



**Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary
Advisory Council Meeting
January 11, 2012
University of Georgia
Marine Education Center and Aquarium
Savannah, Georgia**

Members Present

Clark Alexander, Non-living Resources Research (Vice-chair)
Danny Gleason, Living Resources Research (Chair)
Pat Geer, GA DNR Coastal Resources Division
Capt. Doug Lewis, GA DNR Law Enforcement
Scott Harris, University Education
Jack McGovern, NOAA Fisheries SE Region
Mary Conley, Conservation
Dorset Hurley, Sapelo Island NERR
LT Brandon Fisher, U.S. Coast Guard SRFTC

Members Absent

Wendell Harper, Charter/Commercial Fishing
Venetia Butler, K-12 Education (Secretary)
Chuck Hopkinson, Sea Grant
Tim Tarver, Sport Fishing
Kellie Parr, Sport Diving
Al Samuels – NOAA Office for Law Enforcement
Vacant - Conservation

GRNMS and ONMS Staff Present

George Sedberry, Superintendent
Greg McFall, Deputy Superintendent/Research Coordinator
Becky Shortland, Resource Protection Coordinator
Jody Patterson, Administrative/Event and Volunteer Coordinator
Gail Krueger, Outreach Coordinator
LTJG Chris Briand, Vessel Operations Coordinator
Debbie Meeks, Webmaster/IT and Finance Coordinator
Cathy Sakas, Education Coordinator
Sarah Fangman, ONMS SEGOM, Program Coordinator
Steve Gittings, ONMS National Science Coordinator

Public Present

Tom Wright
William Cliett
Bill Savage
Michael Denmark

Robin Runnels

Guest Speakers

Dr. Peter Auster
Dr. Scott Noakes

Welcome and introductions

Council Chairman Danny Gleason called the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) Advisory Council meeting to order welcoming members, staff, public and presenters. Introductions were made and the agenda was reviewed with no changes.

Science Advisory Group report – Science Advisory Group (SAG) Chairman Clark Alexander introduced the researchers that comprise the SAG and recapped meeting sessions held January 9 and 10 to discuss research completed during the 2011 *Nancy Foster* research cruise, an assessment of needs, changes in focus, and an addendum to the 2008 GRNMS Condition Report.

Condition report addendum – Steve Gittings reported that the SAG considered research completed since the 2008 Condition Report was published. It was determined that there was no need to rewrite the report at this time but an addendum is to be drafted, reviewed and finalized by this spring. The addendum will address an update of status and trends rating as well to insert a confidence rating in science determinations. The addendum is necessary at this time to prepare for GRNMS management plan review. A robust group of experts, including the SAG and sanctuary advisory council members, will be invited to review this report with a focus on new data relating to the condition of habitat, living resources and - to a lesser degree - water quality. The data appear to show some improvements in the status and trends of sanctuary resources, while there is no change in others.

Research area “time zero” data, presentations - Greg McFall facilitated an overview of partner research conducted last year aboard the NOAA R/V *Nancy Foster* to capture baseline, or time zero, data within the newly established research area of the sanctuary. A report of the following projects should be available sometime this spring or summer. Presentations included:

- Piscivore ecology – Dr. Peter Auster, Department of Marine Sciences, University of Connecticut
- Invertebrate assessments and dye tracer study – Dr. Danny Gleason, Department of Biology, Georgia Southern University
- Habitat mapping – Dr. George Sedberry, GRNMS Superintendent
- Fish censuses – Greg McFall (for Dr. Todd Kellison, NOAA Fisheries Service, SEFSC, Beaufort Lab)
- Algal surveys - Greg McFall (for Dr. Nisse Goldberg, University of Jacksonville)
- CO₂ monitoring – Dr. Scott Noakes, University of Georgia, Center for Applied Isotope Studies

Discussion during these presentations included the suggestion to think about comparing sand sites in RA to sand sites outside. The infaunal sites may not have as clear comparative

relationships as compared to the invert surveys. Analyze the relationships of density and distribution to orientation of ledges, whether they are south facing, north facing, etc.

Discussion then turned the *Nancy Foster's* availability in the future. The ship is our regional platform used annually for extended research cruises. The ship was facing possible lay-up in 2012 due to declining budgets. GRNMS, however, has been allotted up to 20 days this year after users and research partners expressed a strong need to keep the ship running. While the GRNMS *R/V Joe Ferguson* can provide a capable day boat platform for our science partners, the *Foster* provides a much more effective and efficient. What researchers can accomplish on the *Nancy Foster* in 20 days at sea would take about three times longer to accomplish on the *R/V Joe Ferguson* and the time on the *Nancy Foster* occurs at no cost to the site.

Research area research and monitoring action plan – Greg McFall continued the discussion around the research area noting the action plan for research and monitoring in 2012 is to focus on continuing what our partners started in 2011 (or before) and to collect additional data to monitor trends, particularly inside vs. outside of the research area.

Law Enforcement Working Group report – Capt. Doug Lewis reported that GA DNR hired a number of new rangers for the region. He also reported that several trips were made to GRNMS during this last quarter. The joint enforcement agreement (JEA) for FY12 is pending ONMS budget disbursement prior to contracting.

LT Brandon Fisher reported that a medium endurance USCG cutter patrolled the sanctuary last quarter finding only a couple of safety violations, however no sanctuary violations or boardings.

George Sedberry noted that NOAA should have new charts in March reflecting the designated research area and we need to be sure that there are no corner buoys incorrectly shown on print or digital renderings.

Gail Krueger reported that outreach materials have been disbursed to GA DNR and USCG law enforcement partners for their use on water and at stops they make at marinas along the coast. Gail completed a mailing of the materials to marina, charter captains, and creel surveyors to expand awareness of the new regulations. Additional materials will be distributed at 2012 fishing tournaments and captains' meetings. She also noted that GRNMS plans to repeat outreach efforts when the fishing season picks up this spring and summer.

