

**Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Advisory Council
- January 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes-**

Date: January 19, 2021

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Location: Google Meet

Meeting Attendees

NOAA: Stephanie Gandulla, Jeff Gray, Phil Hartmeyer, Jean Prevo, Sarah Waters, Katie Wolf, Ellen Brody, Officer Jared Kreeger

State of Michigan: n/a

NEMI/GLSI: n/a

SAC Members: Roger Baumgardner, Don Gilmet, Nancy Kinney, Steve Kroll, Don Newport, Tom Rayburn, Ann-Marie Ruder, Chuck Wiesen

SAC Alternates: Mike Beaulac, Tom Brindley, Rick Houchin, Bob Krafft, Pat Labadie, RC Laugal, Tim Lee, Ron Meneghel

Non-voting Members: Al Moe, Beach Hall

United States Coast Guard: Ryan Coleman, Tom Swanson, Matt Saldivar

Media: N/A

WELCOME AND ACTION ITEMS

Steve Kroll called the meeting to order. The council reviewed and approved the minutes from the March 10, 2020 council meeting.

Jeff Gray announced that Al Moe was selected as Thunder Bay's 2020 Betty Krueger Volunteer of the Year. Al Moe has been a passionate champion for Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and the entire ONMS system. As a retired healthcare executive, his financial and operations management experience, personal integrity, and respect throughout Michigan, combined with his love for ocean and Great Lakes fishing, have been critical to the success of the sanctuary, SAC, and Friends of TBNMS. His pragmatic, diplomatic approach to decision making, and affable, "can-do" spirit, makes Al an exemplary volunteer and role model for many aspiring Great Lakes stewards committed to the sanctuary's mission.

Particularly now, with several new partnerships underway that will significantly expand the sanctuary's Great Lakes regional presence, Al has been hands-on every step of the way. Whether evaluating the feasibility of new opportunities, rolling up his sleeves and clearing brush, or building bridges with much needed funding partners, Al Moe has been a true and lasting friend in every way to the sanctuary. There are no tasks too small or large for Al to take on with gusto and goodwill.

Additionally, despite rain, sleet or snow, Al is always ready, often on the spur of the moment, to host special guests to the sanctuary. You can depend on him to always be a gracious, well informed ambassador for the sanctuary at the many events held throughout the year in Alpena and the surrounding communities along the sanctuary's 150 mile of shoreline.

Jean distributed a copy of the proposed 2021 meeting dates for review prior to the meeting (see attached list.) The 2021 meeting dates were approved by the council. The next meeting will be in April with informal SAC coffees in February and March.

NOAA LAW ENFORCEMENT & UNITED STATES COAST GUARD (USCG) – Tom Swanson and Jared Kreeger

Jeff Gray introduced Tom Swanson of USCG Sault Ste. Marie and Jared Kreeger with NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement who is stationed in Ann Arbor.

Thunder Bay is on the cusp of having a dramatically improved law enforcement presence in the sanctuary. Tom Swanson has been critical in helping us coordinate efforts, not only with the Coast Guard but with other law enforcement agencies. Alpena only has a temporary Coast Guard station and before Jared Kreeger was on board the closest NOAA law enforcement agent was in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Jared and Tom are helping the sanctuary staff coordinate with the DNR who have always been one of the sanctuary's partners, as well as with the county law enforcement agencies.

Tom Swanson spoke about the coast guard's plan to make working with their NOAA partners a priority. Plan on doing operations in the sanctuary, being more proactive and doing their best to minimize the criminal activity taking place. They have had several meetings to discuss plans for the summer and will reach out to the rest of the partners once they have a solid plan in place.

Jeff added that both the NOAA Law Enforcement and the Coast Guard are focused on really developing relationships with the community and the people on the water. Spending time with the dive charters, individual divers, fishing charters and marina employees just to get to know the people and know who to call if something happens. The sanctuary would also like to partner with the Coast Guard on other non-related law enforcement issues (boater safety, search and rescue) to make sure people are safe on the water. This is a partnership that goes beyond law enforcement.

