

SANCTUARY WATCH

Oil Spills and Ship Groundings Keep Sanctuaries Busy on Both Coasts

Ship groundings in environmentally sensitive coral reefs...mystery oil spills and stricken seabirds...the National Marine Sanctuary Program faced both in recent months in its daily efforts to conserve and protect the nation's national marine sanctuaries. In both cases, ongoing partnerships with other federal and state agencies and the efforts of staff and volunteers aided the sanctuaries with these difficult situations.

Staff in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary faced not one, but three, boat groundings within the last three months. In the first, on December 16, 2001, a shrimp boat grounded in the Dry Tortugas National Park, 68 miles west of Key West, Florida. The vessel, *Cap'n Bozo* was successfully removed, but not before the vessel damaged significant sections of coral and seagrass beds. On January 3, 2002, two shrimp boats, the *Blind Faith* and the *Theresa Lynn*, grounded in waters near historic Fort Jefferson. In the first instance, the *Blind Faith* broke up and spilled approximately 2,000 gallons of diesel fuel. *Theresa Lynn*, coming to help the grounded vessel, lost steerage and was carried by surge and wind up against the moat wall, where it partially broke up in some of the Park's popular swimming and snorkeling areas.

Staff from the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, the National Park Service, and the State of Florida, rushed to the site to work with the US Coast Guard in their response and vessel salvage.

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National Marine Sanctuary Program Honors Victims of 9/11

In honor of sanctuary friends lost on September 11, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary recently dedicated a newly acquired research vessel, the R/V *Joe Ferguson*, in a ceremony at the University of Georgia's Marine Education Center and Aquarium dock on Skidaway Island, Georgia.

National Geographic Society Expeditions Leader Joe Ferguson and Ann Judge, Director of the Society's travel office, were traveling on American Airlines Flight 77 when it crashed into the Pentagon. The Society's educators were



Photo: Greg McFall/NOAA

NMSP staff cast rose petals in memory of the victims of 9/11. The new Gray's Reef Marine Sanctuary research vessel was renamed the R/V Joe Ferguson.

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Socio-economic Interviews Aid Sanctuary Management Plan Review

In support of Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary's (GRNMS) management plan review, the National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) staff economist completed a socio-economic study that identified recreational, fishing, and scuba diving as the major activities that occur within the sanctuary boundaries.

During January 2002, the NMSP staff economist conducted in-person interviews with fishing charter boat and dive shop operators along the Georgia Coast, from Savannah to Brunswick. The group discussed a wide variety of issues including spearfishing, anchoring, and mooring buoys.

The survey shows that the most significant user group is private boat owners who are members of fishing clubs, camps, and marinas. (This group will be interviewed later in 2002 through a proposed partnership with Savannah State University. This partnership will provide ongoing socio-economic monitoring of Gray's Reef Sanctuary uses.)

An initial estimate of the total fishing charter boat activity within GRNMS came to 345 trips totaling 1,443 person-days. Operating revenues, costs, and market value of these businesses were estimated at \$1,029,000 in gross revenues, \$582,000 in operating costs, and total market value of \$2,572,500. Only one diving operation was identified offering trips to GRNMS. This business reportedly does 20 percent of their total diving activity at GRNMS, or approximately 10 trips annually totaling 50 person-days. Gross revenues of this business were reportedly \$90,000, operating costs of \$90,000, and a total market value of \$80,000.

Another significant use of GRNMS are sport fishing tournaments. Several major tournaments occur offshore Georgia every year with GRNMS being a premier target for the participants. It was estimated by one organizer that approximately one million dollars in prize money has been won in GRNMS alone.

Those interviewed showed wide support for prohibiting spearfishing among fishermen and within the diving community. Spearfishing is generally viewed as a method of targeting and taking specific large fish. These larger fish represent the top of the recruitment line and are the major reproducers.

The participants consistently reported that they do not anchor in the sanctuary and saw no need to anchor. The fishing methods they used (mostly bottom-fishing and trolling) and diving (almost entirely drifting) do not require the setting of an anchor.

The concept of installing mooring buoys in the sanctuary as a substitute for anchoring is highly supported by these users. While virtually everyone interviewed stated that their methods of fishing and diving do not require anchoring, many did state that if anchoring is not allowed, an alternative must be provided for safety or emergency anchoring.

