



GRAY'S REEF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING – APRIL 30, 2020

Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC)

Attendees

Michael Denmark, Chair
Mona Behl, Secretary
Peter Auster
Paulita Bennett-Martin
Lt. James Bruce
Mark Carson
Bob Crimian
Rick DeVictor
Amy Farak
Joseph Glenn
Monique Gordon
Rachel Guy
Ben Hughes
Kathy Knowlton
Mark Padgett
Lauren Stefaniak
Suzanne VanParreren

SAC Members Absent

Scott Noakes, Vice-chair
Carolyn Belcher
Colby Harris
Capt. Chris Hodge
Warren Hupman

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) Staff

Stan Rogers, Superintendent
Kris Howard
Elaina Jorgensen
Matt Kuzemchak
Elliott Lam
LTJG Justin Miyano
Benjamin Prueitt
Michelle Riley
Kim Roberson
Alison Soss

GRNMS Foundation (GRNMSF) Staff

Jody Patterson

Public in Attendance

Council Business

Welcome and Introductions – SAC Chair Michael Denmark welcomed everyone and asked Elliott Lam to provide guidelines for the virtual meeting and to ensure a quorum of the Council is on the call. Michael called the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) Advisory Council virtual meeting to order at 10:05.

Michael welcomes Lauren Stefaniak, new University Education seat member, to the SAC and asks her to introduce herself to the council, which she does. He then welcomes Elaina Jorgensen, acting Resource Protection Coordinator, to the SAC and asks her to introduce herself to the council, which she does. Michael thanks Matt Kuzemchak for all the effort and work that he has done for Gray's Reef and the council. He welcomes Stan Rogers and other GRNMS staff to the meeting. Michael Denmark outlines the agenda of the meeting.

Michael Denmark: first order of business is to approve the December minutes from the council meeting, there were no objections or correction of the minutes. There was no one that disapproved of the minutes and they were approved.

Elaina Jorgensen outlines the open seats for the SAC (K-12 Education, Commercial Fishing, Living Resources Research, and At-Large).

Superintendent's Report

Stan Rogers GRNMS update: Stan mentions how COVID-19 has impacted the Sanctuary's abilities to do work such as off-shore ops, vessel maintenance, and outreach opportunities. Commends the adaptability of the SAC in switching to a virtual setting. The GR expo has probably been impacted most of all; it was planned for Memorial Day weekend on River Street, but has been postponed to November 21-22. The primary goal is to reintroduce the Sanctuary to the public and raise awareness of the Sanctuary. The plan is to have 25 different booths and several activities to give the public an overview of the Sanctuary and NOAA.

Visitor use has been discussed for a while, it is one of the biggest challenges of the Sanctuary. NCCOS (National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science) and Matt Kendall are analyzing satellite imagery along with more traditional measures of visitor use. They are also working on models to predict visitor use based on weather, gas prices, etc. to try and predict high use times within the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary Sound project is beginning to shift into data analysis and are using sound to determine boats traveling within the Sanctuary. It is tough to quantify the actual number of boats using this method but it is an additional data point for the visitor use analysis. The West Virginia University (WVU) team, led by Robert Burns, has a similar project to NCCOS but has been delayed with COVID-19. They had planned on face to face interactions which have been modified to mail outs; they are pivoting well. Michael asks Stan to give some background of the visitor use issue. Stan: three pieces of the visitor use all began independently but are now seeming to merge together.

Michael Denmark: Visitor use was pulled from a previous SAC meeting. The SAG brought the question of "How many visitors of GR do we want at the Sanctuary?" which then posed the question: how many visitors do we actually have? How many people are fishing, how many people are diving? We don't know. How do you quantify this? This bubbled into a dialog with other Sanctuaries.

Kim Roberson: The question in the early 2000's was the same, and in 2008 a study used marine debris as a proxy for visitor use. The visitor use project now has improved by leaps and bounds. The work by NCCOS and WVU with improved technology has allowed great strides to be made.

Joseph Glenn- We are always counting numbers of divers off the boat

Stan Rogers (updates continued): Research area report issues with 508 compliance have been addressed and are looking towards early May to send in for approval. Connectivity is another working group and a priority for GR. Began mostly looking for ecological connectivity along with the social connectivity. Looking to see how GR is connected to the western Atlantic and beyond. Not only organismal movements but physical characteristics (water quality for example).

The fate of the Nancy Foster Expedition is unknown due to COVID. Once an all clear is given, how will GR fit into rescheduling? As of right now there are no updates. We are hopeful that we will still be on the schedule, but

unknown when. Similar to the vessel opportunity, NOAA diving has been halted. NOAA is looking into mitigation options to allow the return of people to offices and workspaces before the return to work.

Michael Denmark opens the floor for questions. There are no questions.

