

2012 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



GRAY'S REEF OCEAN FILM FESTIVAL

The 10th annual Gray's Reef Ocean Film Festival took place in September 2012. The annual festival, which was attended by an estimated 2,000 people, showcased world-class ocean films and brought marine experts to Savannah, including keynote speaker Jean-Michel Cousteau. The silver-screen highlights were supplemented by an incredible display of photos at the prestigious Jepson Center for the arts in downtown Savannah. The photos were taken by Gray's Reef Deputy Superintendent and Research Coordinator Greg McFall.



MORE RARE STURGEONS DETECTED IN GRAY'S REEF

Seven endangered Atlantic sturgeon have now been detected by acoustic receivers deployed at Gray's Reef. The group includes fish originally tagged as far away as New York Bight. Atlantic sturgeon are large—they can grow to 14 feet long and weigh 500 pounds. According to NOAA Fisheries, their numbers have plummeted by as much as 99 percent in some areas of the east coast. Detecting at least seven individuals is remarkable because the population of Atlantic sturgeon for tagging is quite small.



ORAL HISTORIES FROM COASTAL GEORGIA COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

Sanctuary staff have completed a series of on-camera interviews with fishermen who have spent their lives on the sea in South Carolina, Georgia and northeastern Florida. These first-person accounts will be edited and posted on the sanctuary's website, and will be combined with vessel logs and other archival materials in the [Voices from the Fisheries](#) database. Sanctuary staff successfully competed for a \$10,000 Preserve America grant to fund the work.



RIVERS TO REEF

The sanctuary has completed its eighth annual *Rivers to Reef* program: a 6-day, 270-mile "boot camp"-style immersion in watershed science for Georgia teachers. *Rivers to Reef* begins at a creek just outside Atlanta, then follows the Altamaha River as it winds its way to the Georgia coast. The experience culminates with a visit to a Gullah-Geechee community on Sapelo Island, followed by a trip to the sanctuary itself, where the ice-cold waters of the trickling North Georgia stream connect people to our shared marine environment.



LOOKING AHEAD

- Gray's Reef staff and the Sanctuary Advisory Council will continue work on a new management plan for the sanctuary. This multi-year process combines public input and stakeholder comment to create a new vision for the management of Gray's Reef.
- Research activities in the coming year will be focused on comparisons of habitat quality and invertebrate and fish communities inside, and adjacent to, the eight-square-mile research area, which was designated in 2011.
- Gray's Reef is forming new partnerships with organizations such as the Savannah-area Tourism Leadership Council, Tybee Island Marine Science Center and the Savannah Ocean Exchange. We aim to engage more people with our one-of-a-kind marine protected area.

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
Stallwagen 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>