



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

**December 10, 2013**

Gray's Reef NMS Administrative Office  
10 Ocean Science Circle  
Savannah, Georgia

**Advisory Council Members Present**

Danny Gleason, Living Resources Research (Chair)  
Michael Denmark, Sport Fishing  
Emily Kroutil, K-12 Education  
Randy Rudd, Sport Diving  
Scott Noakes, Non-living Resources Research  
Al Samuels, NOAA OLE  
William Cliett, Citizen-at-large

**Present via Conference Call**

Rick DeVictor, NOAA Fisheries SE Region (Vice-Chair)  
Anna George, Conservation (Secretary)  
Suzanne VanParreren, Sapelo Island NERR  
Tim Goodale, University Education  
Jene Nissen, U.S. Navy  
Pat Geer, GA DNR CRD  
Mary Conley, Conservation  
Warren Hupman, Charter/Commercial Fishing

**Members Absent**

Chuck Hopkinson, Sea Grant  
LT Mike Mastrianni, USCG SRFTC  
Doug Lewis, GA DNR LE  
Christine Laporte, Citizen-at-large

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

Becky Shortland, Resource Protection Coordinator  
Jody Patterson, Administrative Assistant  
LTJG Jared Halonen, Vessel Operations Coordinator  
George Sedberry, Acting Superintendent & ONMS SEGoM Region Science Coordinator

Sarah Fangman, Acting Deputy Superintendent/Acting Research Coordinator & ONMS SEGoM  
Region Program Coordinator  
Amy Rath, Outreach and Communications Coordinator  
Todd Recicar, Marine Operations Coordinator  
Karen Raine, NOAA GC for Enforcement (webinar/conference call)

### **Public Present**

Tom Wright  
Dottie Mayes

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Council Chairman Danny Gleason called the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) Advisory Council meeting to order welcoming members present and those joining via conference call, sanctuary staff and the public in attendance. Introductions were made and the agenda reviewed with no changes.

### **Council Business**

Meeting summaries from the June and July council meetings were forwarded to the members for review. Danny Gleason had minor edits to the June minutes. A motion was made to approve the summaries, with edits. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Council Chair Danny Gleason's term as representative for living resources research is over as of this meeting. The staff of GRNMS and the council thanked him for his many years of service. The vacant seat was advertised with an application deadline of December 31. Staff requested that the council help to spread the word among their colleagues and networks. An election of officers was then in order to select a council chair and Danny Gleason nominated current Vice-Chair Rick DeVictor. The motion was seconded and passed. The council then nominated Michael Denmark as Vice-Chair. The motion was seconded and passed.

The site hopes to have a budget to support travel reimbursements and hold a face-to-face meeting next quarter. In preparation for travel reimbursements, council members were asked to apply as a University of Georgia vendor. Council Coordinator Becky Shortland will send that link to members by email. The rest of 2014 advisory council meetings will likely have to utilize conference calling and webinar for those who cannot travel without reimbursement. The annual meeting of the Science Advisory Group, a working group of the Sanctuary Advisory Council, is planned for February 26, 2014. Staff would like to arrange the next council meeting to coincide with the Science Advisory Group's meeting to save on travel and logistic costs.

The council was asked if GRNMS staff should facilitate public accessibility for future council meetings' webinar presentations and conference calls. It was noted that the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) offers public webinars effectively as does PADI with archived webinars available as well. Google Hangouts was noted as an online video chat option. Staff will check with the SAFMC on webinar participation numbers and inquire about effectiveness. Staff will also continue to research available options.

### **U.S. Navy Atlantic Fleet Training & Testing (AFTT)**

The AFTT 2014-2019 program has been finalized. This presentation by Jene Nissen, Navy Representative, provided an overview of Navy AFTT activities in the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico with an emphasis on activities in the vicinity of GRNMS. Becky Shortland noted that due to the complexity of the issues, future council meetings can provide more information and ongoing dialogue.

Danny Gleason expressed concerns relating to studies about sonar impacts to invertebrate larva settlement. Anna George inquired about permanent threshold shifts and if any consideration of ship noise after being on location for days or weeks at a time? Jene Nissen responded that ship noise was looked at in the Navy Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and that the Navy fleet is quieter than other shipping industry vessels, and that some exercises last 2-3 weeks but the vessels do not stay stationary. Nissen also stated that sea turtles and marine mammals are impacted by sonar activities at varying levels but that no beaked whale strandings have ever occurred from Navy activities. Animals react temporarily during training events and then resume their activities. Ship strikes have occurred but mitigation is in place.

Anna George asked if there is a maximum number of acceptable losses. Nissen stated that they have never reached a maximum loss. Scott Noakes asked if you reach your take limit, will the ships cease and desist activities? Nissen stated that an emergency contingency would transpire to make that determination. Anna George asked if there is any way to tell if they impact 2000 or 2 million individuals? Nissen stated that modeling is based on sonar bits used, and as long as they are under the sonar bits allowed by NMFS then modeling suggests that they will be under the take limit. The ONMS and NMFS dialog with Navy has been very positive and continued discussions are planned to explain the ONMS consultation letter under provisions by the NMSA.

### **GRNMS draft management plan and proposed rule**

The Gray's Reef NMS draft management plan includes a proposed rule to allow weighted markers for diving and fishing in the sanctuary. The proposed rule, draft management plan and draft environmental assessment (EA) were published in the *Federal Register* on December 10, and opened to public comment. The 60-day comment period ends on February 10, 2014.

