



**Gray's Reef NMS
Sanctuary Advisory Council**

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Sportfishing

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LT Mike Mastrianni
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U.S. Navy
U.S. Fleet Forces Command

Dr. Scott Noakes
Non-Living Resources Research

Randy Rudd
Sport Diving

Al Samuels
NOAA Office of Law Enforcement

Suzanne VanParreren
Sapelo Island NERR

June 16, 2014

Daniel J. Basta
Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
N/NMS
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: Characterizing and Monitoring Natural and
Anthropogenic Sound in Gray's Reef National Marine
Sanctuary

Dear Dan,

The Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council is writing to request that the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) investigate the feasibility of implementing a program to characterize and monitor natural and anthropogenic sound in Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS). Such a program may include the placement of passive acoustic recording devices in GRNMS. The purpose of such a program would be to better characterize the ecological impacts of noise in GRNMS.

Human activities in the oceans produce noise that affect a wide variety of acoustically sensitive species that are periodically present or resident within sanctuaries. For example, scientists estimate the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale has lost 63 to 67 percent of their communication space in the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary due to noise created by passing ships. Species that inhabit GRNMS, such as sea turtle, fish and marine mammal species, are known to be acoustically sensitive or use sounds to communicate.

We believe that the program would provide valuable information on current natural and anthropogenic sources of noise in the sanctuary and would establish a baseline against which future changes can be evaluated.

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Understanding the acoustic conditions of GRNMS is necessary to avoid and minimize anthropogenic sounds that impact species found within the GRNMS.

We recognize the ongoing activities happening within NOAA and across federal agencies to build acoustic networks and increase understanding of sound within US waters. We welcome opportunities to engage with other academic and federal agency partners, including other national marine sanctuaries. Coordination will enable similar programs to use standardized methods to measure noise. This would allow for evaluation of trends and comparisons that are critical to understanding this issue both at GRNMS and across the sanctuary system.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rick DeVactor', with a large, stylized initial 'R' and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rick DeVactor
Chair, Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

cc: Dr. George Sedberry, Superintendent, Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary
Dr. Billy Causey, Director, ONMS Southeast/GoM/Caribbean Region

The Gray's Reef Sanctuary Advisory Council is a community-based group representing diverse interests including science, fishing, diving, conservation, education, and other state and federal resource management agencies. The council serves as a liaison to the community regarding Sanctuary issues and assures continued public input to management decision-making. The opinions and findings of the council do not necessarily reflect the position of the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary or the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.