



## GRAY'S REEF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL WEBINAR – JULY 25, 2018

### Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) Attendees

Michael Denmark, Chair  
Scott Noakes, Vice-chair  
Mona Behl, Secretary  
SGT Mark Carson  
Mary Conley  
Rick DeVictor  
Monique Gordon  
Tim Henkel  
Warren Hupman  
Jene Nissen  
Tim Tarver  
Suzanne VanParreren

### SAC Members Absent

Peter Auster  
LT Warren Fair  
Anna George  
Kevin Mitchell  
Mark Padgett  
Carolyn Belcher

### Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) and Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) Staff

Sarah Fangman  
Elise Georgeff (GRNMS volunteer)  
Mandy Harvey (GRNMS volunteer and today's notetaker)  
Scott Kathey  
Jody Patterson  
Michelle Riley  
Kim Roberson  
Becky Shortland

### Public in Attendance

Robert Crimian  
Katherine Doyle  
Susan Inman  
Robert Munson  
Leonard Wojnowich  
Thomas Wright

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Council chair Michael Denmark called the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) Advisory Council meeting to order at 1:01 PM. He and Scott Kathey, Acting Superintendent of GRNMS, welcomed members, staff and public in attendance. Following group introductions, Michael reviewed the agenda and outlined the meeting objectives. The summary of the May 30, 2018 webinar was approved with no changes.

### **Council Business**

SAC Member Recruitment Update – Becky Shortland provided an update on recruitment efforts for the expiring SAC terms, which are non-living resources research, university education, charter/commercial fishing, sport fishing, diving, citizen-at-large, and both conservation seats. Recruitment for these seats opened on June 1 and closed this past Monday, July 23. Multiple applications have been received for a number of seats. However, only one application was submitted for the conservation seat and none were submitted for the charter/commercial fishing seat. As a result, there could potentially be a follow-up recruitment period. The nominating committee is usually comprised of three SAC Executive Committee members, but this year two members of the executive committee have submitted applications to renew their terms and therefore are ineligible to serve on nominating committee. As such, Suzanne

VanParreren and Rick DeVictor volunteered to join Mona Behl on the nominating committee. In terms of next steps, Scott Kathey and Becky will review the applications next week and will then forward them to the nominating committee for review. A conference call will be scheduled to discuss the applications.

Status of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) and Review – Becky Shortland provided an update on the status of the PEIS being developed by BOEM for the Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The draft PEIS has not yet been issued and there has been no announcement on when it can be expected. Michael Denmark encouraged SAC members to contact either him or Becky Shortland if they become aware of any updates on this issue

Visitor Use Working Group Update – During the March 2018 SAC meeting, the group decided to investigate the possibility of organizing a Visitor Use Workshop that would bring together relevant experts, sanctuary representatives, and other interested parties. The output of this workshop would be a plan for how GRNMS should move forward relative to visitor use, as well the identification of strategies that could have application at a national level. A working group comprised of Peter Auster, Mary Conley, Michael Denmark, Rick DeVictor, Marybeth Head, Kim Roberson, and Chip Collier of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) was formed and tasked with developing a rough proposal for the workshop. The working group met via teleconference on June 6.

Following the teleconference, Michael met with GRNMS staff to discuss several items that arose during the working group meeting. One item was the need for a clear definition of the primary goal of the workshop, which the working group defined as “obtaining a robust profile of visitor use within GRNMS over time in order to understand seasonal variations and the intensity and types of visitor use”. Also discussed was the ongoing need to identify technology that could be helpful in obtaining a better understanding of visitor use and the technological needs of each of these technologies (i.e. the desired range, the required resolution, the size of the targets). Marybeth Head continues to research these technologies and has contacted various radar manufacturers to see what is available and what they would need from GRNMS.

Additionally, Scott Kathey outlined the efforts of the socioeconomic team at the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) that is working to quantify the economic value of sanctuaries. A clear understanding of visitor use data for sanctuaries nationwide is a critical success factor in these efforts. ONMS is currently working with experts that have conducted a similar effort for the National Park Service. Given this initiative and Marybeth's ongoing research on the technology front, it was decided that the workshop should be placed on hold pending the findings of these two other efforts.

