

**GRAY'S REEF NMS
SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting, September 28, 2005
GRNMS Offices, Skidaway Island, Savannah, Georgia**

Distributed Materials

- Meeting agenda
- Minutes Advisory Council meeting June 2005
- Draft suggested meeting dates
- Letter to Research Area Working Group
- Coastal Training Program
- Latitude 31-30 May Meeting Agenda
- NMSP Strategic Plan

Advisory Council Members Present

Leslie Sautter, university education	Danny Gleason, living resources research
Venetia Butler, K-12 education	Henry Ansley, GA DNR CRD
Joe Kimmel, NOAA Fisheries Service	Judy Helmey, commercial/charter fishing
Tim Tarver, sport fishing	Brooke Vallaster, Sapelo Island NERR
Ralph Neely, sport diving	Clark Alexander, non-living resources research

Advisory Council Members Absent

Christi Lambert, regional conservation	Scott Rogers, U.S. Coast Guard
Doug Lewis, GA DNR Law Enforcement	Will Berson, local conservation

GRNMS Staff Members Present

Reed Bohne, ex-officio Council member and sanctuary manager	
Greg McFall, research coordinator	Becky Shortland, stewardship coordinator
Jim Sullivan, regional projects coordinator	

Other NOAA and USCG Personnel Present

Lauren Fuquay, Project Oceanica	Jennifer Morgan, Flower Garden Banks NMS
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Public Present

No public was present at this meeting

Welcome

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

Advisory Council Business

Dr. Kimmel asked for any corrections to the June 2005 meeting minutes. There were no corrections noted; the minutes were approved as presented.

Dr. Kimmel asked Council Coordinator Becky Shortland to explain the survey that members of the Council should be receiving in the near future from students at the University of Michigan.

Dr. Kimmel continued with information on the Annual National Advisory Council Chair and Coordinators Meeting, which is scheduled for April in Washington, DC. One of the focuses of the meeting will be anthropogenic noise. Henry noted concerns about potential seismic surveys for oil and gas exploration offshore. Clark Alexander added that his understanding is that existing data will be used and not new survey data. Danny Gleason and Judy Helmey talked about proposed energy windmills in Georgia's offshore waters. Judy has been involved in exploratory sitings, but these were done during humid weather limiting visibility. The proposal is to do three-five windmills as a pilot project in 20 meters of water (70-100 ft). Henry expressed that the main concerns may be view shed integrity, birds and bats. Other concerns voiced were acoustic noise from vibrations, construction interfering with marine mammals, and cable installation across water bottoms. Reed Bohne noted that there may be useful opportunities with cables if they are near GRNMS. Clark spoke about the monitoring data possibilities that could be done jointly with such a project. Judy Helmey asked that the Advisory Council continue to be apprised of the proposal. Clark Alexander agreed to present more information at the next meeting.

Joe Kimmel noted that the national meeting has invited two members of the Advisory Council and he asked the vice chair or secretary be considered in addition to himself. All members agreed that if possible, Leslie Sautter should attend. Leslie will check her schedule and let Dr. Kimmel know.

Becky Shortland noted that two Advisory Council seats will soon be advertised since the three-year terms are ending: K-12 Education and Non-living resources research. Current members are eligible to reapply.

Project Oceanica Transects Program

Dr. Leslie Sautter presented information on Project Oceanica's Transects Program. Project Oceanica at the College of Charleston initiated the new program designed to immerse and engage undergraduate and graduate students in oceanographic research by taking them to sea to collect biological and geological samples and later analyze them in the laboratory. Lively discussion accompanied the presentation. (PowerPoint slides can be obtained by request to the Sanctuary Advisory Council Coordinator.)

Members adjourned for lunch.

Status of Programs

Savannah Ocean Film Festival

Reed Bohne commented on the successful Savannah Ocean Film Festival hosted by GRNMS. The weekend consisted of an interesting lineup of films, filmmakers, and a joint project with Savannah State University. That project, "Seaing is Believing", was an art and essay contest with public schools. He also thanked Gail Krueger who did an exemplary job of putting the festival together. The event received excellent local media coverage.

Reed also mentioned the 25th anniversary celebration in 2006 and asked members to give input on ways to enhance the film festival and events to celebrate throughout the year.

Marine Research Area Concept

Reed reminded the Advisory Council about the last meetings' focus on the marine research area concept recommendations presented by the working group and development of the Council's set of recommendations to management. He announced that NOAA GRNMS has decided to adopt those recommendations as presented. A concurrence memo has been forwarded to NMSP Director Dan Basta for his signature. GRNMS should have that signed concurrence to send out to all SAC members in the near future. The intent is to continue to move forward with this and develop a pre-scoping document using the information developed by the working group and Matt Kendall. The scoping document will be reviewed by the advisory council before it is presented to the public. The public process is not expected to begin until after the first of the 2006 year. We intend to follow the NEPA process as outlined in past meetings.

