

**Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Advisory Council
- March 22, 2022 Meeting Minutes-**

Date: March 22, 2022
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Location: Google Meet

Meeting Attendees

NOAA: Andrew Augustyn, John Bright, Ellen Brody, Stephanie Gandulla, Jeff Gray, Joey Jackson, Jean Prevo, Jared Kreeger, Kathryn Lohr

State of Michigan: Wayne Lusardi

NEMI/GLSI: n/a

SAC Members: Jim Dessenberg, Nancy Kinney, Steve Kroll, Ann-Marie Ruder, Carol Shafto, Chuck Wiesen

SAC Alternates: Mike Beaulac, RC Laugal, Tim Lee

Non-voting Members: Al Moe, Beach Hall

United States Coast Guard: n/a

Media: n/a

Public: Eric Peace, Elizabeth Trueblood

WELCOME AND ACTION ITEMS:

Steve Kroll called the meeting to order. The council reviewed and approved the minutes from the November 9, 2021 council meeting.

Recruitment is happening for the following seats that are expiring:

- Citizen-at-Large – Chuck Wiesen & Mike Beaulac
- Education (higher education) – Don MacMaster
- Fishing (recreational, charter, and/or commercial) – Jason Snyder & Ron Meneghel
- Maritime Industry/Business – Tom Rayburn & Pay Labadie
- Tourism/Recreation – Melissa Olsen

Applications for these seats are due **April 22, 2022**. If your seat is on the list and you have served in that seat for three consecutive terms you cannot apply for that seat again. You are welcome to apply for another one if it fits your constituency. If you are interested in reapplying or if you have questions, please contact jean.prevo@noaa.gov or visit <https://thunderbay.noaa.gov/involved/recruitment.html>.

Jeff recognized Beach Hall as Thunder Bay's Betty Krueger Volunteer of the Year. Jeff said there will be a true celebration of Beach when we are able to meet in person.

Jeff announced that Katie Wolf is no longer working with Thunder Bay. We will be looking at how to fill her position in the near future.

COVID-19 & GREAT LAKES MARITIME HERITAGE UPDATE:

The advisory council sent a letter to ONMS Leadership in January voicing concern about the continued closure of the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Visitor Center and asking for an update on re-opening. The council received a response from ONMS leadership on January 26, 2022, and Jeff Gray has had ongoing conversations with leadership on this issue.

Matt Brookhart, Director of the Eastern Region Office spoke about the issue of COVID and how much is changing on that front. COVID and how it is managed has not been part of a decision-making process at the ONMS level, it has been handled by NOAA. NOAA is calling the shots on what happens with their facilities and their staff during this pandemic. Managing visitor centers is very different than managing office buildings and NOAA vessels.

There has been some ability to make a case for some items, like opening of the GLMHC. The letter from this council has triggered some success. We are starting to see some significant changes on how NOAA is managing its COVID protocols. Starting to see sites across ONMS being considered to move up in the phasing system that is being used by NOAA. The opening of the GLMHC will happen very soon, there is no confirmed opening date yet.

The letter from our council was circulated around the system and created many conversations. It has been good for the ONMS program and has been a catalyst for discussions in places other than Alpena. The letter from the council also sparked other local agencies to send letters. He also reiterated that we are very close to opening.

Thunder Bay staff are working to have everything needed to open in place, so when we get permission we will be ready to go.

Work being done in the sanctuary on our research vessels will continue this field season.

Jeff is hopeful that we will be opening soon and that the council will be able to meet in person in May.

EASTERN REGION UPDATE – Matt Brookhart, ERO Director

Matt Brookhart gave an update on the status of the ONMS budget. ONMS has been operating under a continuing resolution since October 1, 2021. The Biden administration had originally submitted ONMS for an unprecedented budget increase, doubling the budget. Budget currently hovers around \$55 million and President Biden requested ONMS receive \$90 million. That number then went to Congress and the Senate and both of them had different opinions. The Senate put ONMS closer to \$70 million and Congress put us back down to around \$60 million. Congress won so \$61 million is what the ONMS program is looking at receiving for fiscal year 2022. This amount is still a \$6 million increase for sanctuaries which is positive because ONMS has not received an increase in about 5-6 years.

ONMS receives two pots of money. One pot is for operations (salaries, education programs, buoys, research, etc.) The second pot is for construction funds which can be used for improvements to buildings, it allows for improvement or purchase of vessels and allows for installation of signage and other things of that nature. ONMS received \$5 million for the construction fund for FY2022.

The increase to the budget can be partially attributed to the creation of new sanctuaries. There is a new site starting the designation process in California – Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary. Mallovs Bay-Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary in the Chesapeake and Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary were also recently designated. Ellen Brody is currently leading the designation process for a sanctuary in Lake Ontario. It is likely with the new budget that the designation process for the Hudson Canyon off the eastern side of New York will also begin.

