

A Look Ahead

Over the past year, Gray's Reef staff and its Sanctuary Advisory Council have been engaged in an evaluation of the management plan completed in 2006 to look for management objectives that need to be emphasized, corrected or be given a lower priority in a new management plan. Management plan review will also include an updated scientific evaluation of the condition of the sanctuary. In the year ahead, Sanctuary Advisory Council meetings and public scoping meetings will offer opportunities for the general public and stakeholders to learn more about the issues and the management plan review process, as well as be involved in development of a revised plan.



2011 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary surrounds one of the largest live bottom reefs in the southeastern United States, located just off the Georgia coast. The 22-square-mile sanctuary consists of rocky outcroppings separated by sandy troughs, resulting in a complex habitat of ledges covered by a living carpet of algae and invertebrates ranging from sponges to sea stars. Gray's Reef also supports loggerhead sea turtles, migrating right whales and a wealth of fish species, making the sanctuary a popular sport fishing destination and an occasional diving destination. Established Jan. 16, 1981.

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Members

Officers

Chair: Dr. Daniel Gleason
Vice Chair: Clark Alexander
Secretary: Venetia R. Butler

Charter/Commercial Fishing: Capt. Wendell Harper
Sport Fishing: Tim Tarver
Sport Diving: vacant
Citizen-at-Large: William Cliett, Jr.

Federal Government

U.S. Coast Guard (non-voting): LT Brandon C. Fisher
Alternate: LTJg Nathan Downend
NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (non-voting):
Al Samuels
NOAA National Marine Fisheries Southeast Regional
Office (non-voting): Dr. Jack McGovern
Alternate: Rick DeVictor
NOAA Sapelo Island NERR (non-voting): Dorset Hurley

Sanctuary Advisory Council Coordinator
Becky Shortland

Non-Governmental Members

Living Resources Research: Dr. Daniel Gleason
Non-living Resources Research: Dr. Clark Alexander
Regional Conservation: Mary Conley
Conservation: Anna George
K-12 Education: Venetia R. Butler
University Education: Timothy Goodale

Governmental Members

State Government
GA Department of Natural Resources, Coastal
Resources Division: Spud Woodward
Alternate: Patrick Geer
GA Department of Natural Resources, Law Enforcement
Section (non-voting): Capt. Doug Lewis
Alternate: Sgt. Mark Carson
GA Sea Grant: Dr. Charles Hopkinson

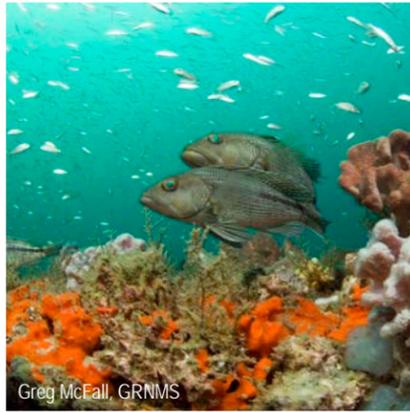
<http://graysreef.noaa.gov>

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is committed to supporting lives and livelihoods across the nation and in sanctuary communities through socioeconomic research and monitoring to understand the economic and social drivers of sanctuary resources and improve management practices.





A Research Area in Gray's Reef

With publication of a final rule on October 14, 2011, the southern third of Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary off the Georgia coast was designated a research area, where scientists can study how human activities and natural processes affect the sanctuary's marine resources. This new research area is specifically designed for conducting controlled scientific studies where critical variables can be controlled over long periods of time. Fishing and diving are prohibited in the lightly used, 8-square mile research area; vessels are permitted to travel through it without stopping.



