

**GRAY'S REEF NMS
SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting, December 18, 2002
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Sanctuary Office
Skidaway Island, Savannah, Georgia**

Distributed Materials

- September 2002 minutes
- GRNMS Advisory Council members list
- National Sanctuary Advisory Council members directory
- Draft revised charter
- Submission for national report
- National SAC meeting policy topics
- Proposed research area background
- Performance measures (current draft)
- *Sanctuary Science*

Advisory Council Members Present

Matt Gilligan, Joe Kimmel, Doug Rader, George Sedberry, Bing Phillips, Patty McIntosh, Venetia Butler

Advisory Council Members Not Present

Judy Wright, Henry Ansley, Clark Alexander, Dave Cinalli

Public Present

Kenneth E. Conley, Natural Resources Specialist, U.S. Navy, Southeast Region

Staff Present

Reed Bohne, Becky Shortland, Cathy Sakas, Lt. Peter Fischel, Greg McFall

Call to Order

Chair Matt Gilligan called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone, including Ken Conley of the U.S. Navy, Southeast Regional Office in Jacksonville, FL. Mr. Conley explained that, on behalf of the U.S. Navy, he is interested to learn more about Gray's Reef NMS and the Advisory Council. The Navy is concerned about maintaining their training ranges offshore and protecting national security.

Dr. Gilligan continued with a quick review of the day's agenda. He then called for approval of the September, 2002, meeting minutes. The minutes were approved.

Public Comment

Mr. Conley noted at that time he had no further comments.

A discussion ensued concerning participation of the public during Council meeting. Because the

number of “public” that generally attend GRNMS Council meetings has always been small, the tendency has been to include those individuals in general discussion. The Council agreed that it was important to be clear that public comment is slated at certain times during the meeting, so that Council members themselves have adequate opportunity to participate. It was also agreed that members of the public who take the time to attend Council meetings should have adequate opportunity to speak early in the meeting, and again at the end of the meeting.

In addition, Council members request that the GRNMS staff expand notification of Council meetings to other outlets, such as the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council newsletter and website, NOAA’s Coastal Services Center publications, and radio stations. Also, staff will send the Public Service Announcement to each member who can in turn send it to their constituents by email.

Non-Governmental Members

Council Coordinator Becky Shortland reviewed the proposed changes to terms of the non-governmental members of the Council. This formula was developed to allow for staggering of terms, so that all members’ seats do not expire at the same time as happened this year. She further explained that the Council Charter must also be reviewed and revised in light of the term changes and because the life of the Charter was initially only three years.

Members and staff continued to discuss these changes and approved the term alterations as proposed. Further review led to several questions regarding conduct of governmental members, specifically Council charter guidelines for individual governmental agency representatives that do not attend meetings. This language will be redrafted with Council input and sent out by email for final approval before NMSP Director Dan Basta signs the Charter. The Charter will also be extended to five years instead of three.

National SAC Chairs/Coordinators Meeting

Council Vice-Chair George Sedberry reminded members of the upcoming National SAC Chair/Coordinator Meeting to be hosted by Channel Islands NMS next year, February 18-21, 2003. Dr. Sedberry will be attending in place of Chair Matt Gilligan who has a conflict. SAC Coordinator Becky Shortland will also be attending for GRNMS.

The agenda for the meeting includes discussion of specific issues at the request of NMSP Director Dan Basta. The outcome of discussions between SAC chairs during the national meeting could feed into national policy. The topics are numerous and wide-ranging. Dr. Sedberry asked that members review the list of issues and identify priorities as requested by meeting organizers. After lengthy discussion, the SAC decided to split the list of issues into two parts: 1) site specific topics, and 2) cross-cutting topics (those issues that affect more than one sanctuary). The topics as follows will be submitted to meeting organizers as the GRNMS priorities:

Site Specific:

- anchor damage
- military activities
- discharges, dumping, water quality

- fishing impacts
- marine debris

Cross-cutting Topics:

- bioprospecting
- invasive species
- oil and gas
- acoustic impacts
- research sampling

SAC members also noted that some issue policies of interest to GRNMS (zoning and artificial reefs) are currently under development. Members would like to know how and when SACs would review these policies.

