

GRAY'S REEF NMS
SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting, December 16, 2004
10:00 a.m. - 2:45 p.m.
Gray's Reef NMS Conference Room
Savannah, GA

Distributed Materials

- Meeting Agenda
- September 2004 Meeting Minutes
- Discussion paper member seats
- Rader resignation letter
- Advisory Council case study guidelines
- Coastal Training Program material
- "Shades of Gray" publication

Advisory Council members present

Judy Wright, sport diving; Venetia Butler, K-12 education; Will Berson, local conservation; LT Kevin Saunders (for LCDR Scott Rogers), U.S. Coast Guard; Bing Phillips, sport fishing; Clark Alexander, non-living resources research; Henry Ansley, GA DNR Coastal Resources Division

Advisory Council members not present

Danny Gleason, living resources research; Leslie Sautter, university education; Joe Kimmel, NOAA Fisheries; Buddy Sullivan, Sapelo Island NERR; Doug Rader, regional conservation (see resignation letter)

Staff present

April Fendley, Keith Golden, Gail Krueger, Greg McFall, Becky Shortland, Jim Sullivan

Welcome, Agenda, and Minutes

Advisory Council Chair Judy Wright welcomed participants and asked for introductions. Judy called for any comments on the minutes from the last meeting; the minutes were unanimously approved.

Council Member Seats

Judy Wright commented on a previous discussion of proposed user seats: fishing representative, diving representative, and law enforcement representative (see discussion paper). Becky Shortland was asked to review the discussion on another enforcement representative. It was noted that a seat for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement (GADNR LE), in addition to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), may be beneficial. Since the Advisory Council was established a Joint Enforcement Agreement has been established between GADNR LE and NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, which supports GADNR LE patrols at the sanctuary. Greg McFall also noted that GRNMS would need a better on-water presence for enforcement if a research area were designated in the future. Henry Ansley commented that Coast Guard has had an active role in the Advisory Council, and Clark Alexander stated that a GADNR LE representative would be beneficial if GADNR plays a major role in enforcement in the sanctuary.

Judy asked Kevin Saunders how the USCG enforcement process works if an individual is cited in the sanctuary. Kevin stated that a relationship does exist with USCG and NOAA General Council, which would be responsible for prosecuting a case whether cited by GADNR LE or USCG. Clark motioned that the Advisory Council recommend to GRNMS Manager Reed Bohne, the addition of a GADNR LE seat. Venetia Butler seconded the motion, and the council unanimously approved. Henry asked if the GADNR LE representative would be a voting or an ex-officio member. Members requested that the motion be amended to indicate that the GADNR LE seat be ex-officio (non-voting).

Discussion about diving seat options ensued. Becky clarified the previous discussion from the September meeting that the seat would encompass all diving interests. Bing Phillips motioned to recommend clarification of the seat description for the next sport diving representative (refer to option 2 on page 10 in handout). The motion was seconded and approved.

Clark Alexander inquired about the proposal to ban all spearfishing in the Draft Management Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and why we would propose now to encompass recreational spearfishing in a Council seat. In response, Becky stated that the management plan has not yet been approved. Henry commented that discussion about a fishing seat may be premature and should be revisited upon management plan approval. Will Berson stated that a spearfishing seat would be awkward if spearfishing becomes prohibited activity. Judy noted that discussion should also include recreational versus commercial fishermen. Henry stated that he feels two seats should exist (refer to options 3 and 5 on discussion paper). Judy stated that the charter seat could be defined under a commercial heading as long as it was clarified in the description when applications for the seat are accepted. Bing noted that charter fishermen usually do not recognize themselves as commercial fishermen, although they receive money as a commercial business, i.e. for profit (refer to asterisk on discussion paper). Discussion leaned towards option 3: a recreational fishermen seat and a fishing-for-profit seat. Kevin commented on the permit system and charter fishing as a commercial industry. Greg noted that the “commercial” terminology would be okay as long as the seat representation is defined to state that charter fishing is included as a commercial industry. Henry motioned to strike “wholesale operations” from the option 3 and to include charter fishing operations under a “commercial fishing representative.” Keith noted that “fishing-for-profit” may be a better terminology rather than a “commercial” seat. Henry stated the description can clarify that the seats are both for revenue and not for revenue. The motion to recommend a new fishing seat for a charter/commercial (for-profit) representative was offered, seconded, and approved.

Becky then commented that Doug Rader has resigned as the regional conservation representative to the Advisory Council, so this seat would need to be filled. She reviewed the discussion and recommendations. If the Advisory Council’s recommendations are adopted by GRNMS, the charter will be amended and the following seats will be advertised:

1. Sport fishing (includes any allowable recreational take of fish from sanctuary waters)
2. Charter/commercial (for profit) fishing (includes charter and commercial fishing)
3. Sport diving (includes divers, dive operators, dive clubs, and dive shops)
4. Regional conservation.

