

**Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Advisory Council
- April 20, 2021 Meeting Minutes-**

Date: April 20, 2021

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Location: Google Meet

Meeting Attendees

NOAA: Andrew Augustyn, Ellen Brody, John Bright, Stephanie Gandulla, Jeff Gray, Russ Green, Phil Hartmeyer, Jean Prevo, Sammy Orlando, Sarah Waters, Katie Wolf

State of Michigan: Wayne Lusardi

NEMI/GLSI: n/a

SAC Members: Don Gilmet, Nancy Kinney, Steve Kroll, Don MacMaster, Tom Rayburn, Ann-Marie Ruder, Carol Shafto, Chuck Wiesen

SAC Alternates: Mike Beaulac, Pat Labadie, RC Laugal, Ron Meneghel

Non-voting Members: Officer Jared Kreeger, Al Moe

United States Coast Guard: N/A

Media: N/A

Public: Sam Orlando

WELCOME AND ACTION ITEMS

Steve Kroll called the meeting to order. The council reviewed and approved the minutes from the January 19, 2021 council meeting. Minutes were approved with the correction of adding Steve Kroll to the attendance list.

Jeff Gray introduced John Bright. John previously worked with Thunder Bay but left to work with CSA Ocean Sciences for a few years on their ocean science team. John is happy to be back as part of the Thunder Bay research team and is excited to share some of the knowledge he gained during his time with CSA.

MALLOWS BAY-POTOMAC RIVER NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY – Sammy Orlando, Sanctuary Superintendent

Sammy Orlando superintendent of Mallows Bay-Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary (Mallows Bay NMS) presented an overview of Mallows Bay NMS to the council.

Mallows Bay NMS is the newest sanctuary and was designated as a national marine sanctuary in September 2019. Prior to that Sammy served as the liaison to the local community and state and county partners to move through the designation process. It is jointly managed by NOAA, the State of Maryland and Charles County.

Mallows Bay NMS is 18 square miles along the Potomac River which is a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. Mallows Bay is located in a very rural area of Charles County, Maryland, 30 miles downstream from Washington, DC. Charles County is a small community similar to Alpena.

Mallows Bay NMS focuses on protecting the Ghost Fleet, the remains of more than 100 World War I era wooden steamships and vessels. Secondly, it promotes recreational access, tourism and economic development.

Mallows Bay Park is the gateway to the sanctuary. The park is owned by the State of Maryland and leased by Charles County. A 10-minute paddle ride in a kayak from the park will put you out paddling among the Ghost Fleet.

The shipwrecks serve as a habitat for fish and wildlife. It is a pristine area for birding, eagles, osprey and blue heron. It's also a premier bass fishing area in the Chesapeake.

Sammy spoke about the history of the Ghost Fleet. During World War I the allies were being beaten up by German U-boats. The U.S. was asked to provide enough ships for moving men and cargo. The U.S. wasn't a ship building nation but President Wilson committed to building 1,000 of these ships in 18 months. This created shipyards all over the country. Nearly every coastal state contributed something to the fleet that now rest in Mallows Bay. When you are building and maintaining that many ships you need a lot of people. The U.S. always had merchant mariners, but they first came to fame and glory during World War I. Building that many ships in shipyards created the expansion of the merchant mariners.

Many of these ships never made it into service but during the war they did serve an important transport function up and down the east coast, South America and Hawaii and freed up the more capable ships. Fast forward about ten years, the war is over and these vessels ended up tied up in Mallows Bay. A picture in 1929 shows over 150 ships, almost 300 feet long are laying side by side in Mallows Bay in one square-mile. Through three different shipbreaking operations in 1920s, 1930s and 1940s they removed a lot of the steel, boilers, engines and the propellers leaving the wooden hulks there. For the next 75-100 years nature has been reclaiming this area.

While the Ghost Fleet has been getting all the attention and notoriety, this area really focuses on the entire cultural landscape. President Johnson deemed the Potomac the Nation's River, because it has so much history surrounding it, going back to the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. The Department of Defense which has been located along the river for 160 years. There are four different Navy bases, one on every corner of the 18 square-mile sanctuary. Long before the John Smith voyage this was ancestral homelands to three tribes. Two on the Maryland side and one on the Virginia side. The sanctuary is learning more about all of these people and are incorporating their stories into the interpretation at the site.