Dr. Sedberry also relayed that he will be presenting a “case study” of GRNMS SAC involvement as a part of the national SAC meeting. He asked whether or not members present agree with his choice of development of the GRNMS research agenda. Members present all agreed that the topic was very appropriate, and is indeed something of which the SAC is proud.

GRNMS Draft Management Plan Update

Manager Reed Bohne gave a briefing on regulatory proposals for the Draft Management Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DMP/DEIS). He noted that, in the spirit of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) and NOAA Fisheries (NMFS), staff arranged a series of meetings over the past two months to present regulatory alternatives in informal consultations with NMFS, Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR), and staff of the SAFMC. The agencies were very supportive of the actions that may be proposed in the plan. SAC members Joe Kimmel and Henry Ansley were present in those meetings. The principal difference in the fishing alternatives is the addition of an “allowable gear” approach to regulation; i.e., a rule that clearly identifies rod and reel (hand-held hook-and-line) fishing gear as allowable in GRNMS. This approach may be in the best interest of sanctuary protection and clarity for the public, instead of the more complicated approach of prohibiting numerous gear types that are detrimental to marine resources now and in the future as fisheries shift and technology changes.

SAC members discussed the options and concurred that the allowable gear approach was desirable. Bing Phillips noted that some recreational fishermen use electric reels to pull fish up from the bottom, and that “drift anchors” might conflict with the proposed anchoring prohibition alternative because these mechanisms can be mistaken for bottom anchoring. This could be a real problem for enforcement. Mr. Phillips also emphasized a preference for the elimination of all commercial fishing in GRNMS. It was also noted that GRNMS should consider exemptions for handicapped individuals who may use electric reels. Others noted that the number of hooks on a line could be a conflict; most recreational fishers in GRNMS seem to use 2-3 hooks on an individual line. Joe Kimmel suggested the possibility of establishing trip limits for commercial permits. It was the consensus of the members that GRNMS consider an exemption for handicapped individuals’ use of electric reels, and further explore the use of drift anchors and

number of hooks used.

Reed Bohne explained that the next step is to develop a formal request of the SAFMC to draft regulatory language that will be promulgated under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA). SAFMC staff was in agreement that we include model language for the regulation, along with all supporting information, such as socioeconomic impacts. The request should be included in the March SAFMC meeting agenda to be held at Jekyll Island, Georgia. If SAFMC takes formal action at its March meeting, the DMP/DEIS may soon be ready for public review and comment.

Reed Bohne also explained that he was unable to travel to the recent SAFMC meeting in North Carolina due to weather. Joe Kimmel reported that he attended the meeting and that SAFMC staff reported on the progress of the DMP/DEIS in Reed's absence. There was little discussion by SAFMC members and they seemed to be comfortable with GRNMS presenting formally at the March SAFMC meeting.

Working group for research area proposal

Research Coordinator Greg McFall introduced the topic by reviewing the outcomes from the Research Workshop, which was held in June 2000. One of the strategies from the workshop was to examine the feasibility of establishing a research area within GRNMS. The initial suggestion was made during scoping for review of the management plan in December 1999. The draft management plan will include this strategy and outline the process to examine the concept with the guidance of a working group of the Council. It was further explained that staff wants to begin to set up that working group at this time, since the process is expected to be lengthy.

Bing Phillips asked what the purpose is of the working group. Greg McFall explained that the working group would be tasked with exploring the objectives of a research area, the feasibility of a research area in GRNMS, and the design of such an area if it is feasible. The working group, according to the Council charter, would report its recommendations to the full Council. The Council would then consider the recommendations and pass its findings on to the Sanctuary manager for final decision-making. Reed Bohne further explained that should the Sanctuary move forward with designation of a research area that required regulation (e.g. prohibition on activities within the area), a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) would be required.

