



## GRAY'S REEF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL WEBINAR – JANUARY 12, 2017

<u>Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) Attendees</u>	<u>Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS), and Office of National Marine Sanctuary (ONMS) Staff</u>
Rick DeVictor, Chair Michael Denmark, Vice-chair Anna George, Secretary Peter Auster Mark Carson Mary Conley LT Warren Fair Pat Geer Warren Hupman Kevin Mitchell Jene Nissen Scott Noakes Mark Padgett Tim Tarver	Sarah Fangman Mandy Harvey ( <i>Volunteer and note taker</i> ) Chris Hines Jarrod Loerzel ( <i>Guest speaker - NCCOS</i> ) Jody Patterson Michelle Riley Kim Roberson George Sedberry Becky Shortland  <u>GRNMS Foundation</u> Vicki Weeks
<u>SAC Members Absent</u> Tim Henkel Dustin Rhyan Suzanne VanParreren Susan White	<u>Public in attendance</u> Paulita Bennett-Martin Maria Bowie Katie Charron Dan DeYoung Dionne Hoskins-Brown Randy James Vernon Leeworthy Richard LePalme Karen Raine Doug Samson Danielle Schwarzmann Tom Wright

### **Advisory Council Business**

Council chair Rick DeVictor called the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) Advisory Council webinar to order at 10:02am. He and Sarah Fangman welcomed members, staff and public in attendance. Rick briefly reviewed the agenda and outlined the meeting objectives. The November 8, 2016 SAC meeting summary was approved with no changes.

### Social Values Survey Results

Jarrold Loerzel of the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) Hollings Marine Laboratory presented the results of a Social Values Survey conducted from August through November of 2015 and March through June 2016 in various locations throughout coastal Georgia. There were three main components to the survey—mapping, value allocation, and management goals. There were a total of 348 surveys completed with an additional 95 surveys that were partially completed. A total of 3,223 points were mapped in the survey, with values including aesthetic, biodiversity, economic, legacy, learning, human needs, recreation, spiritual, therapeutic, wilderness, inspiration, and socializing.

The most mapped value in the survey was “Recreation”, which represented 14% of all points, followed by “Aesthetic” with 12%. “Aesthetic” was the most allocated value, constituting 13% of all values, followed by “Recreation” with 12%. Respondents who allocated more value to “Recreation” were more likely to not be dependent upon Georgia’s coast for income and to be male. Those who allocated more value to “Aesthetic” are were likely to be seasonal residents rather than permanent residents, have more place attachment, not be dependent upon Georgia’s coast for income, be older, and have higher income.

Additionally, respondents who allocated more value to “Biodiversity” did not exhibit any statistical relationships with the variables that were analyzed and those who allocated more value to “Wilderness” are more likely to have a more negative perception concerning the change in the condition of resources and respond more favorably to management options.

Regarding perceptions of ecological changes in coastal Georgia, respondents felt there has been a large increase in the number of birds along the coast and a significant decrease in shellfish in coastal waters. Almost 35% of respondents felt there has been an increase in both adverse marine conditions (i.e. marine debris, jellyfish) and the number of visitors and boaters in Georgia waters.

Most all respondents (97%) agreed with the statement “This area is important for providing habitat for fish and other wildlife”. The other four statements that were evaluated scored between 78 - 85%, with the following statement scoring the lowest at 78%: “My community’s economy depends on the natural resources of coastal Georgia”. The survey found that there was strong agreement among all respondents that management goals for the region are a priority or high priority.

While 36% of respondents felt that access to Gray’s Reef was adequate to more than adequate, 42% did not know and 7% did not respond.

When available, Jarrod will make a larger presentation available to the SAC which will include results for both GRNMS and Sapelo Island. The survey team is awaiting edits from the Sapelo Island management team. Once those edits are incorporated, Jarrod will forward the report to GRNMS staff for review.

Following the presentation, the group posed several questions:

Peter Auster asked if similar surveys have been completed on a state or national level, to evaluate the perceptions of people who pay state and federal taxes to support areas that may be far from where they reside. Jarrod stated that he is not aware of any national surveys, although there could be something that has been undertaken by the National Parks. Peter pointed out that this represents a knowledge gap relative to the value perception of protected areas and other natural places among the public-at-large. Peter then asked if the social survey data presented today could be evaluated to identify any differences between the responses of those who live closer to the coast vs those who live further away. Jarrod noted that in other surveys place attachment has been shown to decrease for those further from the coast.

Noting the comparison of managed areas and artificial reefs contained in the presentation, Mary Conley asked if environmental comparisons with other resources such as salt marshes were available. Jarrod stated that the Sapelo Island data set includes information relative to rivers, marsh areas, and shipwrecks.

