



GRAY'S REEF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ANNOUNCES RESULTS OF FIRST FEDERAL ENFORCEMENT CASES IN THE SANCTUARY

Settlements have been reached in the first federal enforcement cases in Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary. Charges were made against two recreational fishermen for unlawfully anchoring in the sanctuary and for possessing or using unauthorized fishing gear in the sanctuary. In both cases, fines were assessed against the anglers.

The NOAA Office of General Counsel for Enforcement and Litigation (GCEL) issued a Notice of Violation and Assessment (NOVA) that levied a civil monetary penalty against Jeffery Foskey, owner and operator of the fishing vessel *Black Pearl* for unlawfully anchoring in Gray's Reef. The case was settled through payment of \$3,000 by Foskey.

GCEL also issued a \$10,000 NOVA to William Sibley, owner and operator of the Georgia registered vessel GA6032ZP, for unlawfully anchoring as well as possessing or using unauthorized fishing gear in the sanctuary.

"The NOAA sanctuaries program and Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary take protection of the resources of these special areas seriously, and acts to conserve them on behalf of the owners, the citizens of the U.S." said Gray's Reef Superintendent George Sedberry.

Anchoring in Gray's Reef was prohibited in February 2007, followed by an intense outreach campaign notifying users of this change in regulations. During a review and revision of the 1983 sanctuary management plan, scientists and managers determined that anchoring damages the limestone bottom and fragile attached sponges and corals, which are important sheltering and feeding areas for many other species, including important fish like black sea bass. In addition, most users of the reef, including divers and fishermen, felt that anchoring was not necessary for them to enjoy the resources of the reef, and most agreed that the potential for habitat damage was not worth anchoring in the sanctuary.

The ban on anchoring is one of several regulations that are enforced during marine patrols conducted by Georgia DNR and the U.S. Coast Guard. GaDNR is authorized under a joint enforcement agreement to enforce sanctuary and other federal regulations in Gray's Reef. The GaDNR documented the case against Foskey, and the U. S. Coast Guard documented the case against Sibley.

"The Georgia Department of Natural Resources rangers and United States Coast Guard did an outstanding job of documenting these cases" said Dale Jones, director of NOAA's Office for Law Enforcement.

"The Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) is a win-win program and GaDNR is committed to participate in the protection of the reef well into the future," said Capt. Stephen Adams, of GaDNR.

Additional regulations may be found at the Gray's Reef web site (www.graysreef.noaa.gov).