Research Area Working Group

Jim Sullivan presented a thorough overview of the Advisory Council's Marine Research Area Concept Working Group process. He explained that the group had met twice – May and October – expecting to complete recommendations by this time. Another meeting, however, will be necessary to complete the groups' report. That meeting is tentatively scheduled for February.

Clark requested that the discussion consider the quality of the research that will result from such lengthy input and attempts to satisfy all concerns; he expressed concern that the quality of the research will be “watered down” by consensus after attempting to meet all needs and to address concerns of all user groups. Jim responded that GRNMS would not establish a research area that would not be useful. Henry stated that the final decisions on size and limitations may come down to what is politically feasible. Greg reminded members that the product of the working group will be a recommendation only; the Advisory Council has the latitude to change any recommendations, which will then be forwarded to the sanctuary.

The Advisory Council adjourned for lunch at 12:00pm.

National Advisory Council Chairs and Coordinators Meeting

Judy Wright reminded members that the Annual National Advisory Council Chairs and Coordinators Workshop will be held in February with she and Becky Shortland representing GRNMS. Each site is asked to present a case study describing a Council activity over the past year. Becky briefly discussed case study guidelines and framework. She and Judy suggested that this year's case study present an overview of the Research Area Working Group process. Becky noted that details of the working group's recommendations would not be a part of that presentation.

Education Programs

Teacher Workshops

Cathy Sakas commented on this year's teacher workshops. She stated that the Ocean and Estuarine Science Workshop was such a success that they will be holding it again next year (tentatively June or July 2005). In response to Judy's question, Cathy noted that the workshops are geared towards educators. Cathy also commented on the student-teacher GIS workshop held last July as well as on the National Geographic workshop.

Ocean Science Education Module

Cathy is currently working on the Ocean Science Education Module; she distributed the module table of contents for participant viewing. One highlight of the curriculum is the ocean topography map (latitude 3130). Another component to the module is the Rivers to Reefs program. Direct footage and still images will also be included. Cathy described another component, the earth projection, which students can use to mathematically determine the earth's water to land ratio.

Student Ocean Council

Cathy and Leah Cooling briefly commented on the status of the Student Ocean Council (SOC). Leah stated that this year's focus is on water quality. The SOC's first activity was at the dive locker, and they also had a meeting last night to distribute “no dumping” curb markers. Discussion between Leah, Venetia, and Clark ensued about the essay requirement in this year's

application. Clark and Venetia noted that an essay requirement would be beneficial only if the number of applicants needs to be limited.

Outreach Programs

Gail Krueger noted that the latest issue of “Shades of Gray” has just been released. She discussed diving outreach efforts as it relates to the management plan. She also commented that she and Becky are organizing a volunteer orientation for early 2005. Gail stated that a reef clean up may be scheduled for the summer, partnered with land-based and estuarine-based clean ups. Bing asked if clean ups had been accomplished in the past and if volunteers are required. He noted that more extensive and broader advertising would reach more people, especially in his area.

Venetia inquired about other volunteer opportunities. Becky stated that the most pressing needs at this time seem to be for staffing events, such as Earth Day, boat shows, and the Savannah Ocean Film Festival. She noted that she has been tasked with formalizing a volunteer program, including a fundraising group.

Clark asked if there will be another Ocean Film Festival. Gail responded that indeed a 2005 festival is being organized for September. The film festival will likely replace the previously-held Ocean Fest on River Street.

Becky commented on GRNMS’ first partnering effort with Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve (SINERR): Eco-Tourism on the Georgia Coast workshop scheduled for February 23rd in Savannah. The SINERR workshop is part of a National Estuarine Research Reserve program called Coastal Training Programs. Becky reminded council members that they are the voice of their respective constituent groups and requested that they pass this information to their constituent groups. She also asked for feedback from council members.

Final Comments

Becky noted that the upcoming meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 24, but she will suggest other dates that may be more accessible.

Clark stated that the sub-bottom profiler will likely be used at GRNMS this summer; the profiler reflects sound to profile sand and rock bottom.

Exhibits and Events

Communications and Outreach Coordinator Gail Krueger discussed the upcoming Savannah Ocean Film Festival, September 10-12. The festival program was distributed, and additional program details can be found on the Gray’s Reef web site (<http://graysreef.noaa.gov>). Reed noted that Gail has done a good job organizing and promoting the festival. Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) will provide the Trustees Theater for use during the festival. Gail reminded council members about the sanctuary volunteer’s reception on Saturday night, to which all members are invited.

Administration

Reed Bohne commented on the directions being taken on the draft management plan. He discussed staff/program reorganization into a team concept (refer to Program Organization handout). Reed also commented on the proposed regional structure for the National Marine Sanctuary Program. Reed will officially address issues for the Northeast/Great Lakes region

when office-level elevation is approved by the Department of Commerce. Jim Sullivan discussed his role in the regional structure design and implementation. In response to a question from Henry Ansley, Reed briefly commented on next year's budget.

