

What Can You Do?

Your actions help determine the health of our natural wilderness areas on land and in the sea. National Marine Sanctuaries and Monuments are located in watershed drainage basins and collect materials that wash down stream in addition to what is deposited directly into them. Becoming aware of the impacts that your daily actions have is the first step in getting involved.

Choose to Use:

Reusable shopping bags, stainless steel water bottles, or products with recyclable packaging

Alternative energy sources like solar, wind, thermal, and hydro

Bicycles, paddle-powered watercraft, carpool, or your feet to arrive at your destination

Native plant life to reduce water consumption, and rain barrels

Insulation, motion sensors and efficiency light bulbs to reduce power consumption in your home

Natural alternatives to pharmaceuticals, fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides

Sulfate-free detergents

Sustainable seafood and food products from local sources

- Plastics persist in the environment for a very long time, breaking down into smaller pieces but never degrading, eventually being eaten incidentally by marine animals. Reduce your use of disposable plastics to keep them out of our landfills, water shed runoff areas and ocean.
- Burning carbon contributes to greenhouse gases in our atmosphere and corrodes our ocean water. Use alternatives to fossil fuels or reduce their usage when possible by carpooling, bicycling, paddling or walking to your destination.
- Opt to use clean energy sources as available, such as solar, wind, thermal and hydro, and conserve usage of energy within your home by properly insulating, installing motion sensors, and efficiency light bulbs.
- Using excessive amounts of fresh water to maintain a lawn is a waste of a precious resource. By installing native plants that are drought tolerant and limiting lawn expanses you can conserve water and reduce the efforts of water treatment facilities to meet demands.
- Many products used to fertilize lawns, kill pests and weeds, and clean our homes are toxic to the natural environment and result in imbalances in our ecosystems, sometimes generating Harmful Algal Blooms (red tide) or dead zones (hypoxia) in our ocean. Choose to use these in moderation, or not at all, and install native plant life that is more tolerant of local weather conditions.
- Pharmaceuticals do not disappear when you flush them down the drain; instead they accumulate in our water and harm aquatic life. Dispose of medications through a recycling program and choose to use natural alternatives as available and appropriate.
- Plastic shopping bags and balloons become tangled around sea life and are often eaten resulting in death. Use your own reusable shopping bags or choose paper bags instead of plastic. If you must purchase balloons for your celebration, deflate them and make sure they are deposited in a trash receptacle, or better yet don't use them at all.
- Fishing line, crab pots, nets and abandoned gear from fishing vessels result in the loss of life to marine mammals, including many threatened and endangered species. Remove this and all debris from the water when you see it and be sure to dispose of it in a trash receptacle or recycle it where available.
- Our ocean is being overfished and cannot meet the demands that our society places on it. Whether you enjoy recreational fishing or just consuming seafood, learn which species are sustainable, abundant, and local.

<http://graysreef.noaa.gov>

Want To Do More?

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary needs your support as a volunteer to assist in data collection, to observe the wildlife and reef habitat, to expand awareness of these special ocean areas, and to encourage others to live like they too love the ocean. There are a variety of ways in which you can help, depending on your interest and availability.



Easy (Street Team)

Join our Street Team volunteers as we take the reef to the streets to build support for and awareness of Gray's Reef. Volunteers staff our booth and participate in festivals and events throughout the year, including: Boat Shows, Earth Day, Sidewalk and Sand Arts Festivals, Skidaway Marine Science Day, Coastfest, and our own events like the Ocean Film Festival and Right Whale Festival. Some travel (GA coast) involved for certain events with limited physical demands. Volunteers are requested to dedicate a minimum of 10 hours annually.



Moderate (Citizen Science)

Citizen Science programming involves long term data collection and some field work requiring moderate physical demands, including bending, lifting, and working around water. These volunteers collect water samples inshore and in the sanctuary for analysis of phytoplankton under microscope. In addition, citizen scientists are engaged in education events like ROV building workshops and competitions, and within the local business community to expand our mission of sustainability. Some local travel (Savannah area) is required and ability to tolerate offshore conditions. Volunteers are requested to dedicate a minimum of 20 hours annually.



Difficult (Team Ocean Divers)

This is a truly rewarding experience for advanced open water divers who wish to learn more about the sanctuary and to become trained as a NOAA Scientific Diver. Team Ocean Divers work alongside our researchers daily in support of our acoustic fish tagging, maintenance of our data buoy and sea floor packages, fish counts, sea turtle assessments, reef habitat measurements, marine debris removal, and a variety of other projects aboard our annual research cruise. Advanced certifications including Rescue, Open Water, and Nitrox required along with a full medical checkout. Participants must be at least 18 years of age.

Contact your Volunteer Coordinator at Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary for more information on these opportunities, upcoming events, and an application for participation.

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