

**Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary  
Advisory Council  
-March 16, 2023 Meeting Minutes-**

**Date: March 16, 2023**

**Time: 6:00 p.m.**

**Location: Wisconsin Maritime Museum, 75 Maritime Drive, Manitowoc, Wisconsin**

**Meeting Attendees**

**NOAA:** Russ Green, LeAnn Hogan, Jean Prevo, Caitlin Zant

**SAC Members:** Brendon Baillod, Josh Bastianello, John Broihahn, Roland Chaloupka, Mary Ellen Giffels, Melissa Gutierrez, Scott Huebner, John Janssen, Jeff Lamont, Richard Larsen, Tom Mlada, Dawn St. George, Bill Schanen

**SAC Alternates:** Dave Bennett, Kevin Cullen, James Falkowski, Letitia Hase, Jason Prigge, Vanessa VanderWeele, John Wrostek

**Government Agency and Tribe Members:** Greg Buckley - City of Two Rivers, Josh Fennell - US Coast Guard, James Skibo - State of Wisconsin

**Guests:** Todd Breiby, Shelly Harms, Gabrielle Lubach, Rich Tomson

**Media:** None.

**WELCOME AND MEETING OVERVIEW:**

Russ Green, Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary Superintendent, called the meeting to order. With the Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary (WSCNMS) being designated a year and a half ago, this is a great time to get the advisory council started. He thanked the council members for volunteering their time and expertise to the council. Advisory council members are important and help extend the sanctuary's reach into the communities, which is a great asset to the entire program. All councils are different across the map depending on what the community is like, what the geography is like and what the resources are. There is a real opportunity to make this one unique and fit for Wisconsin.

This first meeting focused on getting to know each other, brief introductions, an update on the WSCNMS, reviewing council member roles and discussing future council business.

## **MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS:**

Each council member was given the opportunity to introduce themselves, state their affiliation, where they are from and give a brief statement of why they wanted to be on the advisory council. The current member list is attached.

Russ spoke about the different non-voting government seats on the council and about the tribal opportunities available. There are 11 federal tribes so it is an open rolling seat which allows them to join the council at any time in a government non-voting seat. They have a special relationship with us and the sanctuary. Leaving it wide open so all 11 tribes have the opportunity to work with the sanctuary.

### **Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast NMS Staff:**

Caitlin Zant has been hired as the WSCNMS Research Coordinator. She studied maritime history at East Carolina University and previously worked as the Maritime Archaeologist at the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Jean Prevo from the Eastern Region office will be serving as the advisory council coordinator. Jean also serves as the council coordinator for Thunder Bay NMS and sees an opportunity to connect the two councils together.

Matt Brookhart, Director of the Eastern Region was unable to attend the meeting but will be here in the future. LeAnn Hogan, Eastern Regional Operations Coordinator, spoke on behalf of the regional office. She thanked the council for attending and volunteering their time and reiterated how important advisory councils are to the sanctuary program and linking the program to the community. Councils are integral in how we manage sanctuaries. WSCNMS is a priority not just to the eastern region but for the entire program. The program is working to get the WSCNMS the staff and financial resources needed to get off the ground and running. There are now two sanctuaries in the Great Lakes and one more in the designation process which underscores the importance and the value that NOAA and the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries places on the maritime heritage, the cultural heritage and the ecosystems of the Great Lakes. Really excited to have you on this journey as partners with the program.

### **WISCONSIN SHIPWRECK COAST NMS – Russ Green, Superintendent**

Russ Green gave a broad overview of the entire marine sanctuary system. It's a national program started in the 1970s to protect the USS *Monitor*. Currently there are 15 national marine sanctuaries across the country. Wisconsin is the most recent one designated and the first sanctuary to go from nomination to designation through a community-based process, other sanctuaries were built from the top down. Lake Ontario is currently underway in the designation process. Having three sites in the Great Lakes is good exposure to the legislators and other leaders. These areas become important and promote the general conservation of the Great Lakes.

Russ spoke about the 2014 designation document. That document is on the website and can be found [here](#). The sanctuary is co-managed with the State of Wisconsin. The sanctuary doesn't happen without that co-management partner, the Wisconsin Historical Society is the lead for that.