Several Council members began to discuss the public's response to a proposed research area. The expectation is that there could be much negative reaction to the proposal. Some members noted that if we designed the area to leave enough open to the public with some high relief areas, the community would be more receptive, but, if not, we should expect a great deal of reaction. The public is becoming more sensitized to the idea. Where it is located will be very important.

Research Programs

Greg McFall presented a synopsis of the science field season at GRNMS. A grant was received for new data equipment at the data buoy. Dr. Hyland of the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) sampled at the sanctuary looking for organic contaminants. He has been funded to revisit the same stations to look at contaminant levels now in sediments, mussels and black sea bass. A report will be presented in the spring. Two significant cruises were completed on the NOAA Ship R/V Nancy Foster.

Danny Gleason with his Georgia Southern University graduate students is looking at plot clearings with control areas in J-reef and now GRNMS to investigate invertebrate recruitment. Another student is working on Oculina coral recruitment. A discussion then began on locations and abundance of Oculina in the Southeast. Danny noted that the invertebrate identification guide will soon be available on the internet. GSU is considering the production of a printed guide as well.

Dr. Matt Kendall from NCCOS has been conducting fish counts at GR, a marine debris assessment, and an assessment of invertebrate cover. Project Oceanica provided daily web updates on the cruises as an outreach component. Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) completed another year of advanced assessment team dives at the sanctuary to enhance fish surveys for species diversity.

Greg explained that he has devised a method to extract contaminants from sponges. It appears that sponges do contain organic contaminants at higher levels than in sediments. They may be cleaning our reef. A water quality monitoring program is ongoing with Skidaway Institute of

Oceanography researcher Dr. Marc Frischer. The initial data will soon be reported. Early indications are that GRNMS is in good shape.

NMSP Regionalization

Danny Gleason asked if the regionalization will result in a more effective and more efficient operation or will this reduce the capacity of the program to meet goals and objectives by having to add more staff with limited budget. Reed Bohne responded that we are limited in our ability to grow the program from an ecosystem function basis. Regionalization also allows us to work more comprehensively with partners. Danny expressed concerns that these decisions have already been made without input from Advisory Councils. Jim Sullivan expressed the intent that the regionalization will enhance the ability for the program to maximize efficiency and effectiveness by coordinating and sharing resources. Clark Alexander commented that it seems like the trend is to get bigger sanctuaries and more of them and wondered if it would not be better to expand existing sanctuaries. Reed responded that each region will look at existing resources and assess the entire network of conservation and protection, and look for other protection needs and opportunities. Danny expressed concerns that the growth in personnel will result in a larger percentage of cost because the new personnel will be a higher grade.

Public comment

Dr. Kimmel welcomed former Advisory Council member Matt Gilligan. Dr. Gilligan spoke to the film festival and the panel discussion around the Savannah State University program. He said that it had a tremendous impact on participants regarding the Guerrero Project. He expressed the hope that the NMSP will support the project and finding the ship. He said the project has the potential to galvanize a common goal and bring together differing peoples with differing opinions. He asked that the Advisory Council and GRNMS staff do whatever is necessary to promote formally requesting that the NMSP find and preserve the ship and its stories.

Final Council and Staff Comments

Joe Kimmel spoke about activities for fisheries management that are taking place in the Southeast Region, specifically for recovery of snapper/grouper fish species through management measures being developed in the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Venetia Butler commented that the Sapelo Island Long Term Ecological Research Project is another way to connect research and education. She has facilitated a workshop for teachers to connect ocean observation projects to the classroom and use it to help meet the Georgia Performance Standards for Science Education. This is another way to connect real science with classrooms and teachers.

Judy Helmey is turning her fishing trips into more educational experiences by making her customers aware of the marine resources and promoting stewardship of resources like marine fishes. Her longevity in the business has made her aware of the decline of resources. Judy complemented NOAA Fisheries on targeting appropriately declining fish species.

Henry Ansley reported that Coastal Resources Division has reorganized. He is now habitat program leader and is passing artificial reef responsibilities on until retirement. He reminded the

Advisory Council of the annual CoastFest celebration this weekend in Brunswick. He also mentioned that there is an initiative underway to consider stocking red drum; shrimp and crab industry regulations are being considered and public involvement meetings are being held. There is also considerable concern for drift gillnets and the impacts on sharks.

Tim Tarver is doing a great deal of fund raising for CCA of GA and has also raised money for Katrina victims.

Ralph Neely reported that some dive charters have left this area, but there is a significant amount of interest in GRNMS. There are conflicts between spearfishers and divers that don't hunt. There is not a dive charter in this area that goes to GRNMS without spearfishing. He commented that there are people who want to see GRNMS, but they do not want to be there with spearfishing allowed. He finds it frustrating for business.

Danny Gleason has two students finishing this semester that did research at GRNMS. He will send announcements of their seminars and a link to the invertebrate website.

The next SAC meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 18th, 2006 in Statesboro. Possible agenda items include:

- Final Management Plan/Final EIS
- Next steps in the research area concept process
- Wind farms
- NOAA Fisheries Service activities

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.