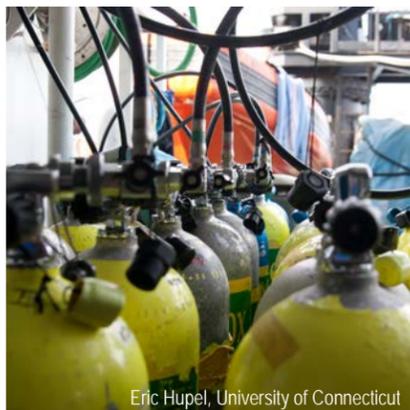
Research Cruise Results

The 2011 research cruise aboard the NOAA ship *Nancy Foster* concentrated on piscivore ecology, fish and invertebrate assessments, and other projects that will aid the success of the sanctuary's research area. On this cruise, researchers visited 37 sites – 19 inside the research area and 18 outside – to count fishes, describe invertebrate communities, and relate observations to habitat types and fishing pressure. These datasets will be important in determining how fishing, or lack of fishing, affects these animals as fishing pressure changes over time.



Volunteer of the Year

Randy Rudd, a Gray's Reef *Team Ocean* volunteer diver, was named the sanctuary's own Volunteer of the Year and The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation's (NMSF) 2011 Volunteer of the Year. Rudd is a scientific diver who collects data for numerous Gray's Reef projects. The NMSF awarded him the national Volunteer of the Year award at its ninth annual Leadership Awards Dinner in June 2010 in Washington, DC. Rudd received the award for his leadership and dedication working as a volunteer citizen scientist diver with Gray's Reef.



KAP Survey

Gray's Reef has completed a knowledge, attitudes and perceptions (KAP) survey for the sanctuary. The survey gauges the awareness of Gray's Reef for both users and non-users of the sanctuary. It also gauges the public's support for sanctuary and ocean management. The results will help guide strategies and activities in the upcoming management plan revision. Analysis of the survey results is underway, but preliminary results indicate that most visitors to the sanctuary are there to fish; approximately nine percent of visitors engage in scuba diving.



Savannah Ocean Exchange

Founded in 2010, the Savannah Ocean Exchange unites worldwide organizations across multiple disciplines and boundaries to accelerate the distribution and adoption of solutions that positively impact our ocean and coast. Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary is one of the exchange's founding organizations. In September 2011, the Savannah Ocean Exchange hosted nearly 200 international participants and solutions presenters. A wave-powered remote sensing device was the winner of the \$100,000 Gulfstream Navigator Award for solutions to ocean-related problems.



Gray's Reef Ocean Film Festival

The 2011 Gray's Reef Ocean Film Festival focused on two critical issues for the marine environment: ocean acidification as a result of climate change and the growing problem of marine debris. The free festival was held at two venues: the Jepson Center for the Arts and the Savannah College of Art and Design's Trustees Theater. In conjunction with the films, the Telfair Museums-Jepson Center for the Arts held an exhibit by noted landscape photographer Sal Lopes, called "The Water Project." Approximately 3,000 people attended the multi-media festival events.



Coast Guard Overflights

Looking at the sanctuary from the observation seat of a Coast Guard helicopter enables Gray's Reef staff to track large marine life. Moreover, the smallest forms of marine life, like cyanobacteria, can be observed in the form of highly-visible blooms offshore. Coast Guard helicopter pilots carry Gray's Reef observers on overflights as part of the Coast Guard's Living Marine Resources (LMR) program. The LMR program supports NOAA's efforts to maintain sustainable fisheries and protect vulnerable resources such as marine mammals, and assists the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries in monitoring activities.



Tagged Fish Found

In early July 2011, fisherman caught "Rare Treat," a gag grouper tagged with an acoustic ("pinger") device at Gray's Reef on May 18, 2008. When originally tagged as part of the sanctuary's on-going fish tagging project, Rare Treat measured just over two feet. When captured three years later, the fish had grown almost a foot in length. While tagged, Rare Treat occasionally swam north as much as 1300 feet to visit nearby ledges. Currently, the Gray's Reef staff is closely examining Rare Treat's data to learn more about gag grouper behavior in the sanctuary.