



# FLOWER GARDEN BANKS

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*Dale Loughmiller/Jacqui Stanley*

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U.S. Coast Guard

*LCDR Carmen DeGeorge*

NOAA Fisheries

*Rusty Swafford*

NOAA Office of Law Enforcement

*Charles Tyer*

March 24, 2011

Dear Dr. Lubchenco:

The Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS) Advisory Council would like to take this opportunity to encourage the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Department of Commerce (DOC) to move forward with the reauthorization of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA).

Congress last reauthorized the NMSA in November 2000 authorizing appropriations through the end of fiscal year 2005. This delay in reauthorization greatly concerns our council and the public we represent since the legislation is the foundation of the sanctuary program and defines the work our council performs with FGBNMS.

Sanctuary sites are increasingly seen as sentinel sites that reflect the health of our coastal waters. This increased visibility is largely due to the educational efforts of the sanctuary programs and their councils. In this capacity, our sanctuaries perform a key role in making the public aware of not only the issues affecting them but the value of conserving such a valuable national natural heritage. Continuing and expanding the sanctuary system should remain an important national priority.

The FGBNMS council is an advisory group to the Superintendent of FGBNMS. The public is represented by two voting representatives for each of the following seats: recreational diving, diving operations, recreational fishing, commercial fishing, oil & gas operations, research, education and conservation. The following governmental agencies provide non-voting representatives to our council: Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (Department of the Interior), United States Coast Guard, NOAA Fisheries (Department of Commerce), Environmental Protection Agency, and NOAA Office of Law Enforcement.

Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council  
4700 Avenue U, Bldg. 216 \* Galveston, TX 77551  
409-621-5151 \* 409-621-1316 fax  
<http://flowergarden.noaa.gov>

As an advisory council, the opinions and recommendations of this letter directly reflect those of its "voting" members. This letter does not necessarily reflect the position of the council's non-voting governmental members, Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries or that of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Our council strongly urges you to support the timely reauthorization of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act so we can continue our work to conserve, protect and enhance our precious sanctuaries without interruption or uncertainty. The time to act is now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. McKinney', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Larry McKinney  
Chair, FGBNMS Sanctuary Advisory Council