

**GRAY'S REEF NMS
SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting, August 26, 2003
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Georgia Southern University Museum
Statesboro, Georgia**

Distributed Materials by Mail

- GRNMS Advisory Council updated member list
- NMSP State of the Sanctuary Report 2002-2003
- NMSP Sanctuary Advisory Councils National Report 2002
- NMSP Sanctuary Advisory Council Implementation Handbook, May 2003

Advisory Council members present

Matt Gilligan, George Sedberry, Henry Ansley, Bing Phillips, Judy Wright, Venetia Butler, Scott Rogers, Joe Kimmel

Advisory Council members not present

Patty McIntosh, Doug Rader, Clark Alexander

Public present

Will Berson (observing for Patty McIntosh), Ken Conley (U.S. Navy), Jeffrey Guss (U.S. Navy)

Staff present

Reed Bohne, Cathy Sakas, Gail Krueger, Peter Fischel, Greg McFall, Marcy Lee, Becky Shortland from GRNMS; Matt Stout, Sarah Marquis, David Hall, Michael Murphy from NOAA

Welcome, Agenda, and Minutes

Advisory Council Chair Matt Gilligan called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. Dr. Gilligan welcomed everyone and introduced the new U.S. Coast Guard representative, LCDR Scott Rogers, along with Will Berson of The Georgia Conservancy who is observing in place of member Patty McIntosh. Dr. Gilligan also introduced others present including Ken Conley and Jeffrey Guss from the U.S. Navy.

Gray's Reef Manager Reed Bohne introduced NMSP Communications Branch staff members Matt Stout, Michael Murphy, Sarah Marquis, and David Hall who are attending to lead a communications workshop.

Dr. Gilligan briefly reviewed the agenda and noted the few suggested changes in the minutes of the March 11, 2003 meeting. He called for a motion and second to approve the amended minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Other Notices and Information

Becky Shortland reminded the Advisory Council that due to the changes in term rotations, three seat vacancies would be announced in early September. Those seats are:

- Local Conservation (currently held by Patty McIntosh)
- Living Resources Research (currently held by George Sedberry)
- University Education (currently held by Matt Gilligan)

She noted that staff hopes to have application letters in, reviewed and members appointed by October. Dr. Joe Kimmel asked that Ms. Shortland send the Federal Register announcement to all members when it is available, so that everyone can help distribute the information to constituents they represent.

Ms. Shortland then briefly reviewed the draft agenda for the NMSP Advisory Council Chair and Coordinator workshop to be hosted by GRNMS in February 2004. She noted that host advisory councils traditionally support a reception one evening during the workshop and that a field trip is being offered on Friday of that week. Any suggestions for field trips would be appreciated. Details of the national workshop will be a lengthier item for discussion at a future Advisory Council meeting.

Reed Bohne explained the information included in Advisory Council members' packets on the upcoming 2005 reauthorization of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA). He urged members to review this material and think about comments also to be discussed at a future Advisory Council meeting. NMSP Director Dan Basta is requesting comments from all sites and Advisory Councils by mid-December.

Becky Shortland explained the NOAA Fisheries notices included in members' packets: 1) the fisheries management conference in Silver Spring, Maryland, November 13-15, 2003; and 2) constituent sessions scheduled for September 18, 2003, during the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting in South Carolina.

Henry Ansley asked about the NMSP's artificial reef policy, which is before the public for comments. Mr. Ansley wanted to be certain all Advisory Council members were aware of the comment period. Becky Shortland said that she would email copies of the policy to everyone. Michael Murphy reported that the deadline for comments is September 16, 2003.

Changes to NOAA Fisheries management plan for sharks may also be of interest. Staff will send that information to Advisory Council members as well.

GRNMS Draft Management Plan Update

Becky Shortland advised that the GRNMS draft management plan/draft environmental impact statement had not cleared NOAA leadership in time for this meeting of the Advisory Council. The intent had been to hold a retreat on this date in order to preview the management plan prior to its release to the public. The retreat will now tentatively be scheduled for late in September. Matt Gilligan asked whether all documents that have been generated by the four-year process would be appended to the document. Ms. Shortland responded that documents, such as the outcomes of each of the strategy workshops, were not included. Dr. Gilligan suggested that those

reports also be referenced somehow in the document and be made available at the public meetings.