Michael Denmark asked how respondents were recruited and if this influenced the demographics of the respondents. Jarrod stated that the “intercept method” of recruitment was used, meaning that the survey team went to various coastal areas such as boat ramps, marinas, and beaches and approached people in these areas about participating in the survey. This method likely impacted the demographic profile of the respondents because it is reflective of visitors to the Georgia coast.

Kim Roberson asked Jarrod's opinion on how GRNMS could most efficiently use the information garnered from the survey. Jarrod offered that the survey findings can help target education and outreach efforts. More in-depth analysis of where the respondents reside can assist staff in deploying tools such as presentations, events, signage, radio spots, etc. Another potential opportunity is reconciling anthropocentric and ecological management priorities by identifying which management strategies might be the most well-received by both visitors and residents.

Rick DeVictor and other members of the group congratulated Jarrod on the survey and thanked him for participating in today's meeting.

### National Recreational Fishing Summit

Tim Tarver reported on the National Recreational Fishing Summit hosted by the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, in partnership with the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and the National Marine Fisheries Service, that was conducted in Hollywood, FL on December 14 and 15, 2016. The objective of the summit was to engage with the nation's recreational fishing constituency as represented by their respective national marine sanctuary advisory councils. Approximately 30 attendees, including 11 advisory council representatives, were in attendance and discussed recreational fishing in sanctuaries and steps forward to improve the relationship between recreational fishermen and NOAA.

Following several breakout sessions focused on identifying common perceptions, improving communication and engagement, learning from individual experience with national marine sanctuaries, management approaches, tools for recreational anglers, and opportunities for collaboration on scientific research, the group reached the following conclusions:

1. Some of the priorities of recreational fishermen and sanctuary management needs can be specific to each region and national marine sanctuary.
2. Fishing access and opportunity are priorities for recreational fishermen whether in a national marine sanctuary or elsewhere in the US.
3. A common, but not universal, perception among recreational fishermen is that marine protected areas, including national marine sanctuaries, take away more (i.e., have more restrictions) than they actually give back (i.e., than benefits).
4. NOAA needs to improve the dissemination of information, communication, and receipt of input from recreational fishermen throughout specific processes including management plans, research, and regulatory activities, etc.
5. NOAA and recreational fishermen should explore opportunities to collaborate on science and education projects throughout the national marine sanctuary system.
6. There is broad interest in working together to enhance the recreational fishing experience in national marine sanctuaries.

The following next steps were identified and agreed to:

1. ONMS will develop and distribute a draft “action plan” based on input from this meeting and continue this discussion with recreational fishing representatives.
2. ONMS and NMFS will coordinate on Cooperative Research Program activities in national marine sanctuaries.
3. ONMS Director will contact each site superintendent to ensure there is an ongoing dialogue between recreational fishing representative (s) on all management issues or areas of concern.
4. ONMS Director will identify a Point of Contact at each site for recreational fishing concerns and the POC will establish contact with NMFS regional recreational fishing coordinators
5. ONMS and NMFS Recreational Fisheries Initiative will seek additional regional and national level opportunities for intra-agency collaboration and with recreational fishermen based on the outputs of the meeting.

Vicki Weeks stated that she would welcome Tim's input on ways for the Foundation to engage with fishing advocates. Tim mentioned that there are several fishing groups in the area that would like to have a speaker from GRNMS or the Foundation. Vicki will contact Becky Shortland and Tim to discuss further.

Sarah Fangman thanked Tim for taking the time to attend the fishing summit and to debrief GRNMS staff afterward. She stated that the meeting outcomes are a priority and have been discussed during several meetings she has participated in at headquarters this week.

#### Recreational Fishing Working Group

Tim also provided an update on the activities of the working group which is charged with finding better ways to communicate and promote collaboration with recreational fishing interests, raise awareness of GRNMS, enhance compliance, and obtain more visitor use information. The first meeting of the working group took place late last year at the Sapelo Sportfishing Club. Tim plans to increase the size of the group and the next meeting will be focused on identifying key issues for the group to address.

#### Law Enforcement Letter

Rick DeVictor reviewed a proposed letter that outlines law enforcement needs in national marine sanctuaries and monuments. Addressed to the incoming NOAA Administrator, the letter is intended to be considered by all 14 NMS Advisory Councils. Rick is presenting this letter to the SAC today to obtain approval for him to sign the letter on behalf of the GRNMS SAC. This letter would draw attention to the law enforcement issues common to all sanctuaries. It contains background information on current enforcement approaches, outlines opportunities to employ emerging technologies to augment ongoing enforcement efforts, outlines ways that SAC chairs could help, and offers recommendations moving forward.