Jared Kreeger is the new NOAA law enforcement officer for the Great Lakes, based out of Ann Arbor. His office is focused on research protection, but additionally, like Jeff said getting to know the community. Connections are going to play a big role in his job. He is a resource for the community.

Ryan Coleman from the USCG District Office said they are looking forward to trying to collaborate all together and keep a law enforcement presence in the sanctuary.

Jeff will continue to include these law enforcement updates at future meetings.

EASTERN REGION/NEW SITES – Ellen Brody, Great Lakes Coordinator

Ellen Brody provided an update on the eastern region. A couple of years ago the Great Lakes and northeast region combined with the mid-Atlantic, southeast and gulf region to create the larger eastern region. There is a lot happening in our region, including two sites that are in designation status. Ellen is currently working on the Lake Ontario designation.

The Mallows Bay-Potomac River was designated in November 2019. Sammy Orlando, Mallows Superintendent, will present on this new sanctuary at a future council meeting.

Today Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary was expanded from 56 square miles to 160 square miles. This action protects 14 additional reefs and banks and slightly adjusts the boundaries of the sanctuary's original three banks. This expansion represents years and decades of scientific research in really understanding what is there and the value of additional protection.

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary protects the only barrier coral reef in the continental United States. The Keys are under threat from a number of intense hurricanes, coral disease, boat groundings, rising ocean temperatures, pollution and human impacts. In an effort to address those threats the sanctuary program is proposing what they are calling Restoration Blueprint. Based on what they have learned from the past 30 years of management, they are proposing to expand the boundaries, update their sanctuary regulations, modify their marine zoning and revise their sanctuary management plan. This is a very good example of how our program is trying to adapt to emerging threats to sanctuary resources. This is currently under public review and the comment period closes on January 31, 2021.

The Monitor National Marine Sanctuary is considering an expansion to include the *Graveyard of the Atlantic*. From January to July of 1942 German U-boats sank ships off of the east coast of the United States and this area off of Cape Hatteras was really a strategic hot spot. Almost 1,700 people lost their lives during this battle of the Atlantic. This expansion is currently on hold, but is still a priority of our program.

Proposed Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary (Wisconsin) is very close to final designation. The final environmental impact statement was published in June of 2020. The only thing that hasn't been completed is publishing the final rule. NOAA ran out of time to get it in before the change of administration. Wisconsin is a top priority for our program and NOAA. All that is left is to complete the designation is to publish the final rule. The program is hoping to have our second national marine sanctuary in the Great Lakes by the summer.

Ellen has been spending most of her time working on the proposed Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary in New York. In April of 2019 they started looking at an area of 1,700 square miles in eastern Lake Ontario. Currently writing the draft environmental impact statement. They are likely to have a boundary alternative that will include the St. Lawrence River which is beneficial because of the number of known wrecks that are more accessible to divers. A pre-designation advisory council has been established. A pre-designation SAC was critical with establishing Thunder Bay as a sanctuary, it was essential to get people from the community sitting around the table and talking in a constructive way. Given that we haven't been able to meet in person or be in the Lake Ontario community, this advisory council has been an incredible network that has enabled the sanctuary program to take the next step. The Lake Ontario council hasn't been able to meet in person yet, just virtually.

The other area in the Great Lakes that is being looked at is the Lake Erie Quadrangle. Erie County, Pennsylvania submitted a nomination five years ago that included all of Pennsylvania waters. NOAA keeps the nominations on an inventory list for five years. There is a public process that after the five years they ask the nominator if there is any additional information that will help decide to keep it on the list for another five years. So, this is another action that is currently under public review. The public comment period goes through mid- February. Hopeful that this will remain on the inventory.

Connecting Great Lake Sanctuaries:

Ellen loves the connections through the sanctuary system but is especially excited about the connections in the Great Lakes. The *Homer Warren* is a shipwreck that is connected with Thunder Bay NMS and proposed Lake Ontario NMS. It was a steam propeller ship carrying passengers originally called the *Atlantic* and Alpena was one of its ports. As the demand for lumber grew the boat was transferred into lumber service and was renamed the *Homer Warren*. It sank in Lake Ontario in 1919.