For five years, the community, state and NOAA worked to get the sanctuary designated. Co-managed with the State of Maryland and Charles County they knew that they wanted to focus on maritime and cultural heritage and they wanted it to support recreation, tourism and economic development. Natural resources were left to other authorities. This was the easy part.

The hard part. How are you going to do it? They visited Thunder Bay to see how it was done. Sammy has been watching Thunder Bay for a long time. The nomination and designation process were set up to bring in outside voices and broadened the focus out beyond the Ghost Fleet. Other ways that were determined to celebrate, commemorate and provide community benefit are really at the heels of the model home of Thunder Bay. Sammy brought folks from the Mallows Bay area to visit Alpena so they could talk to and learn from the Thunder Bay community members.

From those visits they determined four pillars to focus on at Mallows Bay-Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary. The first one is centered around recreation, small business opportunity and enhancing the visitor experience. The second one is based on bringing the sanctuary to the people. The third one has to do with being part of the community and providing something back. Helping to ensure a better quality of life where that is possible. The fourth pillar which is what Thunder Bay does extremely well on top of the other three is that you are the gateway to showcasing other parts of the sanctuary system, other parts of NOAA and other parts of the community and partnerships that are possible.

Visitation at Mallows Bay NMS has doubled in three years.

There are buoys and a water trail map at the park that are provided by the sanctuary. The map talks about the history and the heritage about the sites.

Safety - Mallows Bay NMS worked with the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, the State of Maryland and the Maryland DNR to install a water quality buoy that provides real time weather and water information. Important for recreational, promotional, science and education activities.

Through partnerships with the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and the Potomac Riverkeeper water quality is monitored and bacterial conditions are posted every weekend at major contact points so visitors see it before they enter the water.

Branding – Mallows doesn't have *Alpena Sanctuary of the Great Lakes* or Pure Michigan but early on worked with the State of Maryland and Charles County to incorporate their best practices and their branding and came up with a 'Get Wrecked' brand. Working on other things right now. Some local business have bought into the sanctuary brand and are using it in their businesses for example – The Alamo Cinema and Brew House named their bar "The Ghost Fleet." Patuxent Brewing in Charles County has a beer they call "Sunken Sips" as a tribute to the ships in Mallows Bay.

Mallows just completed an infrastructure study. What do we need to enhance visitor experience? What do we need to make this a living laboratory? What do we need to create an educational center or pavilion? What do we need to create a visitor center or heritage trail? All of these topics were put into the document by over 100 different community members that all have knowledge, information and a vision of where this place is going to go. If you read the study findings it will sound a lot like Alpena and Thunder Bay.

Bringing the Sanctuary to the People - Thunder Bay already does this really well with the Film Festival, Maritime Festival and virtual dives in the sanctuary. There is no diving in Mallows Bay but there are plans to create the equivalent of a virtual dive with a virtual paddle experience. Putting it into a story map and building an audio trail with other kinds of interpretive products. Building out a lot of accessibility for people outside of Mallows Bay.

Community Benefit – Education and Career Opportunities. Mallows has been working with a local school for the past seven years through an Ocean Guardian program. This program has promoted what is possible with students and educators. People love to know what students are doing in their own voices. Mallows doesn't have a system yet to work with the MATE ROV program, but they do have a build your own buoy program where they talk about the importance of buoys and what they do. The goal of these education programs is to inspire education and interest in technologies using that very simple approach.

Diving with a Purpose – Have worked with this program pre-COVID for a few years. Amazing way to blend culture advanced technology, educational opportunities and exposure to vocational opportunities. Incredible program that is a favorite of Sammy's and the students.

The Gateway – A gateway to the sanctuary system, to NOAA and community partnerships. Location! 30 miles downstream from Washington DC. Using Mallows for bigger purposes than just Mallows. Thunder Bay also does this all the time. Show off all of NOAA, show off our partners and community partnerships. This reaches people in congress, natural resource

committees and senate appropriation committees. Mallows Bay is used to show how we integrate sanctuary and community.

