



## GRAY'S REEF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL WEBINAR – NOVEMBER 8, 2016

<p><b><u>Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) Attendees</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) and Office of National Marine Sanctuary (ONMS) Staff</u></b></p>
<p>Rick DeVictor, Chair  Michael Denmark, Vice-chair  Anna George, Secretary  Peter Auster  Mona Behl  Mary Conley  LT Warren Fair  Pat Geer  Tim Henkel  Warren Hupman  Emily Kroutil  Kevin Mitchell  Jene Nissen  Scott Noakes  Mark Padgett  Dustin Rhyan  Tim Tarver  Suzanne VanParreren</p>	<p>Sarah Fangman  Mandy Harvey (Volunteer and Note Taker)  Chris Hines  Catherine Marzin  Jody Patterson  Kim Roberson  George Sedberry  Becky Shortland  Lauren Wenzel</p> <p><b><u>GRNMS Foundation</u></b>  Vicki Weeks</p>
<p><b><u>SAC Members Absent</u></b>  Capt. Bob Lynn</p>	<p><b><u>Public in attendance</u></b>  Jerry Brown  Richard LaPalme (TEAM OCEAN Diver)  Buster Thompson  Amy Reber  Kristi White  Thomas Wright  Sean Yeckley (Former GRNMS Intern)</p>

### **Advisory Council Business**

Council chair Rick DeVictor called the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS) Advisory Council webinar to order. He and Sarah Fangman welcomed members, staff and public in attendance. Rick briefly reviewed the agenda and outlined the meeting objectives. The September 2016 SAC meeting summary was approved with no changes.

Rick informed the group that Emily Kroutil, who holds the K - 12 education seat on the SAC, is stepping down. Rick and Sarah expressed their appreciation for Emily's service and praised her work as the chair of the Outreach & Education Assessment Working Group. A recruitment notice to fill the K-12 education seat was published on November 1, 2016.

Presentation: How can MPAs help address climate change

As part of the ongoing discussion on climate change that began during the annual National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Summit in January 2016 and continued during subsequent SAC meetings, Lauren Wenzel, Director of the National Marine Protected Areas Center led this session, which outlined how marine protected areas (MPAs) are working to address climate change, with a specific focus on potential strategies for GRNMS. She discussed climate-driven impacts on marine ecosystems such as shifts in distribution, changes in primary and secondary production, and changes in population dynamics such as species movement, coral bleaching, and loss of breeding grounds. She highlighted how MPAs can lessen these impacts through a variety of approaches including helping to control local factors such as pollution, functioning as control sites, and engaging and educating the public.

Some direct actions taken by MPAs to mitigate climate change include planting seagrasses to absorb CO<sub>2</sub>, placing oyster shells to buffer ocean acidification, trapping invasive lionfish, and, on a larger scale, expanding protected areas to increase climate resilience. Potential actions for GRNMS include identifying partner organization, linking climate change considerations to ongoing work, evaluating connectivity to areas outside of GRNMS, and developing a rapid vulnerability assessment with the assistance of the SAC.

Lauren discussed the benefits and importance of developing a rapid vulnerability assessment and outlined the key questions that should be addressed to develop such an assessment for GRNMS:

- What resources are we most concerned about?
  - e.g. habitats, invertebrates, and fish
- What changes are occurring and expected in GRNMS?
  - e.g. water quality is relatively unaltered, no trend information on habitats is available, selected key species are at reduced levels, non-indigenous species are present
- What geographic scale should be used?
  - Based on numerous models at global, national, and regional scales
- What information do we need to assess vulnerability?
  - Can be scaled up or down based upon available resources and data
- What partners can provide data, analysis, etc.?
  - Partnering with regional resources has proven beneficial to other sanctuaries

Following the presentation, the group posed several questions:

Sarah Fangman brought up the recent climate conference organized by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and asked the SAC members who were in attendance to share their key takeaways. Mary Conley stated that the conference served as overview of the current knowledge base with an emphasis on coastal, rather than offshore, issues. The conference was attended by over 200 people and Mary feels the participants walked away with a level of commitment to better understanding and addressing climate change. Pat Geer informed the group that a synthesis of the conference is being developed. In the interim, he will send a link to the conference program to the SAC members. A compilation of the session recordings is also in development. Peter Auster asked if there was any discussion of whether ongoing actions on a regional or smaller scale are impacting ecological resilience. For example, have these actions led to the development of more conservative reference points for populations of managed species or habitats that are going to be sensitive to change? Pat Geer stated that there was a presentation on potential sea level rise impact on red drum and penaeid shrimp.

