

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council
Meeting, October 24, 2006
Best Western Sea Island Inn
Beaufort, South Carolina

Distributed Materials

- Meeting Agenda
- Minutes – Advisory Council Meeting July 2006
- Press release Advisory Council vacancies
- SAFMC Amendment 14 Public Hearing Summary
- Education and Outreach Working Group
- Research Advisory Panel
- GRNMS Final Rule

Advisory Council Members Present

Danny Gleason, Living Resources Research
Judy Helmey, Charter/Commercial Fishing
Joe Kimmel, Chair, NOAA Fisheries Service
Will Berson, Georgia Conservation
Venetia Butler, K-12 Education
Ralph Neely, Recreational Diving
Henry Ansley, GADNR Coastal Resources Division
Doug Lewis, GADNR Law Enforcement
LT Eric Johnson, USCG

Advisory Council Members Absent

Clark Alexander, Non-living Resources Research
Leslie Sautter, University Education
Tim Tarver, Sport Fishing
Buddy Sullivan, Sapelo Island NERR
Christi Lambert, Regional Conservation

GRNMS and NMSP Staff Present

Becky Shortland, Stewardship Coordinator
Greg McFall, Acting Co-Manager/Research Coordinator
Cathy Sakas, Education Coordinator
Sarah Fangman, SE/GOM Region
Gail Krueger, Outreach/Communications Coordinator

Others Present:

Matt Kendall, NOAA Biogeography Team
Laurie Bauer, NOAA Biogeography Team
Kerry O'Malley, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

Welcome, Introductions, Advisory Council Business

Gray's Reef NMS Advisory Council Chair Dr. Joe Kimmel opened the meeting, welcomed everyone and asked for introductions. He quickly reviewed the agenda and asked for approval. All present approved the agenda as proposed. Dr. Kimmel then asked for any changes to the minutes of the July Sanctuary Advisory Council meeting. No changes were requested and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Becky Shortland then reminded members that three Advisory Council seats will expire at the end of the year. The announcement for seat vacancies is included in the distributed materials. Becky asked members to please distribute this information widely. She also noted that members currently holding those seats are eligible to reapply. Because NMSP policy requires a review panel of Advisory Council members, Dr. Kimmel asked members to appoint such a panel. Members suggested a minimum of three review panel members to recommend selections to the sanctuary superintendent. Henry Ansley, Venetia Butler and Clark Alexander were selected to serve as the review panel representing a cross-section of interests.

SAFMC Snapper-Grouper Amendment 14 (MPAs) – Kerry O'Malley Sanctuary Advisory Council Discussion

Kerry O'Malley, fisheries biologist with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council gave a presentation on the proposed Amendment 14 to the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan (see attached PowerPoint).

Kerry emphasized the collaborative approach employed to establish marine protected areas for deep water species of snapper-grouper that are in decline. The goal has been to protect the fish species while minimizing adverse socioeconomic effects.

Ms. O'Malley reviewed the proposed offshore sites adjacent to North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. The goal is to recover deep water, long-lived, protogynous species that are vulnerable to overfishing. She explained that traditional methods of management have not worked to recover these fishes and that MPAs are the last shot.

Results in other areas, such as Oculina Experimental Closed Area and Florida Keys NMS, show increased abundance and size within closed areas. (see public hearing summary).

Advisory Council members raising several questions involving vessel monitoring, gear restrictions and future research needs as the discussion continued. Ms. O'Malley noted that the amendment should be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce in early 2007 and may be in place late 2007 or early 2008.

Kerry O'Malley continued with information on other SAFMC snapper-grouper amendments that address overfishing of other species (Amendments 13C, 15 and the developing ecosystem plan). More information can be found on the SAFMC website <http://www.safmc.net/>. It was also noted that Greg McFall now serves on a review panel for Amendment 14. Kerry was heartily thanked by all.

Status of Programs

GRNMS 25th Anniversary Events

-Georgia Aquarium Gala – Joe Kimmel and Cathy Sakas reported on the very delightful 25th Anniversary Gala held at the new Georgia Aquarium on September 7th

-Ocean Film Festival – Venetia Butler and Gail Kruger reported on the successes of the annual Gray's Reef Ocean Film Festival that was expanded to include maritime heritage films and venues in Brunswick and Tybee Island. The Brunswick venue was held jointly with Sapelo Island NERR celebrating the reserve's 30th anniversary. Becky Shortland noted that Venetia Butler was awarded the volunteer of the year award as part of the opening night reception in Savannah.

Education and Outreach Working Group report – Venetia Butler and Cathy Sakas reported that the new Education and Outreach Working Group of the Advisory Council was up and running with a focus on the sanctuary's oceanography curriculum. Members of the working group are helping to develop the course and aligning it with state and national standards.

Research Advisory Panel – Danny Gleason briefly reported that a research advisory panel (working group) has been formed and will be meeting November 28 & 29 in Savannah. The group will be tackling the site "condition report" as its first task. The panel may also be addressing the concept of a marine research area in the sanctuary.

Final Rule and Research Area Process – Becky Shortland reported that the Final Rule was published in the *Federal Register* on October 12th, but that new regulations will not be effective until early 2007 after another Congressional review. The full text of the rule is included in the distributed materials. Joe Kimmel emphasized that members should keep a copy of this on hand to address most questions about the new regulations.

The process to more formally explore the concept of a research area will not begin until after the new regulations are in effect.

Becky solicited ideas on how to get the word out about the new regulations and to help communicate when the research area process begins. Capt. Judy Helmey noted that she would be happy to continue to include information in her newsletter; she also does live morning radio. Another idea is to get out to user by

visiting docks and marinas and just talking to people along with offering presentations to clubs and groups that might be interested. Members also noted that “give away” items like tee shirts or bandanas would be a good idea, or a sea anchor prize to help emphasize the no anchoring rule. Various fishing and diving publications, the SAFMC newsletter and regulations brochure are all important outlets as well as the data buoy website. It was also suggested that a flyer or card be developed that can be handed out by law enforcement officials.

Public Comment

No comments offered.

End Notes

After discussion it was decided that the next meeting of the GRNMS Advisory Council would be held in January (10th or 17th) at the sanctuary office on Skidaway Island, Savannah. Becky Shortland will confirm a date after polling others who are not present.

Members discussed a tentative spring meeting to be held jointly with the Sapelo Island NERR Advisory Committee, which meets on Sapelo Island on April 19th. The pros and cons were discussed including other options for a joint meeting next fall instead of April and hosting Advisory Council meetings in Atlanta or West Georgia. It was mentioned that there are numerous fishing and dive clubs in the Atlanta area that might participate in a meeting. Becky will explore these ideas and consult with members at a later date. She also noted that the Advisory Council has never met in south end of the coast (St. Mary’s).

Henry Ansley highlighted the Coastal Resources Division’s new “Know the Connection” campaign to educate the public about coastal resources. He also noted there is a new shark species assessment that shows some species still in serious decline.

Will Berson alerted members that the state of Georgia will be promulgating regulations defining the boundary between uplands and marshlands despite intense controversy.

Danny Gleason announced that he has submitted a paper describing the sponge community of Gray’s Reef NMS.

Meeting Adjourned