Steve Kroll – Are there vendors renting kayaks and providing tours in the sanctuary?

Sammy – Actually the answer to that is yes and no. There is one local kayak vendor that provides guided tours commissioned through the county. There are also groups like REI who bring people out of Baltimore, Annapolis and Washington DC and provide a guided tour. Otherwise, we do not have a place locally where someone can come down on a weekday and rent a kayak. One of the small business opportunities that the sanctuary and partners are working on. Likewise, not everyone is willing or able to get into a kayak so we are working on other kinds of access – 6-pack boats, heritage tours, pontoons and other kinds of things that provide a different kind of capacity. Wide open opportunity for small businesses.

Steve Kroll – Are there launch ramps?

Sammy – there is one boat ramp and one kayak launch right next to it. With the increased attendance in that area we are working with the state and county to separate the launches and install a different kayak launch. Mallows Bay Park is the main gateway to the sanctuary but you can access it from other parts of the river.

Chuck Wiesen – Is the Mallows SAC up and fully operational?

Sammy – Thanks to Jean, we are up and operational. There are 30 members and 13 government and tribe members. The council has had 3 meetings and a few SAC Chats much like Thunder Bay's SAC Coffees. We have also had one-on-one calls with every member to get to know them and help with the onboarding.

Mike Beaulac – Since these vessels were massed produced what sort of uniformity is there among the sunken fleet? Are they all the same or is there a variety?

Sammy – It's a diverse lot. There were eight or nine different models built around the country, all but one reside in Mallows Bay.

WISCONSIN UPDATE – Russ Green

Russ Green gave an update on the status of the Wisconsin-Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary designation. Designation is in the final stages. One of the final documents that needs to be published is close to getting approved. Once that document publishes it is essentially a sanctuary, but there is a 45-day congressional review period. It is very close to being done.

The designation area is 962-square miles, 36 known shipwrecks and 60 yet to be discovered. These shipwrecks are very similar to Thunder Bay's wrecks in look, feel and location.

Preservation is the same and preservation challenges are the same. Need for public access is the same. Not just for divers but for kayakers and snorkelers, want to create a variety of public access.

From a historical standpoint the story is very different from Thunder Bay. Two of Wisconsin's oldest shipwrecks that date from the 1830's pioneering era and are pretty rare. There is also a variety of canal schooners and paddle wheel steamers that were bringing immigrants to Wisconsin. All the way up to propeller passenger steamers that are on the cutting edge of innovation for their time and into the 1920s a giant steel freighter that has a couple hundred automobiles on it. It's a different story, a complimentary story to Thunder Bay.

When you create a sanctuary it's not only about the stuff in the water, it's about connecting the communities with that stuff. That is one of the key differences in Wisconsin, it's a real opportunity because of the number of communities big and small in the sanctuary. Their heritage is grounded in the maritime world and they have a robust amount of tourism programs and efforts underway. It is a huge part of their economy. Lots of ideas, opportunities and visions for the sanctuary moving forward.

Russ went over some of the research projects that are in the pipeline for the 2021 field season in Lake Michigan. They received an Ocean Exploration grant to do survey work in the proposed Wisconsin sanctuary. Wisconsin has a 30-year-old underwater archaeology program so there is already a lot known about the individual shipwrecks, but they haven't really surveyed the whole area. They will be using some great technology and partners for completing these surveys. Hoping the project will be underway in August.

Also, received a \$30,000 grant to install three real-time weather buoys in the proposed sanctuary where there are none. There are only two in all of Lake Michigan. Good not only for public safety but also for the charter fishermen. Will work with them to find out more about the water column.

SANCTUARY UPDATE

Website – The <https://thunderbay.noaa.gov/> website has been fully redone. Thank you to Sarah Waters who led the effort in getting this completed. She gave a complete overview at our last SAC coffee.