Becky Shortland added that by the charter a working group must be chaired by a member of the GRNMS Council, although the balance of members of the working group do not need to be Council members. All Council members are, however, invited to be a part of the working group. Reed Bohne added that what we are asking at this time is for suggestions of individuals to be members of the working group, since the membership should be broad representing science, users, enforcement and others.

Matt Gilligan noted that regarding the concept of a research area, many concerns and benefits were expressed during the June 2000 research workshop. He further emphasized that it may be useful to resurrect the entire discussion and bring together the same people involved in that discussion along with others.

Doug Rader stated that he believes these processes work best when all the information is laid out by all involved and affected: scientists and users without a conflict of interest.

Matt Gilligan asked what the timetable is for the working group. Reed Bohne explained that the process could take at least two years if the decision is to develop a research area. At this point the DMP/DEIS may be released for public review in May 2003; we could only expect an initial report from the working group to the Council by the time the management plan is finalized (September/October 2003). Reed continued that, again, at this time we are only asking for suggestions on working group members. Identifying a chair at this time would also be appropriate.

Doug Rader nominated George Sedberry. After brief discussion, the Council voted to approve Dr. Sedberry as chair of the working group. Discussion then involved the appropriate size of the group and composition. It was agreed that all the individuals who participated in the discussion during the 2000 Research Workshop should be invited, although it is expected that not all will accept. Council members were asked to submit names of individuals for the working group now or by email in the near future. Staff would like to schedule the first working group meeting for late February if possible.

Council members suggested a number of individuals representing science and users familiar with GRNMS. Council members were also asked to send additional names by email. Greg McFall will then send a full list of suggested invitees out to Council members for another round of input before inviting participants.

It was agreed by all that a full explanation of the purpose and scope of the working group was important, and that ideally 10-15 people would be best. Another question to explore is whether the working group should be facilitated. NOAA facilitators Tim Goodspeed and Tom Culliton who have worked with the Council before were suggested as an option, or GRNMS staff. Reed Bohne said he would like the first meeting of the working group to be in February or March 2003.

SAC members collectively reported on many meetings that are scheduled this winter and spring that could conflict with the working group effort. Becky Shortland will detail all the possible conflicts in a schedule of upcoming events to be used when trying to identify meeting dates. Discussion followed on whether the first working group meeting should be one or two days. The consensus was that it should be at least 1-1/2 days, with no more than three meetings total over the life of the working group to produce a report to the full GRNMS Council.

Draft performance measures

Becky Shortland noted that the current version of performance measures was included in the Council handout. She asked that members please give some feedback by end of year.

Other Business

Program updates

Research Coordinator Greg McFall gave a brief verbal report on highlights of the past research

season, including numerous research cruises with National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science and others, developing information on paleoarcheology and an upcoming report, fish and benthic monitoring, habitat characterization, bottom mapping further offshore, and upgrades to the data buoy. Some complete reports may be available at the next SAC meeting.

Executive Officer Peter Fischel reviewed activities in operations and enforcement including the deployment of new corner buoys, continuing law enforcement patrols by Georgia DNR when possible and the US Coast Guard, as well as on-water presence at GRNMS of staff. Overflight surveys are continuing until water temperatures drop. He plans to meet with US Coast Guard participants in February to set up standard operating procedures and communications. Lt. Fischel also reported that GRNMS now has three vessels operational.

Education Coordinator Cathy Sakas reported on coordinating exhibit possibilities including the Atlanta Aquarium. Distance learning programs are continuing with more requests coming from out of state. Visiting NOAA/NESDIS scientist Felipe Arzayus may help with Spanish sites. Ms. Sakas also noted that her Turner South series has been renewed, that she is now president of the Coastal Education Group and the Tybee Island Marine Science Center, along with hosting several naturalist trips to the Okefenokee and other sites. She also mentioned that we should have a new intern from Savannah State University to support her in education efforts.

Adjourn

The next meeting of the GRNMS Advisory Council will be targeted for March or April. The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.