

**Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary
Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting
September 23, 2002
Sanctuary office
Skidaway Island, GA**

Attendance:

- SAC Members Present: Matt Gilligan, Joe Kimmel, Doug Rader, Judy Wright, Jim Henry, Anne Lindsay Frick, George Sedberry, Lt. Mark Gordon (for LCDR Dave Cinalli), Bing Phillips, Henry Ansley.
- SAC Members not present: Patty McIntosh
- SAC Appointees Present: Venetia Butler, Clark Alexander
- NOAA Gray's Reef staff in attendance: Reed Bohne, Becky Shortland, Cathy Sakas, Lt. Peter Fischel, Felipe Arzayus, Matt Brookhart (CPPB Branch, National Marine Sanctuary Program)
- Public in attendance: Pete Herber

Distributed Materials: One packet including

- May 2002 minutes
- Performance measures presentation outline
- Draft performance measures
- "Report Card" presentation outline
- Chair's Report on Future Roles and Responsibilities

Chair Matt Gilligan called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. GRNMS Manager Reed Bohne introduced NOAA Corps Officer Lt. Peter Fischel who will be with the staff for three years, and visiting NOAA/NESDIS scientist Felipe Arzayus, who will be based at Gray's Reef for two years. Mr. Bohne also went on to introduce and welcome SAC appointees Venetia Butler and Dr. Clark Alexander, whose three-year terms take effect on October 1, 2002. Venetia Butler will replace Anne Lindsay Frick as the K-12 Education representative, and Dr. Alexander will replace Dr. Jim Henry as the non-living resources research representative. With those introductions, Reed Bohne thanked the outgoing SAC members. Anne Lindsay Frick noted that she would like to remain involved, possibly through a working group that may be established in the future.

Matt Gilligan continued with a quick review of the day's agenda. He then called for approval of the May meeting minutes. The minutes were approved.

Mr. Pete Herber of Coastal Conservation Association of Georgia, Skidaway Chapter, was the only public present. His comments were included as appropriate throughout the day.

Management Plan Revision

Matt Brookhart from the Conservation, Policy and Planning Branch of the National Marine Sanctuary Program was introduced and began a presentation on "performance measures" an element of all site management plan revisions (see slideshow copy). He explained that the program is moving toward this comprehensive approach to evaluating site performance, and that in proposing the policy, there is sensitivity to the work burdens of all sites and headquarters. Policy and Planning Coordinator Becky Shortland explained that this presentation was being given in order to solicit comments and ideas from the Council on this policy. She also asked Council members to consider their role in evaluation and reporting.

Discussion followed the presentation, which included questions on reporting methods and whether or not the NMSP policy will track requirements of NOAA in general. Others asked whether or not there is a mechanism to determine cost/benefit analysis, and whether the program will be providing additional resources in order to meet the evaluation requirements. It was noted by staff that the evaluation assumes that priorities had been established, and that this policy does indeed track requirements of NOAA. Mr. Brookhart explained further, that there is a strong commitment from Director Dan Basta to evaluate programs; resource needs will be considered. Evaluation may take place internally or externally, but the intent is to accomplish these assessments without incurring a large burden on sites or headquarters. The group adjourned for lunch at the Georgia Southern University, Applied Coastal Research Lab.

The meeting continued at 1:00 p.m. with a short presentation by Matt Brookhart on the concept of a "report card" for sites and NMSP as a whole (see slideshow copy). Mr. Brookhart further explained that the Leadership Team (managers and superintendents) reviewed the concept just last week; it was well received. Reed Bohne noted that real commitments would be needed from staff in order to make the process work; it may require shifting some efforts. Pete Herber noted that proper evaluation has been a shortfall in many marine protected areas, and has caught the attention of recreational fishermen who view the areas as failures. More discussion ensued on the benefits and shortcomings of quantitative measurements.

Reed Bohne went on to emphasize the priority status of marine resource protection actions, such as the education or research components. Education and research programs have separate action plans in the draft management document; resources could be spread thin. Discussion followed concerning the costs and benefits of proposed actions, such as developing baseline data on user impacts. Bing Phillips noted, for instance, that common sense indicates anchors cause damage to bottom habitat; it is not necessary to expend resources unnecessarily to prove that. Matt Gilligan suggested that several objectives could be incorporated into each trip to the sanctuary, such as gathering information on anchoring impacts, marine debris and visitor use. Venetia Butler highlighted that data collected on such observations might be useful in the classroom. Bing Phillips offered that volunteers might be considered to help with some of these efforts. Doug Rader also cautioned that a report card could draw undeserved, negative media attention if not utilized properly.

The topic concluded with the consensus that the Council's role, at this time, will be to review the performance measures as they evolve, along with the report card concept. It was agreed that any evaluation that is vetted through the Council would have more credibility. Council members asked if they could have access to the draft report card to review and comment. Reed Bohne

emphasized the benefits of Council involvement as the report card evolved. He and Matt Brookhart will confer with Director Dan Basta. Becky Shortland reminded the Council that the 1999 report on the NMSP by the National Academy of Public Administration would be a good reference document when thinking about the NMSP's ability to meet the mandates of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.