Law Enforcement Working Group Update – Sgt. Mark Carson of Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Law Enforcement reported that the new Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) started in July and that GRNMS is a priority in the JEA. Mark stated that 1 patrol was conducted in July and more are scheduled for next week. LT Warren Fair of the US Coast Guard reported via email that the USCG has conducted 10 patrols totaling 11 hours within GRNMS year-to-date. Six of these patrols were flights and 4 were cutter/station patrols. Four vessels were observed during the patrols. There were no boardings and no violations were observed.

Recreational Fishing Working Group Update – Tim Tarver provided an update on the recent activities of the Recreational Fishing Working Group, which is charged with finding better ways to communicate and promote collaboration with recreational fishing interests, reduce bycatch mortality, raise awareness of GRNMS, enhance compliance, and obtain more visitor use information. The group most recently met on June 7 in Brunswick. They discussed ways to increase collaboration with the recreational fishing community and decrease bycatch mortality. Expanding effective use of descending devices remains a top priority of the group and they intend to distribute additional samples of these devices, attend fishing seminars and tournament captains' meetings, disseminate educational materials/videos, and perhaps develop a new video presentation on this topic. In addition, they discussed hosting a fish fry to bring the fishing community together in the future.

Becky Shortland will send Tim and the other members of the working group the video Warren Hupman developed with Georgia DNR demonstrating various descending devices. GRNMS staff, namely Michelle Riley, is working with ONMS to add additional content to the the video and DNR has also recently made updates to the video. Michelle met with several representatives of the American Sportfishing Association and other partners to discuss strategies to expand usage of descending devices and knowledge of best fishing practices. Rick DeVictor stated that the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council (SAFMC) is currently discussing the option of requiring the use of descending devices on private recreational, charter recreational, and/or commercial fishing vessels. Rick will keep the group updated as this issue evolves.

Becky reminded the group that the MyFishCount App from SAFMC is now available. The app is part of the overall management strategy for the region and will help the SAFMC better manage the fishery. More information about the app is available at <https://www.myfishcount.com/>. Tim stated that the recreational fishing working group will include information on the app in future presentations and events.

### **Special Topic**

Marine Life after the Storm: Hurricane Irma and Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary - Sarah Fangman, Superintendent of Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (Florida Keys NMS) and Past Superintendent of GRNMS, provided an overview of the impact and recovery efforts related to Hurricane Irma, which struck the Florida Keys in September of 2017. She also discussed the coral disease outbreak that is currently afflicting waters in the region.

Underwater damage was distributed throughout the Florida Keys to differing degrees. Recovery actions were concentrated in areas with the greatest amount of storm damage and/or the greatest chance of recovery. Historically Florida Keys NMS has not undertaken any actions to mitigate damage following a natural event such as a hurricane. However, restorative actions were undertaken following Irma because the Florida Keys underwater environment was already compromised prior to the storm. Beyond the visible damage caused by Irma on land, two of most significant factors contributing to damage underwater were the heavy wave action during the storm and the increased sediment load following the storm. The increased sediment had an especially profound effect on sponges. In addition, the hurricane relocated approximately 150,000 lobster traps in the Keys an average of 8 to 15 miles on the ocean side of Florida and between 3.5 and 5 miles on Gulf side.

Almost immediately after the storm, Florida Keys NMS assembled a sizable team of partners to assist with recovery efforts. Within one week this team was in place and within two weeks work started on key activities which included a rapid condition assessment of reef areas, location of areas with fragmented corals for subsequent triage, assessment of storm-related impacts (e.g. breakage), coral disease, and the reef fish community and the collection of images of the impacts.

Sarah said that the team learned several lessons from this process. Relationships with partners need to be in place before the storm. Resources and capacities need to be pooled because the capabilities of all entities were impacted. Experts and divers from outside the impacted area can help because they are not dealing with the aftermath of the storm in their personal lives. Logistics are best handled outside the affected area. And lastly, a liveboard vessel should be considered because local hotels will be damaged and/or occupied by land-based emergency workers

The team at Florida Keys NMS also noted several successes including the fact that their data platform allowed for information to be entered daily so informed decisions could be made in a timely manner, the adaptation of protocols specific to the response, and the ability to make comparisons between baseline conditions and post-storm assessments using data from existing monitoring programs.

