



BACKGROUND

Gray's Reef was designated on January 16, 1981, and is the only protected natural reef area on the continental shelf off the Georgia coast. The natural live-bottom reef is teeming with marine life and is part of the endangered North Atlantic right whale's calving ground. Loggerhead turtles rest at the reef, where scientists have identified more than 200 fish species.

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary is part of the National Marine Sanctuary System, which is a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington State to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. National marine sanctuaries are managed for the conservation of their natural and cultural resources, while supporting sustainable recreation, tourism and compatible commercial activities. The network includes a system of 13 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments.

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary



Photo: NOAA

A Gray's Reef science diver sets up a hydrophone.



Photo: Wesley Nichols/TheExcursionTV

David Zelski, host of TV show "The Excursion," displays a barracuda he just caught in Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary.



Photo: Jody Patterson/NOAA

Students from Carrollton Middle School in Georgia compete in the underwater ROV competition hosted by the sanctuary.

Improved underwater acoustic telemetry array

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary took steps to make their underwater technology more applicable to management needs. Acoustic receivers track tagged sea animals and hydrophones record ocean noise. Coupling these two instruments enabled researchers to identify tagged species as they heard the animals' sounds. Scientists can now better understand the natural soundscape and the effects that sound can have as animals communicate, feed, mate, and migrate.

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary appears on tourism focused national television show

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary was featured in "The Excursion" television show to promote recreational fishing in the sanctuary. "Explore Georgia" – the tourism division of the state of Georgia's Department of Economic Development – sponsors the show, which airs multiple times regionally, as well as once nationwide. The segment showed the host fishing and using a descending device, part of the sanctuary's ongoing efforts to raise awareness of best fishing practices.

Rotary provides ROV competition support

Sixty-two Rotary clubs comprising 3,000 business leaders in Georgia supported Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary's annual competition for students to build and pilot underwater remotely operated vehicles (ROVs). As ROV technology progresses, the marine industry demands a skilled workforce of ROV engineers and technicians. Rotary recognizes that the sanctuary's ROV program helps inspire a future workforce while also driving technological innovation. By engaging Rotarians, Gray's Reef advances the Blue Economy workforce while simultaneously increasing ocean awareness.

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Looking Ahead to FY19

- Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary will distribute descending devices to recreational anglers as a partner in FishSmart's Red Snapper and Red Drum Conservation Project, which encourages awareness of best practices and use of tools that improve fish survival after release.
- Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary will work with the NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation to develop innovative technologies to measure the number of visitors that explore the sanctuary, enabling access to useful and reliable data.
- Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary will continue to strengthen its relationships with citizens along the Georgia coast to enhance awareness of the sanctuary as a special protected place and as a recreational and tourism asset of coastal communities.

<http://graysreef.noaa.gov/>