Other suggestions offered include a section in future NMSP accomplishments reports that address management plan revisions, and the idea of a report card for the general public to be able to measure public perceptions.

Other SAC Activities

Future roles & responsibilities report

Chair Matt Gilligan presented the final report on the Council's future roles and responsibilities (see report). He relayed the report to Reed Bohne, asking that Reed use the input as appropriate. Additional comments from Council members can go directly to Reed Bohne. Dr. Gilligan emphasized that this report was chiefly meant to inspire some introspection; that it is not meant for public consumption. He thanked the Council for their thoughtful comments. Reed Bohne commented that these report topics might be a good source for a Council retreat agenda.

Annual retreat

Becky Shortland noted that it was time to begin planning the Council's annual retreat perhaps for early spring, and possibly on Sapelo Island or Ossabaw Island. The Council asked that she forward ideas by email to begin to narrow the details down.

Member term adjustments

Ms. Shortland went on to ask the Council for direction in staggering terms of the non-governmental members. After a brief discussion, Doug Rader offered a motion for staff to make a specific recommendation. The concept was unanimously adopted with the caveat that staff will have some flexibility to achieve what is needed. Anne Lindsay Frick emphasized the benefits of allowing some overlap with members who are new and those rotating off the Council.

National SAC retreat

Chair Matt Gilligan noted that the national sanctuary advisory council retreat would be held February 10-13, 2003, in Santa Barbara, Calif. He will be unable to attend and asked that Vice-chair George Sedberry attend in his absence. Dr. Sedberry will consider the opportunity.

National SAC report

Becky Shortland also noted that during the last national SAC retreat it was decided that a program-wide SAC report be compiled. She will forward a request for information to all Council members by email.

Program Updates

Research

Dr. George Sedberry gave a brief presentation on results of the southeast leg of Islands in the Stream 2002. A major focus of this year's cruise was looking at shelf edge reefs looking for spawning aggregations (see full report for details).

Dr. Sedberry also noted that he has been funded to head up a new NOAA Fisheries MARFIN Geographic Information System (GIS) project. The product will be an interactive GIS site available on the web. GRNMS will be included since it has been the site of much study over the years. He noted that it is important to be able to get information to the public related to proposed marine protected areas, and that this information will help.

Education

Education Coordinator Cathy Sakas updated the Council on her activities including renewal of her Turner South contract. She noted that the Rivers to Reefs education module is nearing completion and that she is presenting on that project at a workshop in Minnesota later this week. She also highlighted the work that had been done with Venetia Butler's help on an Office of Ocean Exploration teacher workshop. The goal is to get teachers and scientists more connected. She is also continuing work on the "Gray's Reef In Depth" brochure. She also mentioned that various teacher conferences are coming up, such as the Georgia Science Teachers Association and Georgia Association of Marine Educators, where Cathy will be making presentations.

Matt Gilligan noted that the South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium has been selected as the Southeast COSEE (Centers for Ocean Science Education Excellence). The center's efforts are to include Georgia.

Enforcement

Lt. Peter Fischel gave an update of enforcement activities at GRNMS. The near term goal is focused on simply being on site more frequently. His goal is to try to be out there one day a week, whether the core purpose is research, user observations or whether the GA DNR vessels are patrolling. At this time, the focus of enforcement efforts is to gather accurate user data.

Lt. Fischel also noted that another USCG 41-foot vessel has been acquired and is being used. He emphasized that we now have the vessels to accomplish some of the above goals. He is still working with GA DNR law enforcement to increase their presence at GRNMS and to report back their findings. Most of their on-water work has been at the Georgia artificial reefs. Also, a recent meeting with the USCG station Savannah resulted in an agreement to perform more overflights both with their helicopter and with the Auxiliary. These surveys will be very beneficial in efforts to better define visitor use.

Member and Staff News and Notes

Doug Rader noted that the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (SAFMC) Habitat and Environmental Protection Advisory Panel would be meeting next week to begin a review of Sustainable Fisheries Act mandates, such as Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and EFH Habitat Areas of Particular Concern. Workshops are tentatively scheduled for November on various aspects of the process.

Additional discussion ensued on ongoing SAFMC activities. Becky Shortland will try to send more information to Council members to keep them better informed.

Dr. Gilligan noted that the Savannah State University masters marine biology program was kicked off with nine students and two new faculty. As part of the program, there will be a seminar series.

The question was raised about future informative presentations. It was suggested that perhaps Dave Kyler, Executive Director of the Center for a Sustainable Coast, would be a good consideration.

Related to the offshore studies mentioned earlier by Dr. Sedberry, the NOAA Ocean Explorer website may be of interest to members. The web address is www.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov.

Next meeting

Becky Shortland suggested that the next meeting of the Council be scheduled for late November or early December, because the management plan is moving toward clearance more rapidly. Final performance measures and other elements could be reviewed. The location and date will be determined later.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.