



**Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary  
Advisory Council Meeting  
November 21, 2014**  
Via webinar

**Advisory Council Members Present**

Rick DeVictor, NOAA Fisheries SE Region (Chair)  
Michael Denmark, Sport Fishing (Vice-Chair)  
Peter Auster, Living Resources Research  
Mark Carson, GA DNR LE  
Mary Conley, Conservation  
Pat Geer, GA DNR CRD  
Tim Goodale, University Education  
Chuck Hopkinson, Sea Grant  
Warren Hupman, Charter/Commercial Fishing  
Emily Kroutil, K-12 Education  
Christine Laporte, Citizen-at-large  
Scott Noakes, Non-living Resources Research

**Members Absent**

Anna George, Conservation (Secretary)  
Michael Mastrianni, USCG SERFTC  
Jene Nissen, US Navy  
Randy Rudd, Sport Diving  
Al Samuels, NOAA OLE  
Suzanne VanParreren, Sapelo Island NERR

**NOAA and Gray's Reef Staff Present**

Sarah Fangman, GRNMS Superintendent  
Kathleen Jamison, Acting Deputy Superintendent/NOAA Coast Survey  
Jody Patterson, Administrative Assistant & Volunteer Coordinator  
Amy Rath, Outreach & Communications Coordinator  
George Sedberry, ONMS SEGoM Region Science Coordinator  
Becky Shortland, Resource Protection Coordinator  
Cathy Sakas, ONMS Maritime Heritage Program/National Marine Sanctuary

Foundation  
Gonzalo Cid, ONMS  
Rebecca Holyoke, ONMS  
Karen Raine, NOAA GCES

### **Public Present**

Dodie Gay Eberlein  
Chris Hines, Gray's Reef NMS Foundation  
Richard LaPalme, Gray's Reef volunteer  
Barbara Phillips, Gray's Reef volunteer  
Tom Wright

### **Welcome and Introductions**

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 to the new age of virtual meetings and thanked GRNMS staff for their diligence in planning. GRNMS Superintendent Sarah Fangman offered that webinar meetings offer a smaller carbon footprint than face to face, and while there are the occasional technical issues, use of this technology is a green alternative to traveling. The meeting agenda was reviewed with no changes.

### **Council Business**

Meeting summaries from the August 2014 council meeting were forwarded to the members for review. A motion was made to approve the summary without revision. The motion was seconded and approved.

Five applications were received for consideration as citizen-at-large representatives on the Sanctuary Advisory Council; one withdrew as she accepted a position on the Gray's Reef NMS Foundation. The council's executive committee collectively favored one candidate and this application has been forwarded on to ONMS headquarters for approval. Michael Denmark had the opportunity to meet with this candidate who he described as very passionate and knowledgeable with a great background. Michael offered that this individual will make a good contribution to the council.

The council representative for Sea Grant, Dr. Chuck Hopkinson, updated that he has resigned as the Georgia Director for Sea Grant to pursue research and teaching on a full time basis. Sea Grant has assigned Susan White as the representative to serve on the GRNMS advisory council. Sarah Fangman offered that we have greatly appreciated Chuck's participation on the council and are sorry to see him go but we are happy that he is pursuing his interests. He noted that he should have more opportunities to conduct studies in the Sanctuary now and wishes best of luck to all.

### **Connectivity Working Group**

Becky Shortland noted that council discussions after the August 2014 meeting determined that the council wished to establish an ecological connectivity working

group to explore connectivity to areas outside of the Sanctuary boundaries. As this discussion took place after the formal meeting ended, a vote is now needed. A motion was made to establish an ecological connectivity working group with Peter Auster as chair. The motion was seconded and approved.

Sarah Fangman reported that we have looked into the process for establishing this group with support of headquarters staff. GRNMS hopes to take steps to engage experts and partners who can help us learn more about our connections to other areas outside of the GRNMS boundaries.

### **Program Evaluations**

Sarah Fangman offered a presentation regarding the Sanctuary's management plan objective of program evaluation. She noted that evaluating the structure of a program helps determine what the desired outcomes are and if we are achieving them and that evaluation analyzes how we are doing with resource, time and cost management while prioritizing our programs and documenting our performance. Sarah added that we have a commitment to the public, council and leadership to do what we said we were going to do, and that management of a natural resource is not meant to be trial and error or prescriptive but should be adaptive to the resources and threats. To that end, we are evaluating staff competency, programmatic and management standards.