The *Persian* which sank in Thunder Bay NMS was built in Oswego, NY. It collided with the schooner *EB Allen*. The *EB Allen* was fine, it went back to Chicago and reported that the *Persian* sank and all lives on board were lost.

There are probably many more connections between the two sites.

Ellen spoke about the partnerships between the Thunder Bay International Film Festival and the Snow Town Film Festival. Thunder Bay is providing five films to the Snow Town Film Festival and will also be having a live question and answer session with Stephanie Gandulla, Ellen Brody and Nick Zachar Office of National Marine Sanctuaries videographer. They were thrilled to connect with Thunder Bay. This is just the beginning of thinking about opportunities to connect resources. The sites in the eastern region may be separated by hundreds of miles but they share a lot of commonalities.

THUNDER BAY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL – Stephanie Gandulla

Stephanie talked about this year's film festival which will be hosted online. She gave an overview of how to navigate the film festival's online platform which is very similar to using Netflix or other online streaming services. The film fest launches on January 20 and runs through January 31. There are more films this year than ever before. The information for the festival can be found at www.thunderbayfriends.org.

There is a student film competition as part of the festival again this year. The winner will be announced mid-way through the film festival.

MANAGEMENT PLAN/CONDITION REPORT – Jeff Gray

There have been some changes to the way headquarters now does condition reports and management plans. Sites will spend a year to two years developing a condition report which is basically an assessment of the resources in the sanctuary. Our last condition report was completed in 2013. The report engages different agencies, resource protection and scientist folks to evaluate different aspects of the sanctuary from the condition of the shipwrecks to water quality. The condition report is done before the management plan so people can better understand the state of the sanctuary. Then that document is used to help guide the management plan process.

Our last official management plan was completed in 2009. In the spring of 2018, a self-assessment of our plan was conducted with the staff and the advisory council. During that assessment, it was determined that the 2009 plan still fit with what we wanted to accomplish.

Under the current schedule, Thunder Bay will begin the condition report process in 2022. The process is estimated to take about a year, maybe a year and a half. After that is completed we will go into the full management plan review process. In the interim, the staff will begin creating a working plan type document to get us through until we start the management plan review.

Steve Kroll mentioned we are fortunate because our management plan was designed to be very flexible. It is a very living document but we need to do some housekeeping kinds of things in there, as we have expanded the boundaries since then and there's new technologies that we want to include. Also, it would be good to address working with other citizen scientists. It's a good

process for all of us because it puts us on track with what we are about and where we want to go in the future.

Hoping to have Mitchell Tart from sanctuary headquarters at a future meeting to speak about the new condition report and management plan processes.

Links to the current documents:

[Condition Report](#)

[Management Plan](#)

Al Moe – What are the obligations of someone other than a sanctuary staff coming across a wreck within the sanctuary, if any, to share that data? Is there some formal mechanism?

Jeff – Under our regulations, people are free to search and if they find a wreck there is no requirement that they report it to us. Some national parks do require permits to do the searching and part of the permitting process is requiring the sharing of information. We do not have that. That is why it is important for us to try to develop relationships with the folks that are conducting that type of research. A newly discovered shipwreck is the most threatened thing we have in the sanctuary. It is critical for us to be able to document it to see how it is changing overtime.

Tom Rayburn – Is there any requirements with the state to report new shipwrecks?

Jeff – There is not for finding it. If you were going to disturb it you would need a permit. It is illegal for them to disturb it whether we know where it is or not. It's just harder for us to prosecute or know that something has happened without us knowing the exact location.

FRIENDS OF THUNDER BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY (FRIENDS)

North Point Project – The Nature Conservancy has purchased that property, the Friends are working with Huron Pines to come up with a formal management plan. Ownership will be transferred to the Friends and co-managed with day-to-day operations with Huron Pines. We will give a more detailed update at a future meeting.

