excluder Device (TED) training with Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) for shrimp season enforcement of TED regulations. He added that the national NOAA OLE Director is retiring and the position may take a year to fill. Of additional interest, Samuels offered that the Supreme Court will hear a fish case relating to intentional grouper dumping where a tangible object (grouper) was destroyed and charges filed for impeding a federal investigation.

Doug Lewis reported for the GA DNR Law Enforcement Division that they have made 13 trips out to GRNMS with 11 boats boarded and no violations. There were no vessels observed during evening or early morning patrols. Next year's Joint Enforcement Agreement with NOAA has been approved for a contracted 68 vessel hours. Sarah Fangman reported that a fishing rod was found recently hooked in the reef within the Research Area. It was recovered by divers.

Education and Outreach Working Group Report

Amy Rath gave an update on progress toward establishing an education and outreach working group of the advisory council. Staff have been working with an ONMS process expert, Anne Walton from the International Program, to develop a plan to move forward toward evaluating GRNMS education and outreach programming. The working group is meant to assist that evaluation. A workshop with staff and a small group of partners (including some advisory council members) is planned for August. The purpose of the workshop is to develop a framework, including criteria and standards, for both evaluating existing education and outreach programs and their relevance to the mission and management objectives of GRNMS; and to determine the types of new education and outreach programs (gaps) that are most suitable for meeting the established mission and management objectives.

Gray's Reef CO₂ Monitoring Program

Scott Noakes has been measuring pCO₂ in the water and CO₂ in the air at GRNMS since 2006. Updated results of the monitoring were briefly presented at the February 2014 meeting. Questions arose concerning possible land-based water quality influences and effects on specific organisms.

Noakes gave a brief overview of the monitoring results, which reflect a drop in pH of .23. In response to a question about what will be affected as pCO₂ levels in the water go up and the pH level goes down, Noakes responded that a drop of .23 in pH would wipe out many hard coral species found in the Florida Keys. Regarding effects on GRNMS species, Noakes suggested that is what the sanctuary now needs to investigate. George Sedberry mentioned that he has found benthic respiration data from GRNMS which may show a seasonal change resulting in the ocean acting as a CO₂ source during summer months.

Bill Cliett questioned if the water quality is deteriorating naturally or from anthropogenic causes. Noakes replied that the water quality is stable, it's the level of CO₂ changing. He added that locally the water quality is okay, the bigger problem is increasing CO₂ resulting in decreasing pH levels. While there is some correlation to the slight increase in temperatures over the last seven years, he noted that temperatures add to the issue but do not equate to the increasing CO₂ and decreasing pH levels.

Superintendent's Report

George Sedberry provided a personnel update pertaining to the position of GRNMS Superintendent. The opening was posted on USAJOBS and federal guidelines require that positions be filled within 80 days. The search committee is comprised of GRNMS SAC Chairman Rick DeVictor, Resource Protection Coordinator Becky Shortland, Thunder Bay NMS Superintendent Jeff Gray, ONMS Southeast Regional Director Billy Causey, and ONMS Director Dan Basta.

Sarah Fangman reported that the NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster* research cruise was completed earlier this year, delaying other annually scheduled research projects until the summer field season. Research Area projects include Peter Auster's fish behavior studies, Roldan Munoz' fish count assessment and Danny Gleason's invertebrate studies. These projects will be carried out via site small boat operations with continued lionfish removal efforts, as needed.

Gray's Reef Friends Group, National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Chapter

National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF) President & CEO Jason Patlis reported on the development of a GRNMS chapter (friends group). The purpose of the chapter would be to further engage the community and to raise funding in support of site programming and mission objectives. Cathy Sakas, former Education Coordinator for GRNMS, has been hired by the Foundation to spearhead this effort. Sakas is developing the business model with Foundation board approval for the chapter expected this fall.

Public Comment

Regarding the discussion of sound in the Sanctuary, Clark Alexander asked how we would know the sound came from inside the Sanctuary and what we would we do with that data. Sedberry reiterated that the study is to collect baseline data of sound in the Sanctuary.

Tom Wright also provided comment pertaining to the sound monitoring, suggesting that the sanctuary be certain the study is consistent and in line with top level efforts.

Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn at 3:30PM, seconded and approved.