Rick DeVictor informed the group that NOAA Fisheries is working on a climate science strategy and a series of regional action plans to address climate needs. The action plan for the Gulf of Mexico will be rolled out within the next couple of months, followed by the Southeast region. These plans outline various approaches that can be taken over the next 5 years including vulnerability assessments, identification of data needs and gaps, establishment of a climate science team, and the collection of critical baseline data. Rick will keep the group updated and suggested that this topic be added to the agenda for the next in-person meeting of the SAC in March.

Rick then asked about the key components of a rapid vulnerability assessment. For example, does the assessment evaluate the species most vulnerable to the impact of climate change? Lauren responded that one of the components of the assessment is to identify what habitat and/or species are of concern and then evaluate the sensitivity of that resource to the different elements of climate changes expected in the region. Next, the degree of exposure of the habitat and/or species to the climate impact should be quantified. In addition, the adaptive capacity of the resource to adjust to climate change should be determined and strategies to increase adaptivity should be developed. Peter Auster expressed the opinion that rapid vulnerability assessments, while useful and necessary, are not sufficient to assess species interactions and address situations where limited data are available. He stressed that the guidelines for the assessment process should include examples of strategies that have been successfully implemented in real-world settings so that efforts can be maximized.

Mary Conley asked if the ongoing connectivity evaluation at GRNMS is designed to address climate change and vulnerability. It is not, as the work is intended to look at ecological connectivity of various species, not evaluate the impact of climate change.

Mona Behl asked if there are any studies investigating how community perceptions of MPAs influence individual and community resilience. Lauren is not aware of any existing information, but stated that the National Estuarine Research Reserve Program is currently in the process of conducting work on this topic. Lauren will forward the information to GRNMS staff when it becomes available.

Rick DeVictor and Sarah Fangman thanked Lauren for her participation in the meeting and asked that she continue to share information about activities at other sanctuaries that may be applicable to GRNMS.

#### Recreational Fishing Working Group

Tim Tarver provided an update on the activities of the working group which is charged with finding better ways to communicate and promote collaboration with recreational fishing interests, raise awareness of GRNMS, enhance compliance, and obtain more visitor use information. The first meeting of the working group has been rescheduled for the afternoon of December 1. In addition, Tim will attend the recreational fishing workshop organized by NMS headquarters on December 14 and 15 in Hollywood, FL. This meeting will be comprised of recreational fishing representatives from numerous sanctuary advisory councils.

#### Resource Protection Program Evaluation Working Group

Sarah Fangman discussed presentations of the GRNMS resource protection plan evaluation process she has made to other sanctuary sites. Sarah has had the opportunity to share the evaluation process with Office of National Marine Sanctuaries leadership, which has resulted in an invitation for her to speak to other sanctuary sites about the learnings, challenges, and benefits of the process. This information will help newly expanded sites conduct their own evaluations in an effective and efficient manner. In addition, there is interest on a national level about using the GRNMS model for new sanctuaries to help them develop an initial resource protection plan.

Sarah also provided a status report on the updated GRNMS resource protection plan itself. The next step is to synthesize the information from the working group and develop a revised plan that describes how each strategic tool will help support sanctuary resources and address critical issues. Following this synthesis, the plan will be scaled to determine which actions will be undertaken first. The final output will be a written document that will be integrated into

future management plans. In addition, output will have an impact on sanctuary research plans and outreach & education activities.

### **Council Members' Reports**

NOAA Fisheries Update – Rick DeVictor reported on the NOAA Fisheries regional action plans earlier in the meeting and suggested that an update on the plans be included as part of the March SAC meeting. Rick informed the group that special spawning management zones are being established off the coasts of Florida, South Carolina, and North Carolina. These newly established MPAs are approximately 5 square miles in size and will enable NOAA Fisheries to assess the spawning of numerous species of fish. The harvest of key species within these zones is prohibited.