Lady Michigan - The *Lady Michigan* will be back in the water in a few months. The season will run May 17 to October 3. The boat had a couple of bad years. In the middle of 2019 season the boat blew an engine which cut the season short. Last year we were dealing with the COVID pandemic and while the boat was allowed operate, the board wanted to match with what NOAA was doing, if the visitor center was closed they did not want to run the boat. When it became clear that the visitor center wasn't going to open the boat did operate limited cruises through September just to get some programming going. Andrew Augustyn worked to get the boat through its 5-year inspection so it's ready to go.

Currently, the boat is being leased by the Friends through Pictured Rocks Cruises but they would prefer to sell the boat. The Friends board will be looking into this moving forward. We believe it is a critical asset for the community as an education tool as well as an economic asset. You may see some fundraising efforts coming up. We are also working on finding some grant funding.

River Enhancement Project - The river enhancement is a project that the Friends have been working on for the past couple of years. Had been awarded a \$4 million dollar grant from Michigan Economic Development Corporations but recently lost this funding because they needed the funds to assist with COVID relief. The Friends continue to work with outside funders to move forward with portions of the project and continue to seek other funding options.

Giving Tuesday - Katie gave a summary of *Giving Tuesday*. Each year we continue to grow. \$21,600 raised this year with 116 donors.

Grants - The Friends was awarded a Michigan Humanities HOPE grant for \$7,500. The Friends and Alpena Shipwreck Tours also received Payroll Protection Loans. Also received a Target Alpena grant.

SANCTUARY UPDATE

Currently, Russ Green is serving as the acting superintendent of the Monitor NMS. He will be filling that position for about 4 months as he continues to work on the Wisconsin designation. After Russ is completed with his 4 months, former Thunder Bay employee Tane Casserley will fill in as the acting superintendent there.

Thunder Bay is working on filling an open research position. Hoping to have that spot filled prior to the 2021 field season.

Jeff gave a brief COVID update. The building remains closed but hoping to open up some time this summer. Staff continue to have a flexibility mindset and are moving forward with education and research planning but prepared to change on a dime because of uncertainties with the pandemic. The work from home order is still in place, but staff are able to access the building. As things change we will keep you posted.

Sarah Waters has been working on the Thunder Bay NMS website revamp. Sarah will present an overview at one of our next SAC coffees. Jean will send out a link when the new site goes live.

RESEARCH UPDATE

We are being careful with COVID but planning for the 2021 field season. This includes trying to incorporate some of last year's fieldwork that was postponed.

Mooring Buoys – Thunder Bay currently has 41 buoys to get out in the lake. Last year staff used partners and volunteers to get about 15 out last year. Mooring buoys are the most important physical way to protect these resources so getting them out is important to us. Also gives the

research team to a chance to view and assess the wrecks as they are putting them in the water. Hoping to get more buoys out this season with the continued help of partners.

R/V Storm - Hoping to get out on the *Storm* this summer to do some surveying. The vessel was updated last year with some new technology.

Amberley Ridge Survey – Dr. John O’Shea received a NOAA Ocean Exploration and Research grant. Thunder Bay staff will be supporting the survey part of the project. They will be surveying the Amberley Ridge. The ridge shows evidence of submerged hunting lanes in Lake Huron.

Middle Island Sinkhole – The research team will also provide dive support at the Middle Island Sinkhole, as well as other sinkholes that have been more recently discovered. Researchers weren’t able to get out last year so that means it will be even more intense sampling of the bacterial mat this year.

Ocean Exploration – In August, Dr. Ballard’s Ocean Exploration team is planning to come back to Thunder Bay with their ASV to continue mapping the sanctuary looking for shipwrecks.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

ADJOURN:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05pm.

2021 TBNMS Advisory Council Schedule of Upcoming Meetings:

- January 19, 2021
- April 20, 2021
- June 15, 2021
- August 17, 2021
- October 19, 2021
- December 14, 2021

All meetings are 6:00-8:30pm at the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center unless otherwise specified.