



GRAY'S REEF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING – NOVEMBER 9, 2015 – VIA WEBINAR

Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) Attendees

Rick DeVictor, Chair
Anna George, Secretary
Scott Noakes
Emily Kroutil
Jene Nissen
Suzanne VanParreren
Mary Conley
Warren Hupman
Pat Geer
Capt. Bob Lynn
Mark Carson
Al Samuels
Mike Mastrianni
Susan White
Tim Henkel
Peter Auster

SAC Members Absent

Michael Denmark, Vice-chair
Mark Padgett
Mona Behl

Dustin Rhyan

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

Staff

Sarah Fangman
Alison Scott
Jody Patterson
Becky Shortland
Justyna Nicinska
Michelle Riley
George Sedberry
Laurie McLaughlin

GRNMS Foundation

Chris Hines

Public in attendance

Tom Wright
Tim Tarver

Advisory Council Business

Council Chairman Rick DeVictor called the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) Advisory Council meeting to order. He welcomed members, staff and public in attendance. Participation was reviewed through the webinar lists. There was not a quorum of voting members, so the August council meeting summary was not officially approved although no changes were suggested.

Membership subcommittee report

Becky Shortland reported for subcommittee chair Mona Behl who was unable to make the webinar at the last minute. The question of establishing new seats, including alternates, had been raised and discussed at the August meeting. A subcommittee to further explore options was created. The subcommittee met and developed recommendations for the council to consider (see attached). After some discussion it was decided that the staff would take a comprehensive look at the recommendations, consider terms of reference for working groups, and bring that information back to the next meeting.

BOEM Environmental Studies Plan letter – Mary Conley and Peter Auster

Mary Conley reminded members how the council came to recommend and draft a letter supporting environmental studies that link with BOEM and sanctuary needs. Mary gave a short review of the draft letter's content. After brief discussion it was decided that Becky Shortland should forward the letter to members who can edit through email communications. The objective is to complete and approve the letter by November 20, which is a deadline for comments on BOEM's environmental studies program.

Council working groups:

Ecological Connectivity Working Group – Peter Auster reported that a panel of nine researchers from various disciplines has been convened and is beginning to gather information on source areas that sustain or enhance biodiversity in GRNMS. Their task is to gather and synthesize relevant information. The proposed structure of the end report and timeline will be sent to council members for their information.

Law Enforcement Working Group – Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Law Enforcement Division's Sgt. Mark Carson reported that he and U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Sector Charleston have been discussing joint boarding operations and coordinated patrols. NOAA Office of Law Enforcement Officer Kevin Mitchell asked to be included in those operations. Mark continued with the patrol report. Sarah Fangman noted that the September working group meeting was productive and informative. USCG's Mike Mastrianni agreed that it was a good meeting and important to do it in person.

Next meeting – Becky Shortland suggested the next meeting could be in person in conjunction with the annual Science Advisory Working Group's meeting. She will follow up with a poll to select a date around February 2016.

Council Members' Report

U.S. Navy Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing – Jene Nissen reported that the Notice of Intent to develop an environmental impact statement for the next phase of Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing will be published soon. Scoping comments are due in January. Gray's Reef, Florida Keys and Flower Garden Banks national marine sanctuaries are in the study area. For more information go to: <http://aftteis.com/>

Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute – Anna George announced that a new, riverfront facility will be built to house the Institute and serve as the only freshwater science center in the Southeast.

NOAA Fisheries update – Rick DeVictor reported that the controversial amendment considering use of black sea bass pots during months of endangered North Atlantic right whale migration has been approved with several points for mitigation. Regulations may also be increased for harvest of black sea bass in the future since quotas have not been met and the species is rebounding.

GRNMS information signs at boat ramps – Pat Geer helped sanctuary and GRNMS Foundation staff to determine appropriate locations for signs. GRNMS received a small grant to put up information signs about the sanctuary.

GRNMS Strategic Communications Plan

Superintendent Sarah Fangman introduced the session and gave members a few minutes to review the section on the recreational fishing audience, and then she asked for comments. Discussion followed that included suggestions to make the language of the strategy more positive and better frame the characterization and goals of the strategy. NOAA Fisheries Service personnel also reviewed the strategy and thought was accurate. There was no comment on the communications objective. It was also pointed out that GRNMS needs more effort to get information on regulations to users.