Designated in August 2021, there are 36 historic shipwrecks, many are on the national registry of historic places. WSCNMS provides stewardship for our nationally significant maritime heritage assets in Lake Michigan and promotes Great Lakes conservation through research, education and public engagement. Senator Baldwin has been an important champion of the sanctuary.

All of the Great Lakes sanctuaries provide benefit to each other and bring focus to the Great Lakes.

In the WSCNMS shipwrecks range from the 1830s to the 1930s, going from fur trade through the industrial period. These shipwrecks are museums that tell the stories of the economic success of the Great Lakes as the U.S. expands westward.

Shipwrecks provide a great recreation component from shallow divers to advanced. It is important to connect the public to these places and get them on the water. There are some great opportunities for paddling to some of the shallow shipwrecks. The sanctuary believes that connecting people to the resource helps with conservation efforts.

### **Sanctuary Update:**

**Mooring Buoys** – Mooring buoys are very important to the sanctuary, providing access to the shipwreck, while protecting them from anchor damage. In October, a no anchoring regulation will come into effect to help protect these resources. Mooring buoys encourage visiting the shipwrecks safely and responsibly. Installing the infrastructure for the buoys will be a multi-year process. There is a high likelihood that they will be able to work with Coast Guard out of Duluth this year to place the mooring blocks on the lakebed without damaging the wrecks. The buoys are Coast Guard approved with lights and reflectors. The sanctuary worked with the Lake Carriers Association to develop the mooring buoy program. Mooring buoys are not instrumented but they could be. Opportunities to do weather buoys, data loggers, etc.

**Research** - Research is an important part of what the sanctuary does. The sanctuary is a magnet for researchers and for resources directed at Lake Michigan. Many projects are funded with outside money.

In 2021, the program received a \$200,000 grant to explore the shipwrecks located off of Three Rivers that were buried in the shifting sands. Worked with many partners on this project including the Wisconsin Maritime Museum, University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute, University of Miami, Ocean Infinity, Wisconsin Historical Society, University of Delaware and Marine Magnetics. The project used autonomous vehicles, sonars and a drone to help locate the

shipwrecks. Marine Magnetics is a global manufacturer of some of this technology and they give the sanctuary a break to bring the equipment here so they can be part of the story in Lake Michigan. It also allows them to try out new technology for their research and development.

Last year, the sanctuary team was able to visit a number of shipwrecks to shoot 6k video, virtual reality footage, 360 images and sonar footage from the wrecks which will help to create photogrammetric models. This project used people and their equipment from across the sanctuaries program.

**Mapping** – Mapping is a key priority. Normally mapping a sanctuary is a multi-year project but Wisconsin was able to do it in under two years. This was a result of leadership and folks on Capitol Hill making sure we are backing up what we said we would do when we created this sanctuary. The Office of Coast Survey awarded a contract to a private company to map much of the sanctuary. Coast Survey, Geo Dynamics, Great Lakes Environmental Research Lab (GLERL) and NOAA’s National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) all worked on this project.

Planning to work with other federal partners to create habitat maps. The first step is map it with the sonar and then come back with an ROV or an AUV with cameras on it, match it up with the sonar imagery and make a key to automate mapping going forward to describe the habitat and what the bottom is made up of. Hoping to receive some EPA funding through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to continue to do the ground truthing that we need, looking at 2024 or 2025.

The sanctuary received a grant and is working with the University of Milwaukee School of Freshwater Sciences to construct a weather buoy in the sanctuary with water quality sensors and some other equipment important for environmental sensing. This buoy will provide the public with real-time weather data.

Smaller weather buoys were previously installed with a grant from the Great Lakes Observing System. These smaller buoys were less sophisticated and only provided wind and waves data and wind direction but they were used as a test to determine if this is something the public is interested in. Data showed that unique users grew from 7,540 to 13,503 from 2021 to 2022, with 86,550 total page views in 2022. These buoys also included water temperature, which the charter fishing groups find very beneficial.

Has a location for the large buoy been established? The current plan is to deploy it between Port Washington and Sheboygan, this is a good spot to get a general sense of the weather along the coast.