### **Sanctuary Report**

#### **Staffing Update**

Kathleen Jamison from NOAA Coast Survey accepted a four month rotational leadership detail with GRNMS and is acting as the Deputy Superintendent. Kathleen introduced herself and offered that her primary purpose here is on evaluation of staffing structure as well as programs. She has been working with staff to develop performance plans that align with position descriptions and linking them to the desired outcomes of the objectives in the Sanctuary's management plan. Kathleen noted that program evaluations have already begun with staff taking a deep dive into the education and outreach programs and that this process should be completed by early 2015 which will help drive Sanctuary messages. Kathleen has scheduled a training workshop for process guidance to staff and partners for future evaluations taught by NOAA Coastal Services Center staff.

Peter Auster offered that he is glad to see this process moving forward. He also noted that the Sanctuary has been identifying key messages relating to a sense of pride for the state of Georgia and that as a *national* marine sanctuary we need to expand that geographic reference. GRNMS is a Biosphere Reserve and he suggested that our messages need to relate global and national issues, as well as local.

As the chair for the Science Advisory Group, Peter also noted that there is a need to address linking research to identified gaps and fill needs in the condition report. Sarah Fangman agreed that the evaluation process should address linking research to identified gaps and needs in the condition report. She said that we are dependent on the SAC to help make sure we capture all of these issues.

Michael Denmark offered that evaluation is a lot of work but it provides focus and accountability, and that he thinks this is a best practice and hopes we share the process with other sanctuaries. Sarah offered her thanks to Kathleen for jumping in to the team and immediately offering such meaningful and effective contributions.

### **Volunteer Speaker Corp**

As a mechanism for generating awareness of and support for GRNMS, Jody Patterson has been working with staff to develop a GRNMS 101 presentation. A small group of volunteers have been identified as members of a budding Speaker Corp who will deliver these Sanctuary messages, by request, to civic and education groups. Jody offered that the presentation will be made available to the SAC for their reference and delivery as well. She noted that it is designed to be robust but generic for multiple audiences, and that the presentation will be a living document that can be outfitted with additional slides and details relevant to specific interests. She added that once finalized, the Speaker Corp volunteers will be oriented with the materials and will be asked to incorporate interpretive elements to further engage their audience.

Sarah Fangman commented that this has great potential and that we need to think broader than the Savannah area for delivery of this information. Mary Conley noted that this is a great idea and it would be wonderful if staff would share this with the council. Scott Noakes mentioned that not only can the council present about the Sanctuary but that Sanctuary marine operations staff Todd Recicar and Jared Halonen came up to UGA in Athens to speak to his scientific diving class.

### **Call to Action**

Becky Shortland updated that all Sanctuary sites and councils have offered their agreement and support for the MPA Call to Action letter, except the Monitor who will consider it later this year. Rebecca Holyoke with the ONMS addressed the initiative and noted that headquarters staff have been discussing what the priorities are for the program as it pertains to that document, and that more updates will be forthcoming early next year.

### **Sanctuary Soundscapes**

The GRNMS SAC took action in the form of a letter to headquarters requesting a program-wide initiative to monitor the soundscapes of Sanctuaries and the funding to support the technology used to record it. Becky Shortland added that a national working group has been established to represent local, regional and system-wide interests, needs, and opportunities in discussions, planning and decisions regarding sound/noise in national marine sanctuaries. She also reported that noise reference stations have been deployed in Channel Islands, Olympic Coast and Stellwagen NMS. A request for funding to establish a noise reference station in GRNMS, based in part on the letter from the council, is pending approval. She also noted that outreach materials are being considered at for this topic.

Scott Noakes has been collecting ocean acidification data for a number of years in the Sanctuary and has also deployed a hydrophone for a collection of sounds, which are now available on the website. He added that he plans to retrieve the hydrophone in early

December which should result in additional sound files for the website and noted that he would like a collection of seasonal sounds but that there is a mountain of data to wade to through. Sarah Fangman thanked him for his efforts and noted that this will add to the portfolio of Gray's Reef.

