



**Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary
Advisory Council Meeting
February 27, 2013**

Skidaway Institute of Oceanography,
Marine and Coastal Science Research & Instructional Center,
Skidaway Island, GA

Advisory Council Members Present

William Cliett, Citizen-at-large
Mary Conley, Conservation
Michael Denmark, Sport Fishing
Rick DeVictor, NOAA Fisheries SE Region (Vice-Chair)
Brandon Fisher, U.S. Coast Guard SRFTC
Pat Geer, GA DNR CRD
Danny Gleason, Living Resources Research (Chair)
Tim Goodale, University Education
Chuck Hopkinson, Sea Grant
Warren Hupman, Charter/commercial Fishing
Emily Kroutil, K-12 Education
Christine Laporte, Citizen-at-large
Jene Nissen, U.S. Navy
Scott Noakes, Non-living Resources Research
Randy Rudd, Sport Diving
Al Samuels, NOAA OLE
Suzanne VanParreren, Sapelo Island NERR

Members Absent

Anna George, Conservation (Secretary)
Doug Lewis, GA DNR LE

Gray's Reef and ONMS Staff Present

Chris Briand, NOAA Corp/Vessel Operations Coordinator
Billy Causey, ONMS SEGoM Region Director
Sarah Fangman, ONMS SEGoM Region Programs Coordinator
Michael Jordan, Communications and Outreach Coordinator
Greg McFall, Deputy Superintendent/Research Coordinator
Jody Patterson, Administrative Assistant/Volunteer Coordinator
Cathy Sakas, Education Coordinator
George Sedberry, Superintendent
Becky Shortland, Resource Protection Coordinator

Public Present

Venetia Butler
Rhonda Hannon

Lou Phong
Michelle Rice, U.S. Coast Guard, Sector Charleston
Marilyn Sobwick
Tim Tarver
Tom Wright

Welcome and introductions

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

Council business

Council Chairman Danny Gleason asked for approval of the November 2012 meeting summary. A motion was made, seconded and passed without comment.

National SAC Summit:

Gleason attended the National Sanctuary Advisory Council Summit in Santa Cruz, CA last December and recapped the main points of the meetings. The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) campaign of engagement focuses on engaging the tourism industry and generated additional discussion of a tourism seat, as well as a youth council. Venetia Butler noted that an individual with tourism qualifications was discussed for the citizen-at-large seat. It was also noted that Gray's Reef isn't a tourist destination. A youth seat has been discussed in the past but staff limitations prevent fostering this idea. Gleason suggested that a college student might be a better fit, or even a student council working group. Further discussions with regional council chairs resulted in synergy around regional-specific issues and opportunities, such as a traveling ocean film festival. Council chairs feel strongly that research in the sanctuaries is important and adds credibility to the system. NOAA is primarily a data-collection agency but sanctuaries also have an education and outreach mandate. Mary Conley noted that aquaria can impact tourism on behalf of the sanctuaries, of which we now have a representative on the council with Anna George from the Tennessee Aquarium. Christine Laporte notes that the number of visitors to the sanctuary isn't as important as the outreach around research that engages and educates the public. The council chairs also met with ONMS Director Dan Basta.

Outgoing council members and new staff:

Two outgoing council members were recognized for their contributions and dedication to the sanctuary, Venetia Butler who represented K-12 education, and Tim Tarver, who represented sport fishing. Their efforts are greatly appreciated and they will be missed on the council.

Michael Jordan has joined Gray's Reef staff as Communications and Outreach Coordinator, and he addressed the council with ideas for promoting the site and the council, and expanding awareness of ocean issues. He is interested in developing videos about sanctuary research, programs and events, and conducting on-camera video interviews with council members to share on social media and broadcast on local television stations. He also spoke of our membership in the Savannah Tourism Leadership Council, which will help in developing relations with local businesses and city management.

Member information:

Council Coordinator Becky Shortland noted that Michael Jordan will be taking photos of members who have not already submitted them for the website. Member pictures and information are scheduled to be live by April 1st.

Next meeting:

Becky Shortland added that the next quarterly meeting of the advisory council is suggested for May or June. A poll will be forwarded to council members for completion. She plans to conduct new member orientation but will likely do so as a webinar.

Science Advisory Group Meeting

The Science Advisory Group (a working group of the council) met on February 26th to review Research Area data collected in 2012. Scientists Peter Auster, Myra Brower, Sarah Fangman, Danny Gleason, Jeff Hyland, Laura Kracker, Roldan Munoz, Scott Noakes and Marcel Reichert presented on research conducted the previous year. The 2012 field season was severely impacted by poor weather, and therefore several projects reported limited results due to sea and visibility conditions. The group then began planning for the 2013 field season. A report of the meeting, including detailed descriptions of findings, is being prepared, and will be made available to the SAC when completed. Mary Conley asked how much of this research was funded by NOAA. Greg responded that these partner contributions far exceed what NOAA funded. In 2001, the site had a research budget of \$300,000. Currently, we have \$0 allocated for research. Conley notes that she is interested in seeing communications concerning funding and the value of partner research as it is a unique story to tell.

Gray's Reef Draft Management Plan update and review

Gray's Reef staff are in the process of developing a new management plan for the sanctuary. Action plans have been reworked after the valuable input from the advisory council during the November 2012 meeting. A new version was sent out prior to this meeting for review. The advisory council and staff were split into two groups to review specific sections of the management plan. The outcomes of today's discussions will be considered for further incorporation into the management plan. After the two break-out groups came back together and gave their recommendations to the entire council, a motion was made to form a working group for education and outreach assessment. The council selected Tim Goodale to chair the working group.

Law Enforcement Working Group report

Al Samuels gave an update on enforcement actions related to protection of the North Atlantic right whale. There have been a few violations in the right whale management areas for vessels 65' and over. Michelle Rice reported for USCG Sector Charleston; no violations have been observed by their vessels in Gray's Reef. She also noted that a class at USCG Southeast Regional Fisheries Training Center (SRFTC) is being provided for Sector Charleston officers to learn more about the sanctuary and regulations. Brandon Fisher reported for SRFTC that a job aid has been created for USCG aviators (Air Station Savannah) conducting overflights of the sanctuary. He also noted that he is moving on to Galveston, TX to act as the Executive Officer on a cutter and next meeting will be his last. He looks forward to working with Flower Garden Banks NMS staff in his next assignment.

Superintendent's report

Superintendent George Sedberry commented on the possible upcoming federal sequestration, requiring 5% cuts across the government, and the potential impacts to the site. Sedberry also noted that he has discussed a "friends group" chapter through the National Marine Sanctuaries Foundation (NMSF) and just needs to hammer out the details in order to move forward.

Public comment

Rhonda Hannon, owner of the local West Marine franchise, commented that she read about the council meeting in the newspaper and is interested in helping the sanctuary any way she can. She is retired and noted that many retirees in the area are looking for opportunities for involvement. Marilyn Sobwick commented that from a marketing perspective, we should consider a tag line for the site along with an icon. She offered graphics support over the next few years as an engaged volunteer. Tom Wright commented that the Savannah Maritime Association is a collaboration of agencies representing the maritime industry and would like to commend Gray's Reef on the placement of bronze markers on Historic River Street. He notes that he sees people reading them every day. He offered the sanctuary a complimentary membership into the Association, of which Superintendent Sedberry graciously accepted. Wright also appreciates sanctuary staff involvement with the Tybee Island Marine Science Center facilities planning that he is also involved with.

Adjourn - A motion was made, seconded and passed, to adjourn at 4:00pm.