SAC Purpose and Process

Michael ask Stan and Elaina to engage in a dialogue with the council of the purpose, charter, and best practices to work with the Sanctuary:

Elaina- There are two big things that have happened recently that make input by SAC members especially important - Gray's Reef has a relatively new superintendent and we are developing a new management plan. Sanctuaries are mandated by the National Marine Sanctuaries Act to be advised and receive recommendations on how to manage the Sanctuary by the SAC. The SAC brings together diverse members of the community to provide advice to the superintendent on the management of the Sanctuary. Each of the council seats is a conduit between the community and the SAC. We really want to encourage the SAC to be a partner in the management of Gray's Reef. Now is the time to inform us of the needs and opportunities of the stakeholders you represent..

Stan- making our management scheme comprehensive. Is there anything that we are overlooking?

Bob Crimian- What specifically about GR makes it more special than other hard bottom areas in the SAB? He thinks that transparency will help build trust with recreational users of the Sanctuary

Stan Rogers: goes back to the designation of the Sanctuary, it may not be a unique area of the SAB; the designation of that area is what's important. Saying this better is something that we are working toward.

Peter Auster: the hope is to put out some outreach materials to show how the Research Area is important to the remainder of the Sanctuary. In minutes from SAC when Sarah Fangman was superintendent on what would happen if we removed the lines but he needs to find it.

Mark Padgett: What makes the advisory council special is that with experience working with feds. He doesn't know of another group that actually listens to advice of the council. What makes it special is the people on the council, the field office, and the open communication.

Michael Denmark: He is hopeful that the council continues to be peering into the future and ask questions that may need to be addressed five years out, and strongly encourages members to be visionary not reactionary. Uses visitor use as an example of being visionary.

Stan Rogers: we have changed focus on education programs and would like to hear ways GR can work better with k-12 and educate the younger generation of citizens. And calls to Lauren Stefaniak

Lauren Stefaniak: mentions how academia has been panicking about how to move labs online. Looking at education materials online, she thinks education materials need to be conducive with online learning. With schools moving towards online learning it is important to have good online learning tools (downloadable videos, and interactive diagrams)

Stan: these are the sort of things that need to be brought forward that can be addressed

Paulita Bennett-Martin: piggy backing off of Bob, having a way to breakdown why GR is important is simple government terms also because what is important may be different for different constituents

Peter: is it useful to push a motion or recommendation for Stan to go the national office to develop a program for online STEM as a focus in education?

Stan: we need to be exploring national programs and thinks specifically will plug into that national program locally at GRNMS.

Michael: uses Joseph Glenn for how the process works. Starts with a challenge, let's be visionary. Joseph reached out to Michael with a need regarding diver safety and conceptualized the idea. Joseph put together a presentation and presented it to the SAC for discussion, and formed a project team. After a council motion a specific proposal then needs to be reported to the Stan. Stan then decides whether or not to move forward. Asks Peter and Lauren to move forward with planning

Peter Auster calls for a motion in the chat: Motion: For GRNMS to communicate and collaborate on production and availability of education materials with ONMS, for STEM education (at primary, secondary and higher education levels) specific to current and future distance learning needs.

Mona Behl: Using Virtual reality to bring education materials to life

Joseph Glenn: Are we (divers) the ones that are going out to the Sanctuary the most. Captain asks should we be keeping track of divers out there or should we be keeping track of boats in the Sanctuary.

Michael: ties down Lauren's question, asks if she's okay with getting into more details. Then asks Stan to address Joseph's question

Stan: Both are important but isn't sure which metric is more important. He thinks that the divers are more important but asks Kim.

Kim Roberson: Reached out to Joseph about introducing him to Matt Kendall and will send him a data sheet for capturing boat use and he can speak with Matt Kendall on diver numbers.

Elaina: hopes that people think this is the beginning of the conversation and will send questions/ideas to Stan or Michael after the meeting. Loved hearing from Bob and Paulita about what makes the Sanctuary special and tailoring that response.

Michael Denmark: regards to Bob's comment let's take a look at our mission statement on a later date to see if it addresses his question. And if it's not there we should begin putting that on documents. Asks Peter to give an update on the SAG yesterday.

Science Advisory Group Update

Peter Auster: Thanks Stan for summarizing some things from the SAG. The main topics are Research Area report, visitor use, and long term science plan. Developing a science plan based on the goals and objectives of the 2014 management plan. A draft was sent out last week and we are working on getting feedback to ultimately have a penultimate draft report to the SAC and then to Stan for approval of a final document. The Connectivity report has been a long standing project for the SAC (SAG?). The work that has been done has now been given to Kris Howard to develop. For the science plan it was called aspirational because there are no funds for research in the plan to be executed. A motion was raised, drafted, and passed to redirect end of year funds affected by COVID to be used for short term science needs.