Oceans Commissions Report and Legislation

Jim Sullivan introduced himself and provided a brief career and personal history. Jim discussed general information about the Latitude 3130 project. He stated that the goal is to help establish the context within which GRNMS exists; we need to understand what goes on around GRNMS to understand what happens in GRNMS. Reed noted that former advisory council member Dr. George Sedberry just completed an expedition to continue data collection and measurements roughly along this latitude. Jim said that he will also be working on the maritime heritage program with Dr. Erv Garrison of the University of Georgia, as well as ocean observation systems. Jim and Greg will be working on water quality monitoring and hope to involve Savannah State University students in various research projects at GRNMS. Jim has also been involved in the research area concept working group.

Jim also discussed the U.S. Oceans Commission Report which has just been released. Major recommendations have been made by this Administration-appointed panel that call for changes in the areas of science, education, policy and ecosystem-based management.

Student Ocean Council

Education Intern Leah Cooling gave a presentation about the 2003-2004 Student Ocean Council and activities in which they participated.

FY05 Advisory Council Work Plan and Future Meetings

Becky Shortland initiated discussion about the duties and structure of the Advisory Council and scheduling of future meetings. Bing Phillips asked about the status of the management plan. Reed responded that he hopes to have a final plan by the end of this year but offers no guarantees. Reed noted that some outreach opportunities will probably arise to educate the public if and/or when the management plan is approved. Becky emphasized the importance of communicating with various constituent groups. Reed suggested that the council focus an entire meeting on outreach questions, issues, and methods. Venetia noted that not all members are likely to attend every meeting; however, a focused meeting may encourage contribution from those who are interested in that focus.

Judy asked Becky to create a list of areas in which Advisory Council input may be needed or beneficial. Becky commented that draft management plan strategies were included in the distributed materials and requested input based on review of these strategies.

Becky also suggested that the council meet once per quarter in the next fiscal year, which starts October 1st. Joe asked that the meetings occur after the SAFMC meetings in December, March, June, and September. Becky will review other calendars and submit dates for consideration based on the suggestion by Joe Kimmel.

Council Member Notes / Updates

Henry Ansley noted that the King mackerel tournaments have been a highlight; a prized fish was caught at GRNMS this summer. It was a king mackerel weighing 75¾ lbs and is now the state record for this species in the Men's Division. The old record was 63½ pounds. The new record

was caught in June at GRNMS by Joe Bell of Statesboro... unfortunately there was not a tournament going on!!!

Venetia Butler recently attended the Gray's Reef teacher's workshop with Education Coordinator Cathy Sakas. Venetia stated that this workshop was a good outlet for state-wide outreach. Venetia also noted that Oatland Island Education Center will soon introduce a high school oceanography education program.

Bing Phillips commented that Yellow Bluff marina will be closing; he noted that limited access to the water exists in the area.

Joe Kimmel will attend two ecosystem meetings over the next couple of weeks: one with a GIS focus and one with stock-assessment focus; the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council will be meeting in South Carolina in October.

Will Berson briefly discussed a proposal to evaluate Coffee Bluff marina; the real question is access, i.e. does one have to own waterfront property to get to the water? Will also commented that the Georgia Conservancy is looking at what Barrier Island resources are protected and that harbor deepening of the Savannah harbor has been delayed again.

Danny quickly noted that he is continuing his research at GRNMS.

Judy Wright stated that she held five dive charters to GRNMS this summer and that most divers were from out of town.

Will stated that The Georgia Conservancy will look at permit coordination at lands' edge in other states to see how they approach the problem of multiple applications for a project. He also noted that the EPA is trying to determine total maximum daily load of dissolved oxygen in the Savannah River; details can be found on the EPA's web site.

Henry noted that republican majorities exist in both the Georgia Senate and the House, thus DNR is waiting to see if any changes will occur on legislative committees. He stated that upcoming legislature is dependent upon budget. Henry commented that DNR is talking with CCA to look into a red fish stocking program; and he has received a lot of questions about blue fin tuna. Lastly, Henry noted that Noel Holcomb from DNR Wildlife Resources Division is the new Commissioner of DNR.

Venetia said that Oatland Island Education Center is now teaching an oceanography class in partnership with Johnson High School; students come to Oatland every afternoon. She also mentioned that oceanography content has been implemented into state standards this year; these standards can be found on the Georgia Department of Education web site.

Bing further elaborated on CCA / DNR discussion of a red fish stocking program; CCA wants to make sure that a healthy fish population exists in the future.

Judy stated that no diving is going on right now. She noted that she will be working with Gail to increase awareness about resource protection to divers. Judy also discussed the PADI / National Geographic dive center program.

Greg commented on NMSP office elevation, which is currently going through the approval process. He also noted that Congress passed an increased budget for the sanctuary program.

Public Comment

No public was present for comment.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:45pm.