



# NEWS FROM NOAA

## NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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### **NOAA Initiates Marine Debris Monitoring at Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary**

NOAA has established a new monitoring program in Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary to collect data on the location and types of marine debris in the sanctuary. The monitoring data will be used to support cleanup efforts and reduce harmful effects on sanctuary resources.

"Understanding the sources of marine debris, and the processes that distribute it throughout the sanctuary, is crucial for designing debris prevention, education, and cleanup efforts to improve habitat quality," said George Sedberry, Gray's Reef sanctuary superintendent. "Results from this new monitoring program will greatly enhance marine debris removal efforts in the sanctuary."

Nine long-term monitoring sites are being established throughout the sanctuary to compare debris accumulation rates among regions with differing levels of human use. Sites will be monitored by trained volunteer divers quarterly. The data will allow sanctuary managers to target locations in need of debris removal, and to determine the frequency of monitoring and cleanup efforts.

The monitoring program is based on a 2007 NOAA study, which found that discarded fishing gear, cans, bottles, rope, and other debris occur in the most intensively used areas of the sanctuary. The study and monitoring program address needs outlined in the Gray's Reef sanctuary's 2006 Final Management Plan to assess and monitor the status of marine debris in the sanctuary. The monitoring program at Gray's Reef is funded by the NOAA Marine Debris Program.

"We have a pretty good idea of what types of debris are out there, where they come from, and where the greatest concentration is," said Laurie Bauer, a marine biologist with the NOAA Center for Coastal Monitoring and Assessment. "This new monitoring effort will help us determine how long individual debris items have been out there and how they affect seafloor organisms."

Located off the Georgia coast, Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary is one of the largest nearshore live-bottom reefs off the southeastern United States, covering approximately 17 square miles. Loggerhead sea turtles, a threatened species, use Gray's Reef for foraging and resting. The reef also is near the only known winter calving ground for the highly endangered North Atlantic Right Whale. The sanctuary is managed by NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Center for Coastal Monitoring and Assessment: <http://ccmaserver.nos.noaa.gov>

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary: <http://graysreef.noaa.gov>

NOAA Marine Debris Program: <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov>