



**Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary
Advisory Council Meeting
August 16, 2012**

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
Marine Resources Research Institute
Charleston, SC

Sanctuary Advisory Council Members Present

Danny Gleason, Living Resources Research (Chair)
Venetia Butler, K-12 Education (Secretary)
Mary Conley, Conservation
Capt. Doug Lewis, GA DNR Law Enforcement
Rick DeVictor, NOAA Fisheries SE Region
Suzanne VanParreren, Sapelo Island NERR
LT Brandon Fisher, U.S. Coast Guard SRFTC
Bill Cliett, At-Large Representative
Randy Rudd, Sport Diving
Anna George, Conservation
Tim Goodale, University Education
Michael Denmark, Sport Fishing
Chuck Hopkinson, Sea Grant

Members Absent

Clark Alexander, Non-living Resources Research (Vice-chair)
Pat Geer, GADNR Coastal Resources Division
Al Samuels, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement
Warren Hupman, Charter/Commercial Fishing

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) Staff Present

George Sedberry, Superintendent
Greg McFall, Deputy Superintendent/Research Coordinator
Jody Patterson, Administrative Assistant
Becky Shortland, Resource Protection Coordinator

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) Staff Present

Billy Causey, Director, Southeast, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Region
Sarah Fangman, Program Coordinator, Southeast, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Region
Becky Holyoke, National Sanctuary Advisory Council Coordinator

Public Present

Bob Van Dolah, Director, Marine Resources Research Institute (MRRI), South Carolina
Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR)

Jeff Hyland, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Center for Coastal Environmental Health and Biomolecular Research (CCEHBR)
Laura Kracker, NOAA CCEHBR
Marcel Reichert, MRRI

Guest Speaker

Jene Nissen, U.S. Navy Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing (AFTT) Program Manager

Welcome and introductions

Council Chairman Danny Gleason called the Gray's Reef Sanctuary Advisory Council meeting to order welcoming members, staff, public and presenters. Introductions were made and the agenda was reviewed with no changes.

MRRI Director Dr. Bob Van Dolah gave an overview of the history of Fort Johnson, the complex today and partners. He further explained that MRRI is dedicated to research for marine management with a focus on fisheries.

U.S. Navy Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing (AFTT)

U.S. Navy Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing Program Manager Jene Nissen gave a presentation on the environmental planning for training and testing in the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. The area includes all three sanctuaries in the Southeast Region. Sanctuary Advisory Council members had requested the presentation to better understand the potential for impacts to Gray's Reef resources primarily and other sanctuaries secondarily. The Navy released a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) in May 2012, to cover activities from 2014-2019. ONMS reviewed and commented on the draft EIS. Concerns were focused on effects to sanctuary resources from active sonar, weapons training, bottom disturbing activities and the potential for marine debris. The final EIS is not anticipated until September 2013. Jene emphasized that 'direct' mortalities to marine mammals from active sonar with the proposed increased activities are not expected. The Navy has developed threshold criteria with NOAA Fisheries Office of Protected Resources.

Mr. Nissen went on to discuss the Undersea Warfare Training Range (USWTR) off the northeast Florida coast. It was USWTR and potential affects on marine mammals, in particular the highly-endangered right whale, that caught the attention of Gray's Reef council members some years ago. The USWTR is fully approved and construction is expected to begin in 2014.

Gray's Reef research area/annual science cruise

Greg McFall gave an overview of the annual science cruise on the NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster* that took place in late May and into June. He reported that despite disruptions from tropical systems and the turbulent aftermath, a good deal of work was accomplished. Drs. Jeff Hyland, Laura Kracker and Danny Gleason followed Greg with presentations on their specific projects. Details of the cruise and projects can be found in the latest GRNMS Programs Report. Billy Causey and Greg McFall thanked the researchers and noted the cooperative partnerships in science at GRNMS are extremely valuable.

Law enforcement working group

Capt. Doug Lewis gave the update on patrols since the new Joint Enforcement Agreement took affect July 1st. One vessel was given a verbal warning for fishing in the research area. LT Brandon Fisher reported on coast guard activities including over flights out of Air Station

Savannah. Brandon also noted that the updated training program at the Southeast Regional Fisheries Training Center (SRFTC) has been overhauled along with job aides. These have stronger sanctuaries components and include the research area. Becky Shortland reported that the annual law enforcement working group meeting was held at the end of June. There were good discussions and valuable networking, but no major outcomes came from the meeting.

Site evaluation list

Billy Causey gave a presentation on the history and current status of the ONMS Site Evaluation List (SEL). Interest has peaked in the SEL because there are several communities around the country that are interested in exploring sanctuary designation for marine and Great Lakes areas. The SEL, however, must be reactivated by NOAA and through a public notice and comment before any new designation can be considered. The list was deactivated in 1995. Reactivating the SEL allows NOAA to begin assessing whether or not new designations will negatively impact the existing system of sanctuaries. That finding is necessary prior to any new designations being made. After questions and discussions on other protected areas and their designations, a motion was made to send a letter from the advisory council to NOAA and the Department of Commerce requesting reactivation of the SEL. The motion was seconded. With no further discussion the motion was passed unanimously. A letter will be developed and circulated to all members for approval.

Superintendent's report

George Sedberry updated the council on several topics including the ONMS campaign to increase public awareness and support, and the Sanctuaries Classic, a contest to encourage family activities in sanctuaries. The classic will run through Labor Day this year and again next year during the summer fishing season. Brandon Fisher suggested sanctuary interest being generated through Facebook.

George also reported that progress is being made toward establishing a "Friends" group for GRNMS as a chapter of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. Other sanctuaries are in the process of either considering the same arrangement or moving toward a memorandum of agreement with the foundation. Members mentioned several people who might be considered for a GRNMS friends group.

Fiscal year 2013 projections indicate level funding again, but the final budget is unlikely to be known until well into the year.

Of primary interest to council members are new web and reporting policies recently passed down from headquarters that require pictures and "bios" posted on the site webpage. Staff will be contacting each member to develop that in the next few months.

Upcoming GRNMS events include:

- Sept. 18 Sep – Oct. 7 *Live from Gray's Reef: Underwater Photography by Greg McFall* at Jepson Center, Savannah,
- Sept. 20 – 23 Gray's Reef Ocean Film Festival
- Sept. 21 National Marine Sanctuary Foundation board meeting in Savannah
- Sept. 22 Dedication of River Walk plaques
- Oct. 20 Skidaway Marine Science Day
- Dec. 4-6 Annual National SAC Summit, Santa Cruz, CA

George Sedberry also announced that Outreach and Communications Coordinator Gail Krueger had resigned. The position will be advertised and hopefully filled before the end of the year.

Council business

Advisory Council Chair Danny Gleason asked for approval of the April 2012 meeting summary. A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously.

Brief discussion followed to remind members that the vice-chair and secretary positions need to be decided at the next meeting. Serving as vice-chair or secretary is not a significant commitment of time. It is, however, hoped that the vice-chair would be willing to become chair after a two-year term as vice-chair. Serving as chair is a bit more demanding with more regular communications and conference calls.

The 2012 National Sanctuary Advisory Council Summit has been implemented differently this year with two national webinars preceding the face-to-face meeting in early December. The next webinar will be held August 30, and focus on tourism and travel. Danny Gleason asked members for suggestions that might be advanced during the webinar. Discussion followed about ways GRNMS can further enhance their role in attracting the public. George Sedberry noted that having a charter operator on the council speaks to tourists. GRNMS data buoy instruments also provide valuable information to users, although there is no instrument to measure visibility. All concluded that development of a dedicated GRNMS visitor center would be the most significant contribution to the tourism industry. Also, the council can support development of a friends group that may in turn help support funding for a visitor center. Anna George emphasized that too much attention on site specifics takes away from the sanctuary system's branding.

GRNMS staff will target November for the next meeting of the advisory council. The location may be Brunswick at the GADNR Coastal Resources Division offices. The winter meeting may be organized for January or February on Skidaway Island/Savannah. Discussion followed about ways to improve council meetings. Tim Goodale suggested that staff add a paragraph for each agenda item sent in advance of meetings to give council members a better idea what the topic and discussions may be. They can then better assess ideas, thoughts and questions. In addition, it was suggested that the agenda might be reorganized to put the council's business in the middle of the day, which make help to break of the presentation-heavy aspect of meetings.

Management plan review and revision

Becky Shortland reported that the scoping period for the management plan review is underway until the end of August. Three public meetings were held, but very few people attended and very few comments have been received so far. Comments that have been received were about weighted marker buoys, lionfish and the need for more public awareness, including awareness of marine debris effects. Danny Gleason suggested adding development of a GRNMS friends group to the management plan. Mary Conley asked that we consider a method to do interactive planning with council members.

Public comment

There was no public in attendance.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.