Thunder Bay SAC has had an impact on these new designations. For all of these sites mentioned there is a direct connection back to Thunder Bay. Whether it is someone in that community coming to visit Thunder Bay to see how a sanctuary operates or whether they are talking indirectly to some of you, this site has been instrumental in all of these other new sanctuaries getting off the ground and continues to serve as a model for what sanctuaries can do, how they can work the community and how they can be such an impact on local economies and other opportunities that everybody wants to see.

Every time we designate a new sanctuary it introduces new congressional districts to the program, new interests, new communities and new opportunities. That all contributed to the Biden administration seeing the need to increase the sanctuaries' budget. When we expand the system, we expand the influence.

Currently conducting interviews for the Superintendent position at Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary. Hoping to have someone hired in April. A contract employee will also be hired.

CONDITION REPORT – Katie Lohr, Science & Heritage Coordinator at ONMS

Katie Lohr is assisting Thunder Bay staff in drafting the updated Condition Report. The last report was done in 2013.

Sanctuary condition reports are tools employed by NOAA to assess the condition and trends of national marine sanctuary resources and ecosystem services. Condition Reports provide a

standardized summary of resources in NOAA’s sanctuaries; drivers and pressures on those resources; current conditions and trends for resources and ecosystem services; and they describe existing management responses to the pressures that threaten the integrity of the marine environment.

The primary purpose of condition reports is to serve as a tool for resource managers, researchers, policy makers and educators during the management plan review process. These groups, as well as anyone else interested in participating in the review process for sanctuary management plans, use the reports as supporting documents for identifying and proposing specific management actions. They also serve as a reporting tool to be used by policy makers, particularly within NOAA and the Department of Commerce, and are used as education and outreach tools. The reports are distributed to constituents and made available to the general public at events and on the internet.

Sanctuary condition reports are structured around a management-logic model called the Driving Forces [Drivers-Pressure-State-Ecosystem Services-Response (DP SER)] Framework.

All reports include the following elements:

D: Driving Forces and Pressures on the Sanctuary - societal values, management and policy actions, and socio-economic factors that influence different human uses of the ecosystem, resulting in pressures.

P: State of Drivers and Pressures - human activities that threaten sanctuary resources.

S: State of Sanctuary Resources - status and trends of sanctuary resources within the four resource categories (water, habitat, living resources, and maritime archaeological resources).

E: State of Ecosystem Services - benefits people obtain from nature through use, consumption, enjoyment, and/or simply knowing these resources exist.

R: Response to Pressures - summarizes current management actions aimed at prevented, reduce, and/or mitigating undesirable changes to the sanctuary’s resources.

Katie talked about the next steps and potential timeline:

Year	Season	Milestone
2022	Winter	Kickoff
2022	Winter - Spring	Indicator development, data compilation
2022	Summer – Fall	Preparation of indicators & data
2022	Winter	Status & Trends Workshop
2023	Spring – Summer	Report drafting
2023	Summer – Winter	3 Review Periods
2024	Winter	Finalize and release report

Please reach out to Katie with questions at Kathryn.lohr@noaa.gov. Katie will be in Alpena soon and the council will have time to interact with her.

SANCTUARY UPDATE:

Viking Cruises

The Viking Cruise ship *Octantis* will be stopping in Alpena eight times this summer during its maiden voyage. Viking is in the process of building its sister ship with the potential of having 20 stops in Alpena next year. The *Octantis* can hold up to 378 guests. Cruise guests will have a number of choices for shore excursions in Alpena including lighthouse tours, downtown tours, wineries, breweries, *Lady Michigan* shipwreck tours and the exhibits at the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center.

Viking has a cooperative research agreement with NOAA being led by our partners at the Great Lakes Environmental Research Lab. Viking is dedicated to doing science on board and making their cruises a valuable learning experience. The *Octantis* is an expeditionary vessel and is equipped with mapping technology, ROVs and even some submarines that we are hoping to use in the future.

The GLMHC was one of the reasons Alpena was chosen as a port during the Great Lakes cruises.

May 4th is the first visit. Stephanie Gandulla will send out the rest of the dates and may be looking for volunteers to help.

Festival of Sail – July 15th- 17th

The Festival of Sail organizers reached out to Thunder Bay staff and asked if the GLMHC could be a stop. The boats will be docked in the river by the *Lady Michigan*. This is hosted by a private company. There is no cost to the sanctuary to host the ships, but tickets will be sold to attend the event. The company does massive marketing throughout the Midwest, so we expect to attract thousands of visitors to the community. For more information contact steph.gandulla@noaa.gov.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

ADJOURN:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:22pm.

2022 TBNMS Advisory Council Schedule of Upcoming Meetings:

Thursday, May 12

July 19

September 20

November 8