

**Gray's Reef NMS
Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting
October 2, 2008
Skidaway Institute of Oceanography
Library Auditorium**

Members present

Joe Kimmel, Chair, NOAA Fisheries
Venetia Butler, K-12 Education
Clark Alexander, Research
Danny Gleason, Research
Dorset Hurley, Sapelo Island NERR
Doug Lewis, GADNR WRD LE
Al Samuels, NOAA OLE
BMC Andy Vanderveen, USCG SERFTC
Will Berson, Conservation
Tim Tarver, Sport Fishing
Ralph Neely, Sport Diving

Members absent

Scott Harris, University Education
Wendell Harper, Charter/commercial
Fishing
Christi Lambert, Conservation
Spud Woodward, GADNR CRD

Gray's Reef and other NOAA staff
present

George Sedberry, Superintendent
Chad Meckley, Marine Operations
Becky Shortland, Stewardship
Gail Krueger,
Outreach/Communications
Karen Raine – NOAA GCEL

Vessel Program

Sanctuary Advisory Council Chair Joe Kimmel opened the meeting. He officially welcomed Special Agent Al Samuels as a member of the Advisory Council representing NOAA Office for Law Enforcement. The first portion of the meeting was dedicated to an overview of the ONMS/GRNMS vessel program, so Joe turned it over to GRNMS Marine Operations Coordinator LTJG Chad Meckley who gave a presentation. (See PPT presentation following summary.)

Discussion followed the presentation during which members asked about the capabilities of GRNMS' current vessels. It was pointed out that neither the R/V *Joe Ferguson* or the R/V *Sam Gray* would be capable of conducting mapping of the bottom. Another limitation is being available only for day trips. The presentation was followed by a tour and ride on the visiting sanctuaries vessel R4106, a 41 foot catamaran.

Advisory Council Business

July meeting summary: Advisory Council members returned to the Library and Chair Joe Kimmel reconvened the meeting with a request to approve the July meeting summary. The summary was approved.

Advisory Council charter and membership: Dr. Kimmel continued with several items of information including a report that the Advisory Council Charter had been amended establishing a standing executive committee. As noted previously, the seat for NOAA Office for Law Enforcement has also been added to the charter. The terms for the sport fishing, sport diving and regional conservation seats have concluded and GRNMS is

advertising to fill those seats. Current members can also apply and be reappointed. Applications are due to the sanctuary by November 1st.

National collaborations: Dr. Kimmel then went on to report that a letter was sent to him by ONMS Director Dan Basta asking that advisory council members help identify national forums and key players with whom we could collaborate to address the marine conservation problems the nation confronts. An example is the MPA Federal Advisory Committee that is currently advertising for several seats to fill. No discussion followed.

NMSA consultation regulations: The ONMS is also requesting comments on a proposal to develop regulations implementing consultation requirements of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. The purpose of the regulations would be to create a more efficient and effective process. While there was no discussion regarding this issue Dr. Kimmel noted similar consultations have proven beneficial when used elsewhere (i.e., NMFS).

GRNMS programs report: The GRNMS programs report was enhanced with information from Communications and Outreach Coordinator Gail Krueger about the 2008 Ocean Film Festival that was held September 18-21 in Savannah. It was a great success with approximately 3000 in attendance. The expanded schedule including the Jepson Center as a venue was very well received.

Clark Alexander commented that the current programs report was “hitting the mark” with providing the information Advisory Council members sought – what had been accomplished since the last meeting. Danny Gleason asked if there were other audiences for the programs report aside from the Advisory Council. Discussion then followed about the possibility of posting the report on the GRNMS website and sending it out to interested parties on the listserve. This could include media representatives with possible highlights for potential stories.

Greening the sanctuaries program: Stewardship Coordinator Becky Shortland then spoke about the report sent to members from the Ocean Climate Summit held in San Francisco last spring. The summit was organized in response to a new ONMS initiative for “greening” the sanctuaries and sanctuary communities. Ms. Shortland asked members to revisit the possibility of establishing a working group of the Advisory Council to address “greening” for GRNMS. Although the Ocean Climate Summit report may not have specific recommendations applicable to GRNMS, she will review the report and report at the next meeting. No action was taken to establish a working group. Discussion to establish a working group is pending delivery of the report from Becky. Danny Gleason mentioned again that Georgia Southern University has established a sustainability group and that perhaps some partnering opportunities exist. It was determined that staff would request a presentation from the GSU Director of Sustainability. Venetia Butler reminded members that GRNMS is already doing a number of things to “green” operations. Biodiesel for the vessels has been considered but supply is an issue. The vessels can be converted, but there are no distributors in the area. The matter will continue to be considered as biodiesel becomes available.

Law Enforcement Working Group – Sgt. Doug Lewis reported about activities conducted by the Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources Law Enforcement since the July meeting. He noted that the new Joint Enforcement Agreement started in July. (See first JEA7 2008-09 report attached.) Sgt. Lewis also reported that construction of the new marine services building at Priest Landing should begin soon and that rangers still do not have federal identification.