Special presentation – A special presentation was made to Dr. Scott Harris for his service on the council and his research contributing to the knowledge about GRNMS. His term representing university education on the advisory council has expired.

Management plan revision – George Sedberry discussed how the addendum to the condition report will feed into the management plan review and revision. Staff have clearly defined the vision, goals and objectives, which will relate to strategies and activities of the management plan. He also noted that thus far in the preparation process, there do not appear to be big issues to consider. There are, however, topics we need to address (e.g., weighted marker buoys), and some technical changes in the regulations.

Conservation Working Group report – Mary Conley reported as chair of the working group. They were asked by management to look at the issue of weighted marker buoy use in GRNMS and assess what alternatives might be considered. The working group met once to

outline the issue and discuss potential solutions. The group hopes to have recommendations for the full council by the spring council meeting.

Council business

October 2011 Meeting Summary – A motion was made and passed approving the summary of minutes from the October Sanctuary Advisory Council meeting.

Membership/Charter Subcommittee report – Danny Gleason reported for subcommittee chair Venetia Butler on the recommendations for a youth seat on the council. After much discussion and inquiry into youth seats at other sanctuary sites, the working group liked the idea but recommended that given the state of sanctuary resources (budget and personnel) and the fact that several new seats are already being recruited for the council, it would not be wise to pursue a youth seat at this time. The concept should be reconsidered in approximately two years after both citizen-at-large seats are filled and all new members are oriented. It is hoped that site resources (e.g., budget) may have improved by that time.

Gray's Reef Student Ocean Council was managed by a Savannah State University student a few years ago very successfully. Cathy Sakas noted this was very labor intensive but was a great way to engage students.

Becky Shortland explained that GRNMS staff asked the subcommittee to discuss the possibility of adding a non-voting U.S. Navy seat to the council. The subcommittee determined it was best to bring to the full council for discussion. Comments from members indicate that Navy participation in the council could be beneficial, but they concluded that for the time being an invitation to the Navy to provide a presentation may be a good place to start the concept.

Executive Committee - Danny Gleason assumed the position of council chair this meeting and as nominations for vice chair and secretary were not forth coming at the October meeting, Clark Alexander volunteered to assume the role of vice-chair and Venetia Butler to remain as secretary temporarily. It was suggested for the health of the council other members should assume those roles that have not already been on the executive committee. After some discussion it was determined that the positions would be reconsidered in the near future, particularly after vacant seats are filled and new members are oriented to the council. Duties of the officers were discussed to give members an idea of time requirements. Mary Conley noted that chairing subgroups requires more time than the executive committee. She suggests that new council members need at least a year to settle in and we should consider existing members.

Action Items from past meetings – George Sedberry recapped action items and outcomes remaining from past meetings.

Development of a friends group – Discussion of friends groups is expected during the upcoming ONMS leadership team conference. George will report back at the next council meeting.

SAC and staff op-ed pieces on climate change - It was determined that this is too vague an issue to make a story of right now. It was suggested that we can discuss climate change, sea level rise, and all other factors while highlighting the monitoring area using collective sites as a regional approach. Susan Shipman wrote a piece on the research area which is about to be released. Staff will continue to request input from the advisory council on programs reports.

Frequently Asked Questions - Commonly asked questions from fisherman have been developed into a one-pager and posted online. Another file created specific to research-area questions will

be posted online as well. The one-pagers are all found under FAQs on the GRNMS webpage under management. A suggestion was made to post these on the front page, possibly as a “widget.”

Navy presentation- The U.S. Navy is expected to issue an environmental impact statement this summer on the entire Atlantic fleet testing and training plan for the next several years. A presentation has been requested by the council and Becky Shortland will make a contact in the SE region.

Press release on CO2 – Dr. Scott Noakes has written a piece for our website which is very informative but the story needs development and is inconclusive at this date. Clark comments that the thrust of it is the sentinel site premise and suggests that we can still go ahead with publishing this by connecting it to coastal economies for more relevance with a link to ocean acidification and shellfish, and sea level rise.

Improving public access to GRNMS regulations – GRNMS (and the southeast region of ONMS) is making an effort to share regulations with NOAA Fisheries and vice versa. Jack McGovern will inquire about posting GRNMS (and FKNMS and MNMS) regulations on NOAA Fisheries’ website. More regulations are coming through digital media now instead of printed brochures, with one-pagers being issued as needed. Setting this precedent will require SAFMC to update regulations for Monitor, Florida Keys and Flower Garden Banks sanctuary sites, which might be difficult. Fisheries SERO and GRNMS are coordinating this with SAFMC.

2012 meetings schedule - Becky Shortland will request input on potential dates for July and October through a Doodle poll online.

MARMAP data analysis – Dr. Marcel Reichert of South Carolina DNR was given coordinates to place traps under permit within GRNMS for the Marine Resources Monitoring, Assessment and Prediction Program (MARMAP). The 2011 data analysis is in process.

Programs report and discussion-The quarterly programs report was forwarded to council members in advance of the meeting. The floor was open to discussion and there was none.

New member orientation- New council members are expected to be on board this spring. Becky Shortland is planning an orientation in conjunction with the next meeting.

Next proposed meeting dates – Danny Gleason suggested that the next meeting be held at the Georgia Southern University Museum due to the new GRNMS exhibits. Dates in April were discussed; and email will be sent to confirm a date with council members.

Public comment - Five members of the public were in attendance. Bill Cliett offered his appreciation for being invited to attend. There were no other public comments.

Adjourn – The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:00 p.m.