The Nature Conservancy's ocean mapping project results

Mary Conley gave an overview of The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) extensive mapping projects. The South Atlantic Bight Marine Assessment looks at migratory animals such as dolphins, whales and sea turtles, as well as important coastal habitats. This large project, covering over half of the Atlantic seaboard from the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay to the Florida Keys, required significant partner collaboration. For more information, see: <https://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationByGeography/NorthAmerica/UnitedStates/edc/reportsdata/marine/sabma/Pages/default.aspx>

Another part of TNC's South Atlantic regional ocean planning strategy, Bob Crimian is also heading up an effort to map human uses along the Georgia coast beginning with recreational uses. Both efforts will help inform coastal communities about where our natural resources are and who is using them. There is a great deal of interest in the projects that can apply to GRNMS.

Sanctuary and Foundation Report

Sarah Fangman spoke about a project that the site hopes to have accomplished in the next year to complete a photomosaic of GRNMS.

Gray's Reef NMS Foundation Director Chris Hines and Sarah Fangman reported on the very successful "A Fishy Affair" held on September 24 to benefit the foundation. They also highlighted the upcoming (January 29-30, 2016) Gray's Reef Ocean Film Festival.

Becky Shortland noted that new hydrophones may be placed in the sanctuary in early December for approximately a month to test new equipment, some of which is loaned from the U.S. Navy thanks to Jene Nissen.

Sarah Fangman solicited feedback on the webinar format. Overall, comments suggested that while webinars are not ideal for several reasons, they should continue as a SAC meeting option. Shorter and more frequent webinars might be considered.

Public Comment

Tom Wright noted that he will relay information about TNC's mapping projects to the Right Whale Recovery Southeast Implementation Team.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM.

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council – Membership Subcommittee Conference Call – October 1, 2015

Notes:

The subcommittee agreed to recommend moving forward with two ways in which volunteers can be engaged:

- Expand use of working groups (6-10 member limits) of the sanctuary advisory council (SAC). The establishment of three working groups may be considered to address SAC needs: conservation, recreational fishing and education/outreach.
- Add new primary seats to the SAC to capture specific audiences and expertise (e.g., informal education, public relations; although the question was raised whether public relations needs are best addressed by a volunteer or intern working with staff directly).

There was no support for:

- Adding additional primary seats to existing advisory council seats.
- Adding alternate seats for each non-governmental primary seat.

Questions asked to focus discussion included:

- Is the SAC missing input from specific groups/audiences? What are the specific needs of the SAC for working groups?
- How do you define a “volunteer” for discussion of this issue? Are they a SAC applicant, an expert that serves on a working group, a member of the public who volunteers their time to aid the sanctuary, or all three?

Consensus:

- Workgroups have worked well in the past to bring experts together to accomplish specific goals and tasks and to report the results to SAC.
- To utilize people who are not chosen for the SAC, the development of specific working groups may be preferable over the addition of new primary seats (assuming workgroup goals and tasks are well-defined).
- Prior to establishment of these suggested working groups, Gray's Reef staff and the SAC should define terms of reference for each working group. The subcommittee noted that workgroups should not be formed to solely engage an expert that was not selected to become a SAC member; rather, workgroups should be formed to accomplish specific goals and tasks.
- Follow-up calls by staff or SAC members to non-selected applicants may be a useful tool to encourage the applicant to remain involved with Gray's Reef. Future involvement may include future working group member if requested, attending meetings and events, etc.
- Consider other volunteer tasks (e.g., Speaker Corps) for non-selected applicants.
- Gain a better understanding of the talents, interests, and expertise of all Gray's Reef volunteers (including event, diving, and administrative volunteers) to be better able to apply them to Gray's Reef's needs.
- There seemed to be particular emphasis and discussion about creating a recreational fishing, as well as a conservation, working group and agreement that more engagement is needed. For the recreational fishing workgroup, local individuals should be considered. National individuals/organizations might also be considered to address larger issues that are complementary to what the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) is undertaking.