**Outreach** – The national exposure that marine sanctuaries bring is an important element to the designation and expectation of the communities and stakeholders. In partnership with the Lake Shore Natural Resource Partnership (LNRP), Coastal Management and Discover Wisconsin the sanctuary was able to produce a 9-minute sanctuary video. This is a great video for sharing with constituents. Jean will email the link to this [video](#).

Russ and Tom Mlada did a podcast together that received over 70,000 views.

Russ and Caitlin attended the Governor's Conference on Tourism in Green Bay and made a lot of connections that will help with outreach. Water was one of the main conference themes this year – access to water, getting people to the water either inland or on the beaches. This is potentially something the group could focus on helping with.

**Media** – WSCNMS has been getting lots of national media exposure including articles in the Smithsonian Magazine, New York Times and Chicago Tribune. Kevin Cullen gave an NPR interview during the designation process. The 2021 designation announcement alone resulted in 5,400 news stories that generated 19 million media impressions.

World class photographer Becky Keagan Schott came here to dive because of the sanctuary and its shipwrecks. Her article was featured in Alert Diver Magazine the widest circulated dive magazine in the world and was read by nearly 200,000 people.

There is potential for council members to help with media and outreach opportunities.

**Education** – Education is a priority for the sanctuary program, it makes it relevant for the public. Staff has been making inroads with teachers. During last year's research cruise two teachers were invited onboard for two days. The idea was to get their impression and feedback to see how this type of thing can be funneled into the classroom. Jean will also email a link to this [video](#) that was developed during the research cruise.

Received some Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding to continue the program this year in conjunction with Sea Grant and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Some of the trips will be with teachers for professional development and some with students. Getting students near the water and on the water can be an experience that may change someone's direction. Hoping to scale this program up over time.

**Facilities Study** – The facilities study has been a yearlong process. There were approximately 60 participants in working groups that included education, marine operations, archaeology and history, providing feedback on what kind of program they expected from the sanctuary, which will translate into what sort of facilities make sense. The [final management plan](#) includes developing a NOAA presence within each of the sanctuary communities. Working with different partners including Discovery World in Milwaukee and the new history center that will open in

2026 in Madison to add resources to codevelop and create programming to include sanctuary experiences.

An example of an idea they are looking at is in Two Rivers where there is an unused water department building. Two Rivers has a vision for turning it into a visitor center and walking path, with the potential for tying in sanctuary exhibits. This type of project represents the types of possible partnerships where the sanctuary can contribute funds and help create exhibits to drive interest in those shallow water wrecks and the paddle opportunities. These are the types of opportunities we are looking at up and down the coast. Might be a better approach than one central location. Funding for this project has not been secured yet. Also looking to include administrative and research facilities space in one of the communities. The important piece is housing for researchers, if you can make it cheap and easy for researchers they will come.

Also looking at developing a coastal trail, a connected series of markers building on the concept of the state's Wisconsin Maritime Trail. With the potential to add additional elements like pavilions for education programming.

Russ reiterated that the advisory council is a huge milestone for us and central to how we go forward. Excited to have this key critical area under the way.

#### **COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES & NEXT STEPS:**

A council member asked how can the council support the staff to get the momentum going out into the communities?

Councils are all different. Many councils are into policies and science-based. WSCNMS's resources are different. Outreach and engagement of communities is key for us, along with tourism, recreation and economic development. We need to establish a plan to work with local communities and small businesses, and figure out what other constituents would be interested in leveraging the sanctuaries for their businesses and vice versa in order to develop products that will be useful to them. We would like to develop that collaboratively with the council. It's typical for sanctuaries to have working groups. With a small sanctuary staff, the council will need to decide on a few key items they would like to focus on.

Please review the WSCNMS Management plan document linked [here](#), prior to the next meeting.

**2023 Meeting Dates** – It was discussed and decided that council meetings will be in person the third Thursday of every other month at 6pm. The meeting dates for 2023 are:

- May 18
- July 20
- September 21
- November 16

The plan is to rotate the meeting locations within the sanctuary communities. There is also a potential of informal get togethers in the off months. Once working groups are established, they may meet virtually.

