

2013 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



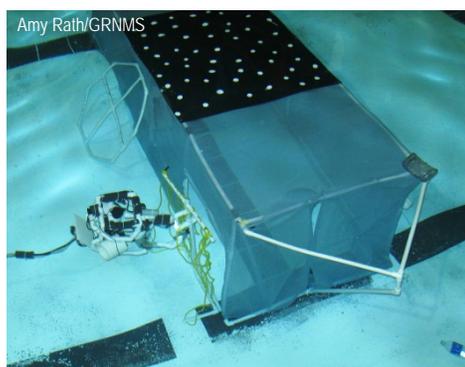
GRAY'S REEF OCEAN FILM FESTIVAL

Through the generous contributions of time, energy, enthusiasm, resources and expertise of various individuals, which included staff, sponsors and many volunteers, the 2013 Gray's Reef Ocean Film Festival was a huge success. The festival allowed for the engagement of guest and student filmmakers through films, such as "Plastic Paradise: The Great Pacific Garbage Patch" by independent documentary filmmaker Angela Sun, and "A Penguin's Life" by National Geographic filmmaker Greg Marshall. The community strongly responded to the poignant films and many viewers were motivated by a call to action.



RESEARCH EXPEDITIONS IN GRAY'S REEF

In 2013, research expeditions aboard the NOAA ship *Nancy Foster* allowed scientists to conduct a variety of projects, such as acoustic fishery biomass surveys, diver fish censuses, invertebrate density and abundance measurements, and habitat mapping with multibeam sonar. Aboard Gray's Reef R/V, *Joe Ferguson*, scientists were also able to conduct a project aimed at quantifying predator-prey relationships of fish-eating animals. An open house event was held in-port to invite community members aboard the *Nancy Foster* for an informative guided tour on current research activities at Gray's Reef.



SOUTHEAST REGIONAL MATE ROV COMPETITION

Gray's Reef hosted the annual Southeast Regional MATE (Marine Advanced Technology Education) ROV (remotely operated vehicle) Competition in Savannah, Georgia. This technically challenging, engaging program immersed participants in the science of sanctuaries and focused heavily on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education. The competition required student teams to build an underwater robot capable of navigating to a certain depth, mapping a shipwreck site, collecting samples, monitoring plants and animals, removing marine debris, and locating identifying features. The pool-side competition encourages collaboration among students, teachers, parents and professionals in the local community.



PROPOSED EXEMPTION FOR WEIGHTED MARKER BUOYS

Weighted marker buoys in Gray's Reef may soon improve diving safety and increase the ability of recreational drift anglers to mark and relocate a fishing spot. Currently, sanctuary regulations prohibit anchoring in the sanctuary and the placement of any material on the seafloor, including weights that mark locations during recreational diving or fishing. An exemption has been proposed for weighted marker buoys that are "continuously tended" by fishers and divers, and not attached to a vessel or capable of holding a boat at anchor.



LOOKING AHEAD

- An unmanned aircraft system is being tested in waters near Gray's Reef that could allow researchers to monitor marine life with minimal disturbance. This type of monitoring is also cheaper, greener and safer than manned flights.
- An Education-Outreach Working Group, a subgroup of Gray's Reef Sanctuary Advisory Council, is under development with a goal to assess and evaluate prior education and outreach programs, as well as suggest new directions for future programming.
- A local chapter of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is under development for future support of Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary.

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.

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.

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM

Olympic Coast
Cordell Bank
Gulf of the Farallones
Papahānaumokuākea
Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale
Monterey Bay
Channel Islands
American Samoa (U.S.)



Thunder Bay
Stellwagen Bank
Monitor
Gray's Reef
Florida Keys
Flower Garden Banks

Scale varies in this perspective. Adapted from National Geographic Maps.

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a system of 14 marine protected areas encompassing more than 150,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. The system includes 13 national marine sanctuaries and the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. For more information on the National Marine Sanctuary System, visit: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>