Reed Bohne also advised that fulfilling the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's request to bring public comment information to a their quarterly meeting has also been postponed until the SAFMC meeting in December.

Ms. Shortland went on to outline the proposed 60-day comment period, which may cover October and November with public hearings scheduled approximately the last week in October and first week in November. Comments will be received during meetings, which will be conducted in a roundtable format, by mail, email (graysreefcomments@noaa.gov) and by fax (912/598-2367).

Ms. Shortland asked members for input on the preliminary locations of meetings, which she explained may be: Kingsland/St. Marys area (one meeting); Brunswick (one meeting), Statesboro (one meeting), Richmond Hill/Midway area (one meeting), Savannah area (2 meetings), and Charleston, South Carolina (one meeting). Dr. Kimmel emphasized that it would be beneficial for staff to contact all interest groups, not represented today, to be sure that any concerns or comments they might have are considered before decisions are made and to ensure the meetings are scheduled to attract the most participation.

Judy Wright suggested that a meeting in the Jesup/Waycross area might be beneficial since many divers and fishermen seem to come from that area. Other members asked it if was necessary to conduct so many meetings. Reed Bohne responded that GRNMS would like to be certain to accommodate as many interested people as possible, especially since it has been some time since the beginning of the management plan review process. Dr. Gilligan also suggested that staff refer to socioeconomic studies for the areas where most constituents are located. Henry Ansley agreed that more meetings would be beneficial since there is still misinformation about the sanctuary plans relating to fishing.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

News and Views

Dr. Gilligan began the segment with his thoughts on the seeming degradation of coastal Georgia environments, such as marsh grass die off and decline in the crab harvest among other signs.

Henry Ansley advised that the SAFMC is in the process of reviewing its Essential Fish Habitat plans. Mr. Ansley also noted that there is a proposed amendment to the shark fisheries plan that members may be interested in. Becky Shortland said that she would send that out to members electronically.

Reed Bohne noted that GRNMS monitoring efforts might help to track environmental changes with the ongoing work of the South Carolina Marine Resources Research Institute and the NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS). He also reminded members that the draft management plan was designed to help contribute to knowledge of regional marine

environmental conditions.

Joe Kimmel noted that there are two new members in the Georgia SAFMC seats. He also mentioned that action by the SAFMC led to increased law enforcement activities for Oculina Banks Experimental Research Reserve off Ft. Pierce, Florida. Enforcement for this site has been a challenge, but indicates that such marine protected areas can be enforced and protected, but it takes special effort.

LCDR Scott Rogers also noted that the new vessel monitoring systems (VMS) requirements would help these enforcement efforts.

Dr. Sedberry talked about the cold-water phenomenon that has occurred this year off the southeast coast of the U.S. He and others are monitoring to see if the cold water will affect fish spawning.

Bing Phillips, acknowledging the cold-water events of this summer, noted that he has seen more diversity and abundance in fish catches this year, especially cobia. Overall, he has observed the decline in fish populations and the current trends toward improvement. He views some of these population declines as the result of natural cycles such as drought, although some species may need management measures to help boost their recovery.

Venetia Butler responded that the knowledge apparent in the membership of this Council is valuable to teachers and students. Members may want to consider contacting schools to be able to present this information in classrooms. Teachers are generally eager for this support.

Judy Wright noted that her child's class would be participating in the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream program led by Dr. Joe Richardson of Savannah State University.

Communications Workshop

NMSP Communications Branch Chief Matt Stout led GRNMS Advisory Council members through a series of exercises to help inspire the foundation of a communication strategy for the site during release and review of the draft management plan.

At the end of the workshop, Manager Reed Bohne offered some concluding remarks. He repeated the desire to have Advisory Council members familiar with NMSP communications planning and how GRNMS will be getting information out to the public on the draft management plan. He emphasized the hope that the workshop may have provided ideas or methods that Council members will use in communicating with their constituents about the plan when it is released to the public. He also noted that staff would do a brief follow up on the communications approach with the Council when we next meet to review the draft plan.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.