During group discussion, Mary Conley suggested that the letter should clarify or be sent with a comment that law enforcement represents only one critical need out of many. Peter Auster moved that the group accept the letter with the suggested comment clarifying priorities and that Rick DeVictor should be a signatory to the letter. Michael Denmark seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

#### **Council Members' Reports**

NOAA Fisheries Update – Rick DeVictor updated the group on changes to black seabass regulations. A prohibition has been in effect since 2013 against the use of fishing pots because of the risk posed to right whales. Effective December 29, 2016, the total prohibition has been reduced in size to better reflect the migratory paths of the whales. Rick noted that NOAA Fisheries has requested public comment on the proposed action to establish five special management zones in the South Atlantic to protect spawning fish. Fishing for 59 species of snappers and groupers would be prohibited in these zones, each of which is roughly five square miles in size. Rick will send a link with information on the proposed management zones to the group and clarified that none of the zones will be located off the Georgia coast. Rick will report on the NOAA Fisheries regional action plan on climate change during the next SAC meeting.

Update on New Office for The Nature Conservancy – Mary Conley updated the group on the new offices of the coastal Georgia branch of The Nature Conservancy, which have moved from Butler Island to the new Altama Plantation near Darien, GA. Mary invited all SAC members to visit if they're ever in the area.

Aquarium Conservation Partnership Campaign on Ocean Plastics – Anna George reported on the recently formed partnership of 17 aquariums working together to address common water problems. The first issue which will be targeted is ocean plastic. The partnership is working to develop a broad-based national media campaign with consistent messaging about plastic and other marine debris and what people can do to help. She said some of these efforts may be targeted in the Savannah area, as the South Carolina Aquarium is a partner.

GRNMS Buoy Camera – Chris Hines, reporting on behalf of Scott Noakes, stated that the buoy camera is now operational and thanked Scott for his commitment to the project. The buoy is located in the north-central quadrant of GRNMS and is not

in close proximity to the research area. Images from the camera are being archived and staff will soon have access to the archived images.

GRNMS Speakers Bureau – Michael Denmark provided an update on speakers bureau activities. A fully completed slide kit is available for speakers. It is appropriate for use with a variety of groups ranging from civic groups to local fishing and diving groups. Over 90 local and regional groups have been identified as potential targets for the presentation and several have already been approached. Seven talks have been scheduled to date. Chris Hines will send both the slide kit and the list of target organizations to the SAC members. He asked that they review the list and provide additional suggestions and encouraged members of the group to volunteer to speak on behalf of GRNMS. Michael and Chris thanked Jody Patterson for her efforts in developing the presentation.

Piscivore Ecology Project - Peter Auster provided an update on the piscivore ecology project with additional results from the 2016 research cruises at GRNMS. Hydroacoustics were employed to assess density of schooling fish at various times over a 24-hour period. Changes in density were observed in both schooling and non-schooling fish dependent upon time of day. For instance, after dusk mid-water predators retreat and prey fish move upward in the water column. In addition, acoustic Doppler was used to measure water flow velocity. There is variation in the direction and velocity of flow over the course of measurements. These changes are due to tidal dynamics and influence the aggregation of fish. Peter will share additional findings at the next SAC meeting.

### **GRNMS Report**

Chris Hines provided an update on the upcoming Gray's Reef Film Festival. This year's children's session will take place on January 24 at the Savannah Theatre. The main portion of the film festival begins the evening of February 2 with the Foundation opening party at 24e in downtown Savannah. There will be two nights of 3D films on February 3 and 4 at the Trustees Theatre and the Emerging Filmmakers event will take place on the afternoon of February 4 at the SCAD Museum. On Sunday, February 5 the film festival will expand to Tybee Island for the first time with a session at the Tybee Post Theatre. Chris will send the full schedule to the SAC and invite members to attend and share the event information with others. Due to time constraints, Sarah Fangman will supplement this report with an email to the SAC members.

### **GRNMS Foundation Update Report**

GRNMS Foundation Executive Director Vicki Weeks provided details on the Foundation Founder's Party to kick-off the film festival on Thursday, February 2 at 24e in downtown Savannah. During the event, all 200 attendees will have the opportunity to participate in a virtual reality experience that will allow them to "dive" Gray's Reef. Invitations will be emailed to all SAC members soon. The Foundation will host an after party at 45 Bistro on Saturday night (February 4) following the last film. On Sunday, February 5, the Foundation will host a wrap party at North Beach Grill on Tybee Island. Lionfish wraps may be on the menu, dependent on availability. In addition, the Foundation is planning another "Fishy Affair" event in the fall.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be a full-day, in-person meeting in Savannah on Tuesday, February 28. Suggestions for meeting topics can be emailed to Chris Hines.

### **Public Comment**

There were no comments from the public.

The webinar was adjourned at 12:05pm.