(Motion from the SAG) The GRNMS SAG recommends the SAC consider a motion to request ONMS rebudget available year-end FY20 funds due to Covid19 response, for enhancing science funding and support to partners (academic, agency, business), to better understand and inform policy and management related to natural resources and human dimensions.

The idea being that there are numerous ideas that things that won't be funded due to COVID. Acknowledges that funding generally comes from sources outside of the Sanctuary.

Peter has a motion he would like to bring forth to the SAC: The GRNMS SAC requests the Superintendent contact ONMS regarding a rebudget of available year-end FY20 national program funds, remaining due to the agency response to Covid19, for enhancing science funding and support to partners (academic, agency, business), to better understand and inform policy and management related to natural resources and human dimensions

Michael does anyone second this motion: Mark Padget second the motion. Michael opens the floor to questions.

Monique Gordon: is there any sort of written budget?

Stan: there is an assumption that there will be funds that will not be used because of closures and that will be reallocated. The SAG wants some of that money to be directed towards funds for research.

Peter: we are essentially raising our hands so that we could use some of the surplus funds.

Rachel Guy: is this something that would be done as competitive grants, how will it be allocated if given?

Stan: GR in the past hasn't given direct grants. it is unsure how the funds will be allocated

Mona: education seems to be missing from the motion and suggests keeping it broad including education and research.

Michael Denmark: can you go over how funds will be allocated if given, who will do the deciding who gets funds.

Stan Rogers: Across all of sanctuaries there may be considerable money and may be looking for who has hands up for this surplus. This motion allows us to raise our hand saying we have a need

Peter: clarifying that funds need to be out before the end of the fiscal year

Michael: asks to vote on the motion of Stan asking to have surplus money allocated to Grays Reef. Calls for a vote. Is there anyone on the council opposed to approving this motion? The motion is approved and Stan receives and will do it.

SAC Action Plan Updates

Michael: Asks Paulita and Mona to summarize diversity.

Mona: We propose that GR forms a working group for JEDI (Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion)

Paulita: Presents a powerpoint and asks which image represents, diversity, inclusion, and equity. Diversity is the representation of all our varied identities and differences. Inclusion builds a culture of belonging by actively inviting the contribution and participation of people. Equity seeks to ensure fair treatment, equality or opportunity, and fairness in access to info. Achieving all of these helps to receive the justice piece. Who are we doing this for? Internally or externally? Putting together a working group will help crystalize this idea.

Michael Denmark: would love to see directions with specifics for what can the council do to maximize our efforts regarding the council.

Bob (rec fishing engagement): the idea of this project is to have learning exchanges with fishermen and get them involved with citizen science. Late winter there were two forums in Brunswick, there were small crowds but great discussion. Meeting yesterday discussing ways to meet our goals for these learning exchanges. There are also plans for releasing a video to display GR and best fishing practices.

Joseph Glenn - update on buoy: with COVID there has been a delay with mooring buoy, charters are currently still being done at GR. Visibility has not been great but there are plans to still get out to the Sanctuary. Joseph has reached out to people in the Florida Keys. It is important to know who and what kind of boats use the Sanctuary to allow for the proper equipment to be used. Work has been delayed but not halted.

Mark Carson had to leave the meeting so law enforcement update was skipped

Mark Padgett - Ecotourism: The ecotourism in coastal Georgia hasn't been etched out really for GR. At least 30 businesses have been identified with the idea of an initial phone call with a select few for potential to benefit for GR and ecotourism industry. Would like to get with Stan about picking this back up

Michael: advises Mark Padgett to follow the correct procedure to get this moving again

Elliott Lam: adding for Ben Hughes Don't think I can talk. Law Enforcement: One item I would like to point out. Offshore activity/fishing has substantially increased during the COVID-19 period. I expect GRNMS visitation has also increased.

Foundation and Chapter Updates

Jody Patterson (GR foundation): events have been postponed/cancelled due to COVID including fishy affair and ROV competition. CHOW meeting January the 9th. Science on tap will be an informal panel of GRNMS scientist discussing research.

Michael: requests that the council attend the expo would like to see a strong council

NOAA Fisheries and other reports

Rick DeVictor: Decreasing fishing effort, commercial fishing has largely stopped. It is difficult to gauge recreational numbers and is unknown how COVID has affected recreational fishing. SAFMC are going to meet in June and possibly talk about emergency response to commercial fishing to help fishermen affected by COVID. There's a proposed rule out for descending devices

Public Comment

Michael opens the floor to anyone from the public

Adam Geer: new faculty, introduces himself to the SAC

Closing remarks

Michael Denmark provides closing remarks for the SAC meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 12:28 pm EST