The fishermen voiced their belief that a system of mooring buoys would attract bait-fish, and they would like to see a small number (2-4) of mooring buoys installed as a pilot program, one in each quadrant of the sanctuary.

—Rod Ehler

Annual Research Coordinators Meeting

The National Marine Sanctuary Program's recently held its annual Research Coordinators Meeting in Charleston, SC, at the National Center for Coastal Ocean Sciences (NCCOS) facility at Fort Johnson (the Center for Coastal Environmental Health and Biomolecular Research). During the week-long meeting, participants discussed NMSP research programs and activities, gave progress reports on the FY01 NCCOS partnership projects, and made presentations on the Charleston lab activities. One day was dedicated to discussions on the utility, function, and proposed development plan of a NMSP systemwide monitoring.

Four awards were given during the week. The NCCOS partnership was recognized for its productivity in FY01. The *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary (NMS) was honored for its special achievement in recovering artifacts from the *Monitor* wreck site, and SIMoN, an innovative monitoring program developed by the Monterey Bay NMS, was recognized. Dr. James Lindholm, Research Coordinator for Stellwagen Bank NMS, received an award for his numerous publications over the last two years, including his book, "Dynamic Modeling for Marine Conservation" and Paula Souik, a former member of the NMSP Science Team, was recognized for "exceptional service."

A meeting report will be available online in April. For further information, visit <http://sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov>.

—Mitchell Tartt

Second Annual SAC Meeting

Sanctuary Advisory Councils (SACs) chairs and coordinators met on February 6 and 7, 2002, in the Florida Keys. Participants focused on SACs accomplishments in the prior year, procedural questions, the development of annual operating plans and reports, and retreats, and their roles in national issues and projects. A meeting report, a directory of all SAC members, and updated protocols to be included in the second edition of the SAC Implementation Handbook will be produced. The third annual meeting is expected to be held in February 2003 on the west coast.

—Elizabeth Moore

Oil spills and ship groundings

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A shrimp boat, Blind Faith, grounded and broke up near the ecologically sensitive Dry Tortugas National Park. It spilled approximately 2,000 gallons of diesel fuel into the water.

Photo: Channel Six News, Florida

On February 7, 2002, a team visited the site of the *Cap'n Bozo* grounding to assess the current conditions and the need for restoration. The team determined that most coral fragments were either missing or had no live tissue remaining almost two months after the original grounding. Additionally, limited observations at the site also showed that a number of the scar areas where corals fragments had been located, were filled in with sediment and most likely were buried.

Work on the two other grounding sites began on February 7 and ended three days later with over 125 hard and soft coral fragments stabilized. The assessment and restoration project demonstrated the ability of multiple organizations to come together to help restore Florida's priceless coral reefs. In addition to the partners who responded to the initial groundings, the National Marine Fisheries Service (RC and SERO), the State of Florida, and Mote Marine Lab also worked together in the emergency efforts.

In late November 2001, the Program's California sanctuaries, Cordell Bank, Gulf of the Farallones, and Monterey Bay Sanctuaries were alerted to a growing number of oiled sea birds in a 200-mile stretch of coastline. Hundreds of shipwrecks dot the California coast and any of them could be the source of the oil spill. Soon over 1,000 birds were found. By early February, 1,300 birds, most all common murre, had succumbed to the mystery oil spill while an additional 1,502 had been soiled.

The effort to discover the source of the mystery spill once again involved many partners. The Channel Islands Sanctuary staff provided assistance in identifying the potential wreck

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National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Plans Ocean Day on Capitol Hill—The National Marine Sanctuary Program will once again be a featured participant in the second annual Oceans Day on Capitol Hill. This year's event will take place on June 5 and 6, and will coincide with the 10th anniversary of World Oceans Day, which takes place on June 8, 2002.

Coordinated by the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, Oceans Day 2002 will focus on two topics: the stresses facing coral reefs, and the need for increasing ocean literacy--especially in formal education settings. An Ocean Technology Fair, featuring firsthand interactive experiences for attendees designed to acquaint them with the tools and technology used in ocean exploration, observation, and conservation will be a part of the two-day event.

