

FGBNMS Goals and Objectives
Sanctuary Advisory Council DRAFT
July 10, 2006

Mission:

Identify, protect, conserve, and enhance the natural and cultural resources, values, and qualities of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary and its regional environment for this and future generations.

Goal 1: Protect, maintain and, where appropriate, restore and enhance the characteristics of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary including, but not limited to, the natural living and geological resources, ecological processes, and water quality.

Objectives:

- 1A: Develop and integrate best practices, available science, and innovative management techniques.
- 1B: Manage in favor of resource protection when the potential impacts of an activity are unknown.
- 1C: Identify and reduce threats to Sanctuary resources.
- 1D: Ensure compliance with and enforcement of Sanctuary and other federal regulations.
- 1E: Ensure a management presence in the Sanctuary.
- 1F: Maintain and enhance assets for reef protection, including but not limited to mooring buoys and underwater monitoring stations.
- 1G: Evaluate and implement methods for monitoring usage rates and patterns of the Sanctuary by the public.

Goal 2: Enhance conservation and protection of the region by supporting, promoting, and coordinating scientific research and monitoring of the FGBNMS environment.

Objectives:

- 2A: Gather baseline data on the physical, chemical and biological oceanography of the Sanctuary.
- 2B: Promote resource and socioeconomic research and monitoring necessary for effective management and protection of the Sanctuary resources.
- 2C: Monitor and assess long-term environmental changes in the Sanctuary.

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- Monitor and assess the occurrence of potential invasive species.
- 2D: Develop and maintain the ability to conduct a rapid assessment and response to unexpected ecological or human-induced changes.
- 2E: Forecast the range of effects on the environment that would result from predicted changes in human activity. Develop contingency plans to minimize any adverse effects that increased human activity might cause.
- 2F: Encourage and facilitate scientific information exchange among managers, scientific investigators, user groups, and the public.
- 2G: Improve collaboration and coordination of research and monitoring activities with domestic and international partner agencies, institutions and organizations.
- 2H: Assess need for improved surveillance and enforcement activities to protect the FGBNMS. Evaluate methods of accomplishing these surveillance and enforcement activities and determine what can economically be implemented.
- 2I: Determine whether existing artificial structures located within the boundaries of the FGBNMS enhance the ecosystem and utilization of the FGBNMS. If so determined by a study, establish plans to utilize the structures appropriately.
- 2J: Evaluate the use of Gas Platform HIA389A as an ocean observing system, a research station, a sanctuary monitoring site and a possible enforcement asset.
- 2K: Assess and evaluate the role of the FGBNMS in maintaining the biodiversity of the GOM region.

Goal 3: Enhance and foster public awareness, understanding, appreciation, and stewardship of the FGBNMS and the regional marine environment.

Objectives:

- 3A: Broaden public awareness and support for the protection of Sanctuary resources.
- 3B: Emphasize the concept of bringing the place to the people.
- 3C: Promote the Sanctuary as a source of information about coral reefs and related marine systems.
- 3D: Improve the interpretation and dissemination of research and monitoring results in a format useful for the general public.
- 3E: Increase the active participation of volunteers.
- 3F: Maintain and enhance the delivery of information through a dynamic and up-to-date internet presence.

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- 3G: Promote voluntary user compliance with Sanctuary and other Federal regulations.
- 3H: Improve collaboration and coordination with other domestic and international organizations to increase public awareness, understanding and stewardship.
- 3I: Identify and publicize how the Sanctuary enhances human well-being.

Goal 4: Manage and facilitate multiple sustainable uses of the FGBNMS compatible with the primary purpose of resource protection.

Objectives:

- 4A: Educate users to minimize impacts to sensitive Sanctuary resources and how these impacts can be avoided.
- 4B: Minimize potential user conflicts and environmental degradation.
- 4C: Evaluate the potential effectiveness of a marine zoning system to achieve the mission of protecting Sanctuary resources for current and future generations.
- 4D: Study and monitor human activities and impacts at the FGBNMS over time to identify problems and facilitate management and protection of Sanctuary resources.
- 4E: Determine the limits to visitor use that are compatible with resource protection and user needs.
- 4F: Evaluate and predict the cumulative effects of multiple uses.
- 4G: Engage stakeholder communities and the public when exploring new approaches to managing human activities and enforcing Sanctuary regulations.

Goal 5: Promote and lead conservation and management partnerships to protect FGBNMS resources and the regional marine environment.

Objectives:

- 5A: Coordinate policies, regulations, procedures, and permitting with the domestic and international agencies and organizations that participate in protection and management activities that affect Sanctuary resources and the regional marine environment.
- 5B: Reduce threats, address specific management concerns, and minimize physical impacts to the Sanctuary and surrounding marine environment through cooperation with other resource protection partners.
- 5C: Enhance opportunities for participation of representative stakeholder communities and the public in developing effective management strategies.

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- 5D: Improve cooperation and enhance the exchange of technical knowledge and innovative strategies with regional and international programs, incorporating the FGBNMS with global conservation of marine resources.
- 5E: When necessary, develop compatible or complementary Sanctuary management measures to eliminate potential conflicts with resource management measures adopted by other federal agencies or management organizations.
- 5F: Promote partnerships with federal, state, regional and local government entities; public and private interests; and international organizations.
- 5G: Evaluate the need for a program that will further protect and manage the fishery resources in FGBNMS boundaries.

Goal 6: Promote ecosystem-based management of the region external to the FGBNMS.

Objectives:

- 6A: Assess the extent by which the health of sanctuary resources is connected with external areas and processes within the regional ecosystem of the northwestern Gulf of Mexico and identify actions that enhance ecosystem-based management of this sensitive region.
- 6B: Determine if recent science provides a more appropriate ecosystem boundary to Stetson Bank, East & West Flower Garden Banks. If so determined, seek the boundary changes.
- 6C: Research the regional marine environment of the FGBNMS. Evaluate how the ecosystem complements or interfaces that of the FGBNMS and advocate accordingly.
 - Expand and enhance data collection on physical / chemical parameters related to water mass and circulation processes.
 - Evaluate remote sensing and similar data that delineate dynamic processes at the FGBNMS in a regional context.
 - Assess range changes for Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean species.
 - Monitor and assess the occurrence of potential invasive species.
- 6D: Evaluate the ecosystem provided by oil and gas platforms and by the Rigs-to-Reefs structures. Study the effect of ecosystem-based management for these structures.

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- Determine the effect of having platforms left in place.
 - Determine how marine life on various platforms differs.
 - Determine how marine life at various depths on a platform supports the marine ecosystem.
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- 6E: Investigate the function of the FGBNMS as a refuge for species whose habitats or populations are elsewhere degraded. Evaluate and determine whether there are marine species which should be protected from fishing in the FGBNMS.
 - 6F: Assess and evaluate how the Gulf of Mexico region maintains the biodiversity of the FGBNMS.

Goal 7: Provide appropriate infrastructure and assets for FGBNMS programs to effectively conserve and manage FGBNMS resources.

Objectives:

- 7A: Identify and utilize infrastructure and assets available from external sources to implement activities and programs related to the Sanctuary.
- 7B: Clarify the roles and responsibilities of parties involved in Sanctuary administration and specify procedures for implementing essential components of the management plan.
- 7C: Improve cooperation and exchange technical knowledge with regional and international programs that promote conservation of marine resources.
- 7D: Provide support for the application of innovative management techniques.
- 7E: Evaluate the need for a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) for all users and visitors within FGBNMS boundaries.