

**Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary-
Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting
March 3, 2000
Gray's Reef NMS Office, Savannah, GA**

Attendance:

SAC Members Present: Anne Lindsay Frick, Jim Henry, Matt Gilligan, Patty McIntosh, Bing Phillips, Doug Rader, George Sedberry, Judy Wright.

NOAA Gray's Reef Staff: Reed Bohne, Marcy Lee, Ralph Rogers, Cathy Sakas, Alex Score, Becky Shortland.

Distributed Materials:

- * Agenda
- * October 1999 meeting minutes
- * Draft Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Synthesis of Public Comments Scoping Phase
- * State of the Reef report draft outline
- * SEAMAP data print out
- * South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) Public Information Document "Potential Use of Marine Reserves in the South Atlantic"
- * SAFMC meeting agenda 3/6-10/00
- * Draft Memorandum of Understanding SAFMC and Gray's Reef

Approval of Last Meetings Minutes

Approved

Outcomes of Management Plan Scoping

1. Overview of meetings and comments:

A draft synthesis of the public comments from the scoping phase was distributed. Reed Bohne asked SAC members to give their impressions of the meetings and the scoping process. A summary of member comments follows:

Bing Phillips: There were many complaints by attendees about the lack of information on the health of the reef. The general consensus from user groups was, "don't close the reef". Prohibiting anchoring could help the reef. We should carefully evaluate how changes in management might affect the economy and benefit the reef and recreation.

George Sedberry: Most of the complaints focused on the lack of information available to present and gaps in knowledge, i.e. spawning. We don't have research plan to tell us enough. Marine reserves have not been tested for live bottoms. No one has ever set one aside in the South Atlantic Bight.

Doug Rader: Talked to a lot of fishermen at the scoping meeting he attended, many who bottom fish and spearfish. Gray's Reef is not isolated from the rest of the region; status quo is not enough. More stringent regulations may be needed if marine reserves are not employed to

recover fish stocks. No one has been in a position to say what "should" happen to Gray's Reef and how the reef should be involved in fish recovery.

Anne Lindsay Frick: Public comments concerned a lack of information on the state of the reef. She also mentioned a need for more outreach and informational meetings with an emphasis on adults and users. She would like to know more about commercial fishing pressures.

Judy Wright: Feels that most divers are conservationists. Very few people spearfish at Gray's Reef; and most divers are non-consumptive. Spearfishing has recreational limits. If changes are necessary, divers will go along with what has to be done. There should be no impacts on divers if anchoring is prohibited. Don't close anything permanently. Stress conservation education toward children and adults.

Patty McIntosh: It was unfortunate that people came to meetings in a defensive posture. Folks with other interests were not heard. Hope we won't get diverted from the purpose of protecting Gray's Reef. Liked the way the meetings were setup. Mentioned the need for more education. Concerned that conservation groups were not heard during the public meetings. Long term protection is needed for Gray's Reef.

Matt Gilligan: There should be no spearfishing of pre-spawning and spawning aggregations. Gray's Reef could be used to help find answers; let science drive the decision to limit, close or leave the reef alone. Also mentioned that if there is closure, it should be a part of a study with a time limit.

Jim Henry: Scoping was premature in terms of the public's knowledge; and it did not help that the public was predisposed toward the rumor of closure of Gray's Reef. There is a need for information about users and conditions.

2. Synthesis:

Becky explained how the comments were synthesized and suggested that an appropriate way to look at the responses was in terms of a range of thoughts and ideas. She asked the SAC members to make suggestions on the format and content of the synthesis by Friday, 3/11. Doug suggested providing the context regarding the whole management planning process in the introduction.

Next Steps and Outreach to Participants and General Public

Reed said that the scoping process helped to get more people interested in Gray's Reef and that we need to keep up that interest and involvement through frequent public outreach efforts.

Reed asked for input on "who" should receive information and stressed the need to get it out in a timely manner so it would reach end users. Alex mentioned using a list serve as a method for getting information out, and Reed suggested the Web Page as another method. Bing suggested that we make an effort to put it in the hands of non-computer users. Other ideas included mail, email, materials distributed to marinas, etc., media opportunities such as outdoor magazines, and electronic forums.

State of the Reef Report

Reed discussed plans to prepare a "State of the Reef" report. He mentioned the need for the report before scoping and the need to provide a regional context with information on surrounding areas. SAC members discussed including anecdotal information gathered from users. Matt suggested a simple, narrative format that would take into consideration questions asked at the scoping meetings. Anne suggested adding information about archaeological resources and large invertebrates.

SEAMAP

George Sedberry discussed the SEAMAP (Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program) initiative to map offshore and live bottom habitat throughout the Southeast.

Workshops

Reed discussed the need for completion of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council before the workshops to clear up certain issues. The next SAC meeting will focus on defining topical areas for workshops.

NOAA ShipFerrel Cruise

Ralph discussed the schedule of projects to take place during the five-week Ferrel cruise. Some SAC members mentioned their interest in observing some of the projects. Ralph and Reed will try to accommodate those who would like to take a day trip out to the ship during some of the projects.

GRNMS 2000 Program Activities

Reed stated that the budget and program descriptions are still being developed.

Program Vacancies

The Research Coordinator position will be advertised and filled within the next two months. Bruce's position may be shifted to include more enforcement. Gray's Reef is also considering a joint agreement with Skidaway Institute of Oceanography for vessel maintenance and operation.

Savannah Ocean Festival

Cathy Sakas discussed plans for the Savannah Ocean Festival at Rousakis Plaza on Earth day (April 22nd).

Public Comment

No public comment.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on May 9th at Savannah State University, hosted by Dr. Matt Gilligan. Topics will include the State of the Reef report and workshop timing, content, and participation.