Tennessee Aquarium Conservation Institute New Building – Anna George reported that the new conservation facility has opened. This new facility features 14,000 square feet and includes innovative features such as a rainwater catchment system. It includes space for education, research labs, and offices. Anna invited SAC members to visit if they are ever in the Chattanooga area and has offered to host a SAC retreat at the facility.

Ecotourism and Gray's Reef – Mona Behl reported that Georgia Sea Grant is developing a proposal for an ecotourism conference to be conducted in 2018. As part of the planning process, an external advisory panel will be formed with meetings beginning in 2017. Mona invited the SAC members to express any interest they have in serving on this advisory panel and/or to pass along any recommendations they have relative to potential advisory panel members. The panel will also include experts on tourism.

### **GRNMS Report**

Scott Noakes reported that two members of the National Data Buoy Center team will be offshore in GRNMS on Friday, November 11 to repair the buoy damaged by Hurricane Matthew, as well as to attempt to bring the buoy camera online. In addition to the buoy repair, Sarah Fangman reported that GRNMS staff may transit to the sanctuary on Thursday, November 10 to deploy a sound trap. The sound trap will be utilized to conduct acoustic monitoring. Staff are also eager to get a view of the seafloor after the hurricane. Although there are no reports on seafloor conditions in general following Matthew, Dustin Rhyan reported that he had observed a 3' shift in the sand in an inshore river bed.

Sarah spoke of the recent passing of GRNMS 2012 Volunteer of the Year Beau Mix and stressed the importance of volunteers in supporting the work of the sanctuary. Per an evaluation of volunteer activities by Jody Patterson, 62 volunteers provided 1600 hours of support to the sanctuary in fiscal year 2016, which is equal to having one additional full-time staff member. Nationally, 11,000 volunteers contribute time that is equivalent to 68 employees. To express appreciation to the volunteers and thank them for their contributions, the sanctuary will host a volunteer appreciation oyster roast on Friday, December 2 at Skidaway. Sarah extended an open invitation to all SAC members to attend.

In addition, Sarah let the group know that Dr. Russell Callender, the Assistant Administrator for the National Ocean Service, will be in Savannah on Wednesday, November 9 to attend the Ocean Exchange event. He will be visiting the GRNMS headquarters. Also, LT Jared Halonen, the current GRNMS vessel operations officer, will be moving to the Silver Spring, MD, and working for the NOAA Corps recruiting office. Taking his place will be Marybeth Head, who will join the GRNMS right before Thanksgiving. Rick DeVictor offered his congratulations to new GRNMS Deputy Superintendent Chris Hines.

### **GRNMS Foundation Update Report**

New Foundation Executive Director Vicki Weeks provided a summary of the highly successful "A Fishy Affair" event in September. She thanked the SAC members for their support of the event. "A Fishy Affair" raised over \$20,000 this year and 450 pounds of lionfish was consumed. The next major event is the Gray's Reef Film Festival (formerly

known as Gray's Reef Ocean Film Festival) in February 2017. The children's session will take place the week prior to the main festival on Tuesday, January 24 at the Savannah Theatre. The goal is to bring 500 students to the session. The main portion of the film festival kicks off on the evening of February 2 with the Foundation opening party at 24e. There will 2 nights of 3D films on February 3 and 4 at the Trustees Theatre and the Emerging Filmmakers event will take place on the afternoon of February 4 at the SCAD Museum. On Sunday, February 5 the film festival will expand to Tybee Island for the first time with a session at the Tybee Post Theatre. Vicki welcomed all SAC members to attend the film festival and asked that they forward any suggestions for sponsors to her.

In addition to the film festival, the Foundation is in the process of developing a new membership program. Details will be available shortly. The Foundation has added one new trustee to the board.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be a webinar on January 12, 2016. Proposed topics include the social values survey results. Additional suggestions for meeting topics can be emailed to Chris Hines. The next in-person meeting will be a full-day meeting proposed for March 2, 2017 in Savannah. This will be preceded by a meeting of the Science Advisory Group on March 1, 2017. Chris thanked the group for their time and support and expressed his appreciation to Becky Shortland for her 18 years of service guiding the SAC. Chris will assume responsibility for the SAC beginning December 1 and is looking forward to his new role.

### **Other**

Kevin Mitchell stated that a new enforcement officer for Savannah will be starting the week of November 14.

### **Public Comment**

There were no comments from the public

The webinar was concluded at 11:39am