### **Ocean Film Festival**

Amy Rath reported that the 2015 Gray's Reef Ocean Film Festival will run January 16-17 with a theme of connectivity and will include an emerging filmmaker competition. She added that we will kick-off the GRNMS Foundation with a launch gala on January 15th and that the festival itself will be a fundraiser for the Foundation, and so for the first time we will charge an admission fee for tickets to the film festival. She noted that we hope to have a member of James Cameron's expedition team to present the Deep Sea Challenge premiere along with a shark researcher for the Saturday evening Q&A session, and that the festival will wrap with a cocktail reception on stage at the Lucas Theater. Amy asked that the council share social media and email posts about the festival to expand awareness of the event, and that we hope to see everyone at the festival.

Michael Denmark asked if this could be a traveling festival for additional exposure. Amy noted that is a great idea and we would like to see that happen in the future.

### **GRNMS Foundation**

Cathy Sakas, retired education coordinator for GRNMS, updated that Gray's Reef now has a chapter of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. Cathy is the Chair for the Board of this nonprofit that will be locally managed by Chris Hines as President and CEO along with a board of well-connected local ocean advocates. She offered that the Foundation will be a voice for the Sanctuary as well as a fundraiser for GRNMS programs, noting that a suite of activities and initiatives are planned for the near future with the Ocean Film Festival as the first fundraising endeavor. Chris Hines invited the council to visit their website ([graysreefnmsf.org](http://graysreefnmsf.org)) and to share the news!

Sarah Fangman offered that this is another initiative that has been long desired and we are thrilled to see it come to fruition under the leadership of Cathy and Chris.

### **Sanctuary Nominations**

George Sedberry reported on one Sanctuary nomination received from the southeast region. He noted that a group of interested citizens in North Florida nominated an area for Sanctuary consideration but that the nomination was declined. More information on that nomination can be found at <http://www.nominate.noaa.gov/nominations/>. George offered that he is communicating with the interested Northeast Florida community and hopes there will be a re-nomination, perhaps with redefined boundaries and more support.

In response to council member questions, George provided background information on the designation process and the new community-driven process adding that these nominations aren't meant to be written by experts but by citizens that value marine areas and recognize threats to them. George noted that the nomination process is the first step in beginning the discussion and is not a guarantee of designation.

George added that the website lists all nominations and the Sanctuary response to those nominations for public viewing.

### **Law Enforcement Working Group Report**

Mark Carson updated for Georgia DNR Law Enforcement that five trips have been made out to GRNMS in the past two months for a total of 31 hours on patrol. He added that no vessels were present in the Sanctuary during those patrols.

### **Council Members Report**

Sarah Fangman reported for Anna George who was unable to be on the webinar that Tennessee Aquarium submitted a Hollings grant proposal to update and expand exhibitry in the aquarium. Messages would be broadened beyond Flower Garden Banks NMS to include GRNMS and the sanctuary system as a whole.

Sarah also reported for Randy Rudd who could not be on the webinar that he contacted a new dive shop and charter in St. Mary's, Georgia, that is considering running trips to GRNMS. She added that Randy has offered to go out with the charter early next spring to lead interpretive tours and provide information on best practices while diving in the Sanctuary.

Emily Kroutil offered that she facilitated a GRNMS 101 presentation to the Kennel Club in Savannah which Chris Hines conducted. Jody Patterson offered a few words about this new presentation earlier and added that Chris has been the guinea pig for delivering it, providing excellent feedback for improving the content.

### **Next Advisory Council Meeting**

Becky Shortland noted that planning for the next council meeting is underway. The meeting in February is scheduled to coincide with the annual Science Advisory Group meeting and to be in-person instead of a webinar.

Sarah asked for feedback on the webinar meeting. Council members responded that they thought the webinar went very well noting travel for meetings can be difficult for some. Members reiterated that they are very appreciative of staff for setting this up and that discussion was effective, although some content is better for face-to-face meetings. This type of abbreviated, small group meeting, however, is effective.

### **Public Comment**

No comments were received.

### **Adjourn**

A motion was made to adjourn at 11:30AM. The motion was seconded and approved.