

**GRAY'S REEF NMS
SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting, June 21-22, 2005
Doubletree Guest Suites
Charleston, South Carolina**

Distributed Materials

- Meeting agenda
- Minutes Advisory Council meeting March 2005
- GRNMS Advisory Council Members List
- Recommendation Document, Marine Research Area Concept Working Group
- Final Chair Letter to Secretary Gutierrez
- NMSP Sanctuary Advisory Council Fact Sheet
- Summary Document: Implementing a Regional Structure
- NMSP Strategic Plan 2005-2015
- NMSP Advisory Councils National Annual Report 2004
- A Monitoring Framework for the NMSS, July 2004
- Fishing Regulations for the U.S. South Atlantic Federal Waters, May 2005
- NOAA/GRNMS Research reports as available

Advisory Council Members Present

Leslie Sautter, university education
Venetia Butler, K-12 education
Joe Kimmel, NOAA Fisheries Service
Tim Tarver, sport fishing
Christi Lambert, regional conservation
Dorset Hurley, Sapelo Island NERR

Danny Gleason, living resources research
Henry Ansley, GA DNR CRD
Judy Helmey, commercial/charter fishing
Will Berson, local conservation
Kevin Saunders, U.S. Coast Guard alternate
Doug Lewis, GA DNR Law Enforcement

Advisory Council Members Absent

Clark Alexander, non-living resources research
Ralph Neely, sport diving

GRNMS Staff Members Present

Reed Bohne, sanctuary manager
Leah Cooling, education intern
Greg McFall, research coordinator
Becky Shortland, planning and evaluation coordinator
Jim Sullivan, regional projects coordinator

Other NOAA and USCG Personnel Present

Matt Kendall, NCCOS
Kate Eschelbach, NCCOS
Jason Lind, U.S. Coast Guard

Public Present

No public was present at this meeting

Tuesday, June 21, 2005

Welcome

Gray's Reef NMS Sanctuary Advisory Council Chair Dr. Joe Kimmel welcomed meeting participants and reviewed distributed materials.

Marine Research Area Concept Working Group (RAWG)

Regional Projects Coordinator Jim Sullivan presented an overview and details of the entire research area working group process (see slides). He also presented an overview of Matt Kendall's systematic GIS-based optimization study and analysis of various research area sizes and placements.

Dorset Hurley questioned choosing an area that would allow more types of fishing at Gray's Reef. Joe Kimmel responded there has been no prior evidence or past research that we can compare to. Danny Gleason noted that Gray's Reef is a perfect location between tropical and coastal temperate waters. Joe Kimmel emphasized that the process has been very thorough and consensus-based.

Henry Ansley asked whether or not the designated area would be too large or not large enough to conduct research. Christi Lambert asked if consideration was given to being part of a global network rather than only local and gave an example of collaborating with the Florida Keys. Reed Bohne added that a network could possibly be formed to answer further questions.

Jim Sullivan noted that the working group report included all discussions and raw data along with the conclusions. Danny Gleason commended the tremendous work that had been done by the working group, and felt that the public's comments could be incorporated at this point.

Jim noted that the working group developed an extensive list of "pros and cons" of the various research area concepts that can be found in the recommendation document.

Joe Kimmel noted that the working group concluded with three sized areas to explore, the largest being a 4-square kilometer area.

Will Berson asked about the length of time a designation might be in place. Research Coordinator Greg McFall responded that the length of time will depend on the research needs. Henry Ansley mentioned that both short-term and long-term projects were discussed in the working group. Joe Kimmel emphasized that areas large in size may not leave enough area for comparison, and it may be wiser to choose a smaller area.

Joe Kimmel mentioned that law enforcement was discussed in the working group. Judy Helmey noted that she believes that highest amount of fishing at Gray's Reef is trolling

for coastal pelagic species such as king mackerel, whereas less than ten percent of fishermen are bottom fishing. Jim Sullivan noted that law enforcement factors would continue to be a point of discussion with the Advisory Council. Joe Kimmel responded that it does not take too many bottom fishermen, in fact it takes just one, to destroy a research area. Henry Ansley noted that the main focus may need to be on divers.

Matt Kendall gave a presentation on the GIS-based tool that was developed for the Research Area Working Group.

Judy Helmey asked whether the largest grid represents the entire reef. Greg McFall responded that the bottom mapping was limited to just the sanctuary. Venetia Butler asked whether the noted research sites on the map are historical or whether they are still in use. Reed Bohne responded that most sites shown are more recently utilized. Danny Gleason noted that it is important to take the “edge effect” into consideration when planning a research area.