COVID-19 –The staff will continue with telework and there are no immediate plans to open the visitor center. Today we have decided to officially say that we will not be able to do the Thunder Bay Maritime Festival this year. In order to keep staff, volunteers and the community safe we felt it was the right thing to do. We will make the event bigger and better next year. The *Lady Michigan* will be operating starting May 22. Working with schools and trying to get some small student groups out on the water. Hoping to do some in-person programs with students this spring.

Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center – The visitor center is still closed but the staff are excited to get back up and running. The staff has continued to work on several things over the last year, including renegotiating the lease with Alpena Marc, LLC. Staff has also been working on updating and fixing the exhibits. The loading dock is being remodeled to add a catering kitchen so we can do more events and provide better service. It will also enhance our zero waste effort. The roof deck will also be expanding by double its current size with more living roof and an AV system, making that area a premier space on the river. Also looking at potentially adding solar panels. The construction on the roof deck should be done by the end of May. There are also some modifications happening to the dive tank so it will be ready to go when we are able to get back into the building.

Riverfront Project – Continuing to push hard on ways to do components of the riverfront project. This summer one or two of those components will be happening. The sport courts, sustainability projects, parking and other components funded by Alpena County, Alpena Marc and others will go in this fall.

Field Operations – The team is excited to get back out in the field. Lots of paperwork required to get approval from NOAA and sanctuary headquarters to get out in the field. The staff will be putting buoys out soon.

Dr. John O’Shea who has been leading the research at the Amberly Ridge has received a grant from Ocean Exploration. During this project Thunder Bay staff will be running the survey onboard the *r/v Laurentian*. This is just one phase of Dr. Oshea’s research that he’s been working on for years. We can expect some exciting stuff from this project.

Thunder Bay will be providing diving and vessel support to researchers from University of Michigan and Grand Valley State as they continue their research of the Middle Island sink holes.

The Ocean Exploration Trust project will be back in June to continue exploring the shallow waters off of Rogers City with ASV *Ben*. *Ben* is a 12-foot long autonomous vehicle that is piloted from a mobile van on land. There will be virtual programming opportunities during the project. Staff will send out links to these virtual events.

9th Annual Thunder Bay Film Festival – This year with the help of staff member Chuck Bennett the Film Festival was held virtually. It was a great success, reaching different audiences. Hoping that we can make next year’s festival a hybrid with some in person along with the virtual options. The virtual capabilities allowed us to partner with other film festivals like the Snow Town Festival in Lake Ontario.

Rogers City’s Sesquicentennial – Rogers City is celebrating their 150th anniversary August 3rd-8th, during Nautical Festival. We are planning some great programs there with our partners in Rogers City. Stay tuned for more event and program details in early August.

Women Making History Virtual Programs – Stephanie and Katie were able to virtually host two well-known underwater photographers and filmmakers to celebrate Women’s History Month in March. This was made possible by a grant through the Northeast Michigan

Community Foundation. These programs have been archived and can be viewed at <https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/education/teachers/alexandra-rose.html> and <https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/education/teachers/women-making-history.html>.

Lady Michigan – The *Lady Michigan* will start doing cruises in May. Tickets are available online at www.thunderbayfriends.org. Last year the Friends of TBNMS secured some grant funding that allowed the installation of a new AV system onboard. This new system includes video screens and a new sound system which will help us enhance our education programs and the visitors' experience on the water.

Media – Even during the pandemic Thunder Bay NMS has kept up a robust media presence. Wayne gave an interview to The Alpena News for the “Jewel of the Lake” insert. Staff have also met virtually with the team at WBKB and will very soon be back in person on their morning show. Throughout the pandemic HITS FM have continued running what they call “Shipwreck Stories.” Stay tuned for more media coverage especially as the field season ramps up.

SAC Questions:

Steve Kroll – Can you please at least look into the possibility of how we can have some type of a group meeting? Other groups are starting to meet.

Jeff Gray – June 15 is our next scheduled meeting, we can look into seeing if maybe there will be some way to do an outdoor gathering. Jeff suggested waiting a month to see how the conditions are.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

ADJOURN:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20pm.

2021 TBNMS Advisory Council Schedule of Upcoming Meetings:

June 15, 2021

August 17, 2021

October 19, 2021

December 14, 2021

**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.