Becky Shortland gave a brief overview of the proposed rule that adds an exemption to allow the use of weighted marker buoys in the sanctuary and clarifies the anchoring prohibition to include "attempting to anchor". GRNMS staff plan to produce outreach material about this on website, listserv, social media, etc. and the council was asked to share this information with their constituencies.

### **Education & Outreach Assessment Working Group Report**

The council established a working group in February 2013 to assess GRNMS outreach and education programming to coincide with the draft management plan. Tim Goodale was asked to chair the working group. Some discussion between Tim, Emily Kroutil and staff has occurred. This presentation is meant to help initiate this task with a presentation from staff on the purpose of the assessment and existing programs. Council discussion is encouraged along with suggestions for working group members.

GRNMS Outreach and Communications Coordinator Amy Rath presented on current education and outreach initiatives and a strategic model for future planning. Staff would like assistance developing an assessment of these initiatives to determine effectiveness and suggest new initiatives to further awareness and support of the sanctuary.

A list of potential working group candidates was developed during discussions with Tim and Emily. Suzanne VanParreren asked about the inclusion of a representative from the Georgia Coastal Education Group, which includes federal and state resource management agencies on the Georgia coast. Oatland Island Wildlife Center was also recommended. Michael Denmark suggested his wife who works in educational publishing. Danny Gleason suggested increasing exposure through the college crowd, which is not represented on the working group list.

George Sedberry asked if development of curriculum materials is something that GRNMS should be doing? What do we want to our education and outreach program to accomplish, who are the audiences, what vehicle can we use to best leverage funding? Anna George asked if we target specific ages and develop program for each. Suzanne VanParreren suggests an assessment of who is already doing what in the area. All good suggestions that the Education and Outreach Assessment working group needs to follow up with along with materials already provided.

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

Al Samuels reporting for NOAA Office of Law Enforcement states that applications have closed for Deputy Director. An unusual mortality event has resulted in 800 dolphin dead washed up along the Atlantic seaboard from morbilivirus. The OLE has been assisting in stranding and necropsies.

Karen Raine, NOAA GC, reports that three enforcement attorneys have been lost from the program but that a new protected resource attorney has come on board that will work with GRNMS and the SE region.

#### **Superintendent's Report**

Acting Superintendent George Sedberry reports that NOAA eliminated the sunset clause from the ship strike rule protecting North Atlantic right whales in the seasonal management areas. Loggerhead critical habitat is under review with the ONMS commenting on suggested habitat including sargassum. Suggested extensive coastal and offshore habitats along east coast and GOM, migration routes, and foraging habitat.

Capt. Todd Recicar presented a Marine Operations update and introduced NOAA Corp officer LTJG Jared Halonen who will assume vessel and dive operation coordination duties at Gray's Reef for the next three years. The site is struggling with r/v Joe Ferguson repairs anticipated at \$10,000 - \$15,000. The smaller r/v Sam Gray is less capable but sturdy and also has repair issues, including a corrosion hole. A budget of \$60,000 is expected for vessel operations and repairs but half of that is fuel cost, includes dive equip, tank fills, repairs and scheduled maintenance. It will be difficult to run both boats and not run out of money by mid field season. There is high demand with new research opportunities and Nancy Foster support. Average days at sea are around 50. Vessel ops are critical to research and management plan directives but it

might be mid-January before one boat operable. Anticipated FY14 budget is 95% of last year's budget.

New sanctuary site evaluation criteria are being reviewed by NOAA HQ.

George Sedberry also updated on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council activities, which he holds a seat on, including deepwater MPAs proposed for grouper with public scoping expected in August. Additional public scoping for input on black sea bass pot removal relating to North Atlantic right whale protection is expected, and a seismic survey considering sound as essential habitat and impacts to fish. He will distribute summary to the council.

Personnel changes at Gray's Reef include Greg McFall assuming the NOAA Dive Program Manager position in Seattle, Washington leaving the Deputy Superintendent and Research Coordinator positions open. Sarah Fangman has accepted Acting responsibilities of these duties for Gray's Reef. George Sedberry will remain Acting Superintendent until the position is filled.

### **Public Comment**

Tom Wright offered that Tybee Island Marine Science Center is building a new facility on North Beach and GRNMS should have space there. Staff confirmed that we do have displays there and will continue to work with them as education and outreach partners.

Dottie May works for the Department of State and is participating in an executive leadership program. She will be assigned to another federal agency for two months. She spoke to Becky Shortland about an opportunity with NOAA and was invited to the council meeting. Dottie offered that she is impressed with the amount of work that this council is involved in and appreciates being invited. She states that it brings home realities of budgets concerning boats. She says there is much room for expansion in terms of public relations to inland communities. She heard about the festival on a flyer at a visitor center in South Carolina. Expand further into nation, share student films with schools and lifelong learners. She is concerned about Navy activities but applauds the open dialog. The increase of activities and impacts with sonar and explosives are concerning.

Tom states that for the past few years there have been Russian subs off our coast. Dottie states that ours are out there as well. She said she understands the importance of protected our country but we also need to protect our oceans. We have a limited number of right whales and losing one is substantial. She will continue to come to our film festivals.

Danny Gleason offered that this has been a great council and appreciates everyone's efforts. Keep doing the good work and he'll keep an eye on us.

The meeting was adjourned.