Matt Kendall asked for feedback on the shape and orientation of boundaries as well as locations where bottom fishermen are least affected. Will Berson emphasized that instead of beating around the bush when asking fishermen where they fish, ask instead where they wish we wouldn't put any boundaries for research. Leslie Sautter suggested a compromise be considered where there some fishing does occur, but not a significant amount to minimize effect on the fishermen. Several members questioned whether fishermen will tell where they fish.

Judy Helmey noted that she would prefer to fish in a variety of places depending on the time of year. Danny Gleason noted that control sites with usual fishing activities are necessary. Leslie Sautter raised the question of recovery rates; she reemphasized and strongly encouraged a compromise between fishermen and researchers in selecting sites.

Danny further suggested a rectangle shaped research area, but Leslie noted that the rectangle shape was discussed but strongly discouraged by a consulting statistician. Tim Tarver suggested an idea that would call for two research areas – one for remote observations and one that would require a permit (by lottery) to fish with a reporting requirement.

Discussions concluded on the two presentations and the meeting adjourned for the day.

Wednesday, June 22, 2005

Joe Kimmel welcomed everyone again and gave a brief review from the previous day's presentations and discussions. Members were prepared to discuss the specific working group recommendations at this point.

Joe Kimmel began the discussion by noting that he supports Recommendation 1 and asked for other comments. Will Berson said that he approves of the recommendation, but

asked about specific research questions, links and time that would be critical to the public.

Venetia Butler added that she believes it is a very good idea to establish a research site. Matt Kendall stated that there is an element of flexibility involved in selecting a site. He noted that research teams will change, size, dimension and shape will change, and the habitat may vary. Joe Kimmel commented that the sanctuary management plan is to be reviewed every five years, which would include a review of a research area. Danny Gleason agreed that adding size and area to the recommendation may be helpful for the public to consider to concept.

Judy Helmey agreed, and added that before and during the public review process, the sanctuary may need to improve communications with user groups so they don't have a fear that Gray's Reef will close. Judy suggested and offered to use any information in her fish report.

Henry Ansley supports the recommendations but he still has questions related to the available user data. He praised the work of the working group and noted that he was impressed by the process and tools used to develop the recommendations.

Tim Tarver noted that he agrees with the concept. In addition, he would like to see more action taken to replenish fish stocks. Tim pointed out that fishing is a major food source for the country, not just for recreation. Tim Tarver further asked if we considered not just the fish stocks but corals and invertebrates as well.

GRNMS staff then clarified the differences between NOAA Fisheries Service mandates and the mandates of the National Marine Sanctuary Program. Dorset Hurley also noted that the research questions noted by the working group are valid and overall it reinforces the need for a research area in GRNMS. Many marine resource research questions and challenges, however, go beyond the sanctuary.

Jim Sullivan asked Advisory Council members whether or not they think the working group missed anything? With no additional comments, Jim emphasized that the summary concept was a good start. More work, however, will need to be done to prepare for the public process if NOAA GRNMS decides to proceed. Henry Ansley understands the process but is concerned about how the concept will be presented to the public. Becky Shortland noted that the Advisory Council will be asked to help lay the groundwork for those communications.

Doug Lewis said that he supports the recommendation and commented on letting the public know what we are looking for and what is in it for them. Christi Lambert also supports the idea but does not want to see the research program limited. Before going public, Christi suggested we consider the global benefits in addition to the benefits to GRNMS. Becky Shortland explained the overall process when the public is fully involved and that many such ideas can be considered from that point on. Reed Bohne emphasized that such new ideas can be captured through the scoping process.

Dorset Hurley agreed with Christi's points and noted that future water resource management is a very powerful issue for the public. One benefit may be to leverage future funding and increase flexibility to accommodate future research needs.

Jason Lind stated that the U.S. Coast Guard will make their best efforts to enforce any laws that are established. Jason also mentioned that shape and size of a designated area are important factors from a law enforcement perspective.

Becky Shortland then read an email from Dr. Clark Alexander who could not attend the meeting. Dr. Alexander pointed out specific concerns (see attached email message) but expressed overall support for the research area concept.

Reed Bohne suggested that the sanctuary may develop and distribute materials on the research area concept to the public before meetings so they are not walking into a meeting with a blank slate. Reed also emphasized that final design of a research area, such as size and restrictions, are the types of decisions that would be made in the public process – development of a draft National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document, most likely an environmental impact analysis (EIS) that is supplemental to the management plan EIS.