Funds Dedicated to Monitor Salvage Operations—The Department of Defense (DOD) recently announced that it will provide \$6.5 million in 2002 to continue the Navy's salvage operation to recover the Civil War USS *Monitor*. This summer's expedition will attempt to raise the *Monitor's* 120-ton turret and collect associated artifacts. DOD began funding the conservation effort in 2000 to assist the *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary while enhancing Navy diving and salvage capabilities.

Korean Officials Visit Sanctuaries

Dr. Jong-Geel Je of the Korea Ocean Research and Development Institute (KORDI) and Mr. Jong-Seok Lee of the South Korean Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (MOMAF) spent the week of March 18 with various sanctuary staff in the Silver Spring, Maryland headquarters discussing the many facets of Sanctuary Program operations. Dr. Je and Mr. Lee are the driving force behind the development of several marine conservation areas in the Republic of Korea. On the recommendation of Bud Ehler and Jonathan Justi of the International Programs Office, the two scientists visited sanctuary sites and headquarters to discuss a strategic management plan for a proposed conservation area off the southern coast of Cheju Island. During the visit, sanctuary staff provided information on management plan review, budgeting and annual operating plans, Advisory Councils, education and outreach, permitting, and cooperation among sites, headquarters and other resource management agencies.

—Matt Brookhart



n People value sanctuaries as sacred places protected for future generations.

ion To serve as the eyes for the nation's treasure of marine protected areas to conserve, protect, and enhance their biodiversity, ecological productivity, and cultural legacy.

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back whales return to the San Juan Islands National Marine Sanctuary from the coast of British Columbia. The humpbacks feed on sand lance and other small fish in the waters around the islands. The humpbacks are seen in the waters around the islands. The humpbacks are seen in the waters around the islands.

loggerhead sea turtles nesting on the islands. The loggerhead sea turtles are seen nesting on the islands. The loggerhead sea turtles are seen nesting on the islands.

Reef National Marine Sanctuary. For more information, contact the sanctuary manager.

the Bay National Marine Sanctuary, American Samoa. The sanctuary is celebrating its 25th anniversary. The sanctuary is celebrating its 25th anniversary. The sanctuary is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Sanctuary Restoration and Rescue Efforts Coast to Coast *(cont'd from pg. 3)*

locations and contacting the recreational dive community for help in discovering the source of the mystery spill. NOAA's Hazmat, Damage Assessment Center, General Counsel, the US Coast Guard, other Federal trustees and the state of California also joined in the investigation.

By early February, evidence pointed to the *S.S. Jacob Luckenbach*, which collided with another vessel in 1953 approximately 17 miles southwest of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge.

Today the US Coast Guard and the California Department of Fish and Game, Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) are working together to remove the oil aboard the *Jacob Luckenbach*, which now has been linked to "mystery" oil spills that have been impacting wildlife and the California coastline since 1992.

R/V *Joe Ferguson* Honors Victim of September 11 *(cont'd from pg. 1)*

joined by Washington, D.C., teachers James Debeuneure, Sarah Clark, and Hilda Taylor and their students Rodney Dickens, Asia Cottom, and Bernard Brown. All the students were 11-year-old sixth graders. The group was bound for a week-long workshop to the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary to introduce the students to the Sustainable Seas Expeditions, a five-year project of deepwater exploration and public education conducted by NOAA and the National Geographic Society. In 1999, the Expedition spent two weeks exploring Gray's Reef.

"The staff at Gray's Reef felt it was important to name the vessel in Joe's honor in recognition of all he has done to educate students about the marine environment and America's ocean treasures," said Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Manager Reed Bohne.

A former Coast Guard patrol boat converted for scientific and educational programs, the R/V *Joe Ferguson* will be the primary vessel for Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary. With a cruising speed of 26 knots, the vessel will be used to support patrols of the sanctuary, maintenance of mooring buoys, reef fish and habitat assessments, water quality monitoring, as well as assist local scientists in individual projects. The vessel is expected to be ready for full use this spring.

"This was the first, but it won't be the last time we remember and celebrate the brave students and educators who died on September 11," said Daniel J. Basta, director of the National Marine Sanctuary Program. "We are grateful for Joe's dedication in sharing our national marine sanctuaries with others. His work will not be forgotten."

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