The Nature Center at Point Beach State Forest in Two Rivers was suggested as a potential meeting location in the warmer months.

Council members wondered if there would be a potential for listening in if you can't make it to the meeting? We will look into it and see how we can make it work.

**Chair/Vice Chair Elections** – The council will need to elect a chair and a vice-chair. There is information in the charter on these positions. Jean will also email a list of other potential responsibilities that could come along with holding one of these positions. We will have an agenda item to go over this at the next meeting and hopefully a few folks will be ready to nominate someone or self-nominate. Then we would do a virtual vote and ideally have the chair and vice-chair in place for our third meeting in July.

Please get to know each other, especially the primaries and alternates. All of your voices and opinions matter so we really encourage everyone to participate and attend the meetings.

**Open Seats** - SAC Applications are being accepted through **April 30** for six alternate positions:

- Diving/Dive Clubs/Archaeology
- Education (K-12)
- Education (higher education)
- Fishing
- History/Heritage/Public Interpretation
- Recreation

Please share this opportunity with your constituents or anyone you think may be interested.

Detailed information is on the website

<https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/wisconsin/involved/recruitment.html> or they can contact Jean directly at [jean.prevo@noaa.gov](mailto:jean.prevo@noaa.gov).

### **Council Questions & Discussion -**

It was mentioned that the vision statement on page 2 of the council charter doesn't include Great Lakes, only ocean. Wondering if someone can take a look at this at a higher level?

Working group examples? Boundary expansion, management plan review and education program working groups were given as examples from Thunder Bay. Communication, community engagement and development were discussed as possibilities for Wisconsin. Would be great to have a local friends' group or chapter of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

A working group could help put together materials for sharing with constituencies. These ideas could be discussed in more detail at a future meeting.

How can the council touch base with archaeologists, divers and dive shops? Should correspondence come from the sanctuary staff to let them know it up and running and ready to do things, here are the people you should contact? Maybe include some information and a map? Or should it come from the council? Yes, it can come from a council member to make the connection. It would be helpful to have council members identify who these groups are, then we could come up with a simple communication plan. This would be a good working group option.

Are there any media guidelines for SAC members? Specifically in regard to social media and podcasts. There is some information in the council's charter but it's very general. Russ and Jean will look into this further.

Is there a way to put an identifier on the sub buoy for use when the mooring buoy has been removed? Russ will talk to the Lake Carriers Association to see if that is a possibility. Sub buoys in the shipping channel need to be at 40 feet depth, shooting for 20 feet in the shallower near shore areas.

As our council work progresses do you envision collaborative connective opportunities with Thunder Bay? There could be opportunity to invite key Thunder Bay members to present virtually to share ideas. Sometimes priorities change as new administration comes on, there could be an opportunity for the two Great Lakes sites to work together on these. Maybe the council could put together a contingent to visit Thunder Bay in person to see what a mature sanctuary is like. Tom mentioned the overall sense of community pride, ownership and overall embracive impact. He shared the example of the sanctuary branding in the Alpena airport. The connective threads among all of our sanctuary communities, that branding really could work here in Wisconsin. Could the sanctuary put something in the Milwaukee and Madison airports? Suggestion to market to folks heading from Illinois to Door County. Russ could see these types of ideas being added to a higher-level document that outlines the opportunities available.

There was a suggestion to put sanctuary messaging on the *Badger* car ferry. Russ said they are working on that.

There was some discussion about the possibilities of establishing a friends' group to help support the sanctuary. Jeff Gray could present at a future meeting on the development of Thunder Bay's friends' group

**Reminder** – If you haven't sent Jean your likeness form, please get that to her.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

N/A



**ADJOURN:**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm and the council was given a sneak peak of the new Bringing Shipwrecks to Life exhibit featuring photos by Becky Kagan Schott at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum. The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, May 18 at 6pm**, location to be determined.

**Attachments:**

SAC Member List

**Links:**

[Discover Wisconsin Video](#)

[Education Video](#)

[Management Plan](#)

**Action Items:**

Sanctuary staff will look into social media limitations

Russ will talk to Lake Carriers Association regarding sub buoy options

Send likeness form to Jean if you haven't already provided one