Joe Kimmel read Recommendation 1 as developed by the Sanctuary Advisory Council during the meeting. He noted that the simple wording is best as is; the simpler the better. Henry Ansley added that a further explanation of the process leading to development of these recommendations should go to NOAA and the public. Joe added that some comments may be useful in a separate paragraph. Jim Sullivan suggested that the minutes from this meeting be attached to the public document. Christi Lambert agreed that a summary and minutes should be attached to the document.

After a lengthy discussion, Recommendation 1 was revised to reflect the comments of all members present (see attached).

The working group's Recommendation 2 was presented and Joe Kimmel suggested that the idea may contain more than one recommendation. He suggested dividing it into two recommendations. Will Berson agreed. Venetia Butler noted that the presentation on the GIS tool certainly justifies its continued use. Danny Gleason, however, noted that he saw it as two different tools - a GIS tool and a statistical tool. Venetia Butler suggested putting both together. Doug Lewis asked how GRNMS would explain statistical tools to the public when GIS is difficult enough. Venetia offered her rewording on the first part. After considerable discussion on the topic, members agreed on the recommendation and proceeded.

Recommendation 3 was read and Will Berson said he would like to consider siting and size criteria along with inclusion of previous research sites. Joe Kimmel added that high relief habitat was important as well as previous research areas. Henry Ansley asked about the suggested locations of the designated research area. Will Berson commented on the

need to minimize impacts in a designated area. Matt Kendall mentioned new elements that have already been suggested by the working group to enhance the GIS tool. Tim Tarver said that he said this recommendation as two different statements and suggested separating them. Christi Lambert suggested that the Research Area Working Group also be maintained as a tool in the public process. All members agreed. Becky Shortland also noted that the additional public scrutiny of working group meetings would help the public better understand the issues.

Recommendation 4 was read by Joe Kimmel. Again, members wondered whether the statement should be divided into two recommendations. Tim Tarver suggested new wording. Much discussion followed concerning the idea of different designated areas for different purposes.

Dorset Hurley stated that it is important to have multiple sites for comparisons over a long term period and to set up some form of impact assessment site. Tim responded and said that it still would not make everyone happy.

Judy Helmey emphasized that most activity at GRNMS is trolling for pelagic fishes. Doug Lewis expressed that he believes for clarification in the recommendation there is a need to explain the differences between different activities in the sanctuary. Jason Lind noted that simpler language may help the public understand the intent.

More discussion followed concerning minimizing impacts before members agreed on the language for recommendation 4.

Venetia Butler made a motion to accept the four recommendations as developed during this meeting of the GRNMS Sanctuary Advisory Council. Judy Helmey seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Final Notes and upcoming meetings

Becky Shortland reviewed other distributed materials, including the NMSP Strategic Plan and other materials for future meetings. She suggested that the Advisory Council consider setting meetings a year in advance and perhaps moving the location on a schedule for the public benefit. Members stated that they had no problem with the advanced schedule and will make decisions at the next meeting. The next Advisory Council meeting is tentatively set for September 26. Becky will contact members who are not present and confirm a date.

Members thanked the staff for the good meeting accommodations and began discussion of recognition of the working group. The Advisory Council concluded with a request to send a letter of thanks to all working group members and to advise them that the Advisory Council recommends that the working group continue its deliberations if NOAA GRNMS decides adopt the recommendations of the Council and proceed with a public process for a research area in the sanctuary. Reed Bohne stated that staff will assist with that task.

Will Berson motioned to adjourn the meeting, Judy Helmey seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.

GRAY'S REEF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Recommendations to NOAA in Response to Recommendations for the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council from the Advisory Council Marine Research Area Concept Working Group June 22, 2005

Recommendation 1

Significant research questions exist at Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) that can only be addressed by establishing a control (research) area. Therefore, it is the finding of the Sanctuary Advisory Council based on the recommendation of the Marine Research Area Working Group to NOAA that the research area concept should be further explored through a public review process.

Recommendation 2

The Sanctuary Advisory Council recommends that as many appropriate tools as feasible, especially the GIS-based site evaluation tool and the Research Area Working Group, be used to investigate a research area in GRNMS with proper siting criteria.

Recommendation 3

The Sanctuary Advisory Council recommends consideration of the diversity of habitat (with emphasis on high relief habitat) as the primary siting criterion. Should NOAA decide to proceed, the Research Area Working Group should be maintained to support NOAA in consideration of these various criteria (e.g., habitat, size, existing research and monitoring sites, bottom fishing data) in developing proposed options for a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS).

Recommendation 4

The Sanctuary Advisory Council recommends minimizing impacts to user communities including fishing, diving, research, and resource management and considers this a priority under the research area concept. The Sanctuary Advisory Council also endorses the Research Area Working Group finding that non-bottom impinging activities are not viewed as conflicting with the primary objectives of a proposed research area.