Karen Raine reported that a settlement of \$3,000 had been reached in the first anchoring case made at GRNMS. There is another notice of violation for a case of anchoring and use of prohibited gear that was assessed at \$10,000. Karen and others congratulated the GADNR and U.S. Coast Guard personnel who made those cases and also thanked NOAA OLE's Al Samuels for the outstanding support he has provided. It was also reported that a case has been made for illegal take of live rock. While the rock was not taken from GRNMS, the accused stated that he attempted to take from GRNMS but was unsuccessful. Discussion followed about permitted taking of live rock offshore Georgia, but that no permits have been issued for this area. Will Berson asked if there was protocol for issuing a press release about these enforcement cases. Karen Raine responded that there was no issue with ONMS issuing a press release on the settled case. Venetia Butler noted that this provides yet another opportunity to get GRNMS out in front of the public while putting users on notice that enforcement is something to consider. It was also suggested that these enforcement actions could be put into the programs report for distribution and placement on the webpage.

U.S. Coast Guard representative BMC Andy Vanderveen reported that CGC YELLOWFIN has made three trips through the reef since July (no sightings) and will continue that in the future. CGC TARPON continues regular patrols and the anchoring/illegal trap case has been processed through NOAA GCEL with a \$10,000.00 penalty assessed.

Most notably, CG AIR Station Savannah will now be conducting LMR overflights with a SRFTC observer aboard in their AOR and Gray's Reef is one of their areas of concern. USCG will pass the results of any overflights in the GRNMS area to GRNMS staff as they come in. They anticipate regular flights, operations permitting, for the foreseeable future.

GRNMS Condition Report

Superintendent George Sedberry gave a brief presentation on the recently released Gray's Reef Condition Report (See following presentation.)

After a review of the threats, discussion focused on the proliferation of lionfish in waters of the Southeast including GRNMS. Members expressed serious concerns about the potential impacts and alternation of fish populations due to the invasive lionfish. Will Berson also noted that oil drilling offshore of Georgia may also be in the near future and asked about potential impacts to the sanctuary. George Sedberry responded that no drilling is permitted inside the sanctuary, but that activities outside the sanctuary can still be a concern. It does not appear that environmental review of any proposal will be based on current science but on very old reports done in the 1970s and 1980s. It is

expected that the ONMS and GRNMS would be consulted if proposals arise. Clark Alexander noted that an environmental impact statement is being developed for the Mid-Atlantic.

Dorset Hurley talked about studies in which GRNMS may want to participate that are being conducted through Sapelo Island NERR. NOAA NCCOS (National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science) is looking at the spread of PCBs from superfund sites in the Brunswick, Georgia area. Excessive amounts are being found in dolphin and the Center for Disease Control is becoming involved to look for it in human populations. Dorset asked about getting samples of fish from GRNMS into shore to sample for contaminants. There are also studies looking for bacteria and antibiotic feed traces from large animal production facilities. This is being found in oyster tissue from along the Georgia coast. Scientists are looking in the Altamaha and Satilla rivers. Perhaps mussels could be sampled from GRNMS. George Sedberry mentioned that NCCOS' Dr. Jeff Hyland conducted sediment sampling for contaminants out through GRNMS to the shelf-edge from Altamaha Sound. Sampling was also done under the NOAA Ocean Exploration Latitude 31 -30 cruise from the shelf edge to 1000 m to collect fishes for examination of antibiotic resistance in 2004, but those samples were lost in Hurricane Katrina before being processed.

In George Sedberry's brief absence, Becky Shortland reviewed the points adopted by NOAA GRNMS for the research area draft environmental impacts statement. (See list below.) There was much discussion concerning permitted diving in the research area. Clark's understanding was that the RAWG wants the research area to be tightly controlled. Doug expressed regulation concern. Al Samuels' suggestion of taking videos to promote changes in the area was well received. Danny Gleason reiterated his concern that the area would be closed to all users and thus no public could observe the changes on site. Ultimately, no consensus was reached by the Advisory Council on the diving issue.

Ms. Shortland also reported that the draft Environmental Assessment and proposed rule on the use of spearfishing gear in GRNMS is in NOAA clearance. A comment period with a public meeting is expected when it is released.

Public comment

No members of the public were present for comments.

Educational presentation: MPAs – what are they?

Because of time overruns on the agenda and the lack of public present, it was decided that the presentation on MPAs would be schedule at a later date when new SAC members would also be in attendance

Next meeting and agenda

Sanctuary Advisory Council members agreed that the next meeting should be held in January in Statesboro, Georgia, at the Georgia Southern Museum if possible. Becky Shortland will poll members by email for a date. The suggested agenda would include a presentation by the GSU Sustainability Office Director. The meeting was adjourned.