Unrelated to the effects of Hurricane Irma, Florida Keys NMS is experiencing an outbreak of coral disease across a large geographic range of over 96,000 acres that includes more than half the Florida Reef Tract. This represents one

of the most significant outbreaks that has ever occurred anywhere in the world. The disease outbreak began in 2014 and has continued to spread. Over 20 of the 45 species of reef-building coral found in Florida waters have been affected and, within certain affected species, disease is seen in 66 to 100 of every 100 surveyed colonies. Once these corals begin to lose living tissue, the colony will generally die within weeks to months. Florida Keys NMS is mobilizing a response utilizing many of the same strategies employed in the Irma recovery efforts.

Sarah closed by stating that both Hurricane Irma and the coral disease outbreak can teach many lessons about how to proactively prepare for dramatic events so that an organization is strategically prepared to respond if and when something happens. Michael Denmark challenged the GRNMS SAC to consider these lessons and outline a response plan for GRNMS. This will be a topic of discussion during the next council meeting.

### **Council Member Reports**

NOAA Fisheries Update – Rick DeVictor updated the group on the upcoming red snapper season that was announced by NOAA Fisheries earlier this week. The commercial season will run from July 26 until December 31 unless limits are reached earlier. The recreational period will consist of two, three-day periods on August 10 - 12 and August 17 – 19. The recreational limit is one fish per day per person with no size limit. Rick also let the group know that the new regulation requiring charter vessels with federal permits to report electronically once a week is currently in rule making.

GRNMS Data Buoy Camera – Scott Noakes updated the group on the maintenance and repairs to the data buoy. The crew of the US Coast Guard Cutter *Willow* temporarily pulled the buoy for maintenance during a mission to GRNMS on June 27. The camera was replaced but it is not transmitting pictures. Technicians will be working on the buoy during August to restore the functionality of the camera.

U.S. Navy Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing (AFTT) Status – Jene Nissen shared the status of the AFTT with the group. The final EIS is scheduled to come out in early-to-mid September. Consultations with various agencies including the NOAA Fisheries Office of Protected Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and ONMS have either already been completed or will be in the near future. The goal is to have the process completed and in place by November 13 of this year.

### **GRNMS Report**

NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster* Research Cruise Preview – The 2018 GRNMS research cruise aboard the *Nancy Foster* will take place July 29 – August 8. Kim Roberson provided a preview of some of the planned projects including evaluating the growth rate of hard coral to assess ocean acidification, an algae inventory, an assessment of reef biophysical interactions, and new approaches to quantify coral larval supply. In addition, a second sea floor platform will be placed in the southern part of the sanctuary. A congressional delegation is expected to visit the ship on August 6 while she is at sea. Following the completion of the expedition, the *Nancy Foster* will transit to Savannah and dock on River Street, where student tours of the ship will be conducted on Thursday, August 9. Media will also be aboard that day.

Staffing Recruitment – Scott Kathey updated the group on recruitment efforts for the State Program Manager position. The job was posted to the University of Georgia Employment Services website on June 19 and the search remains open. Fifteen applications have been received to date.

Scott reminded the group that his term as Acting Superintendent will draw to a close on September 9. The search for a permanent Superintendent has yet to begin. On behalf of the SAC, Michael Denmark thanked Scott for his service to GRNMS.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be a full-day in-person meeting in Savannah on October 4, 2018. Potential topics include a potential hurricane response plan for GRNMS.

**Public Comment** – Tom Wright invited the group to contact him if they have any items to introduce during the Georgia Marine Business Association tomorrow night. He also wonders where all the right whales are. Bob Munson stated that this was his first time joining a SAC meeting. He said he was here to learn and hopes to serve the council in a citizen-at-large capacity in the future.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 PM.