

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting Minutes February 8, 2018

Meeting Attendance Roster:

Jimi Mack	Recreational Diving	Present
Jesse Cancelmo	Recreational Diving	Present
Natalie [Hall] Davis	Diving Operations	Present
Randy Widaman	Diving Operations	Absent
James Wiseman	Oil and Gas Industry	Absent
Clint Moore	Oil and Gas Industry	Present
Scott Hickman	Fishing - Recreational	Present
John Blaha	Fishing - Recreational	Absent
Shane Cantrell	Fishing - Commercial	Present
Buddy Guindon	Fishing - Commercial	Present
Adrienne Simoes Correa	Research	Absent
Larry McKinney	Research	Present (webinar)
Brian Shmaefsky	Education	Present
Jacqui Stanley	Education	Present
Joanie Steinhaus	Conservation	Present
Jake Emmert	Conservation	Present
James Sinclair	BSEE (non-voting)	Absent
Mark Belter	BOEM (non-voting)	Present (webinar)
Stacy McNeer	U.S. Coast Guard (non-voting)	Present
Rusty Swafford	NOAA Fisheries (non-voting)	Absent
Charles Tyer	NOAA OLE (non-voting)	Present
Barbara Keeler	EPA (non-voting)	Present
G.P. Schmahl	Sanctuary Superintendent (non-voting)	Present

Total voting member attendance: 12 of 16 of voting members

Others in Attendance:

Leslie Clift, Kelly Drinnen, Michelle Johnston, Shelley Du Puy, Bill Kiene, Jimmy MacMillan, Marissa Nuttall, John Embesi, Dustin Picard, Travis Sterne, Dan Dorfman (NCCOS (National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science)), Randy Clark (NCCOS - webinar), Bill Jones, Jeb Adame, Frank Burek, Nicole Morgan, Matthew Roache (NOAA/OLE)

9:15 Meeting called to order by Clint Moore.

9:15 Welcome and Announcements – G.P. Schmahl

Today's meeting is being run through a webinar, and with a sound system.

G.P. introduced Matthew Roache, the new NOAA OLE officer stationed in Galveston.

9:28 Administrative Business – Clint Moore

Adoption of Agenda – motion from Randy Widaman, second from Brian Shmaefsky, no discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Approval of November 2017 Minutes – motion from Charles Tyer, second from John Blaha, no discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

9:15 Council Constituent Updates & Agency Reports

Brian Schmaefsky – Nature Fest is scheduled in March, and Brian will put up a booth to outreach about FGBNMS (Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary).

Buddy Guindon – Commerical fishing is facing more challenges than the time allotted for constituent updates.

Scott Hickman – Scott will be attending the National Recreational Fishing Summit at the end of March, as well as outreach days in Washington DC in early March with the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF).

Jake Emmert – Jake has 2 upcoming field projects: 1) Yucatan in March to look at caves and how they take in methane from the atmosphere; and 2) South Pacific in April to look at corals with Rice University and graduate students. Also, Moody Gardens will be conducting member events once each month.

Stacy McNeer – The USCG (United States Coast Guard) will focus on living marine resources and will have more boats on the water this year than in the past.

Jesse Cancelmo – Jesse communicates reguarly with the dive clubs in Houston. At the last HUPS (Houston Underwater Photographic Society) meeting, he shared the news

about the upcoming SAC (Sanctuary Advisory Council) seat vacancies.

Clint Moore – Clint serves on several committees for his industry, and he briefs these committees regarding the BEWG (Boundary Expansion Working Group).

Shane Cantrell – Shane shared the news regarding the Professional Boatman's Association in Galveston that has newly formed. Along with Scott, Shane will also attend the National Recreational Fishing Summit. Mentioned the front page article in Galveston Daily News.

Jacqui Stanley – Jacqui's SEEDS (Students Engaged in the Environment through Discovery and Science) students have given 3 presentations recently regarding FGBNMS. One of her students recently came and toured the NOAA campus with FGBNMS staff.

Matthew Roache – Matthew is the new NOAA OLE officer in Galveston and will be attending Council meetings.

Charles Tyer – Charles provides guidance to the BEWG and the Visitation Permit Program Working Group. He said Texas was just issued an exempted fishing permit from the Gulf Council, specifically for Red Snapper. Also, Texas will be setting the red snapper limit from shore out to 200 miles, most likely affecting FGBNMS. He added it should be a much longer recreational season, and there will not be a federal red snapper season.

Barbara Keeler – Barbara reported that the revised NPDES General Permit for offshore O&G operations in the western Gulf of Mexico was issued October 1.

Joanie Steinhaus – Joanie shared information on the 13th annual Sea Turtle Saturday, February 17. This event is hosted by FGBNMS, and FGBNMS Michelle Johnston will present on her graduate sea turtle work in South Carolina. Joanie will be training ~300 volunteers for beach monitoring. Lastly, Joanie will travel to Washington DC in March and will be talking about NOAA, FGBNMS, and the turtle barn at NOAA.

Natalie Davis – Natalie has been outreaching to her constituents, and encouraging divers. She has also been actively reaching out for input on the Visitation Permit Program.

Jimmie Mack – Jimmie shared information on the National Association of Black SCUBA Divers' annual event that will take place in June in Roatan, where they will teach youth (ages 12-17) about marine life, underwater photography and ROVs (remotely operated vehicles). Youth from Roatan and Belize will also join. Jimmie was recently nominated as Safety Officer for NABS, and will attend their annual meeting in November. Jimmie also is a member of North Texas Scuba Retail Association.

9:41 Sanctuary Updates – G.P. Schmahl

G.P. mentioned the lapse in government funding in January, mostly over the weekend, which resulted in a government shutdown, and the possibility of another lapse occurring at midnight on February 8.

SAC recruitment is occurring, with 4 seats open and the current seat holders who are all eligible to reapply: Recreational Fishing (Jesse Cancelmo), Diving Operations (Natalie Davis), Diving Operations (Randy Widaman), and Commercial Fishing (Buddy Guindon). Applications will be accepted Monday, February 5, through Monday, March 7. Recruitment has changed in that the Federal Register will now be published only once each year. G.P. defined the Diving Operations seat as someone who is or does one of the following: dive shop owner, arrange dive travel for groups, trains divers, dive operator. The SAC review subcommittee volunteers for this round are Joanie, Scott, Jacqui, John, and Shane. Scott asked what type of weight the review panel will have in selecting the applicant. G.P. responded there is no formula other than their input is important, but as stated by the 2010 SAC Handbook, Sanctuary superintendents select the candidates in consultation with the Regional Director and approval by ONMS (Office of National Marine Sanctuaries) Director.

RDML Tim Gallaudet, Acting NOAA Administrator, visited the NOAA complex on January 12, 2018, and will be visiting other NOAA facilities. His site visit with FGBNMS was brief (1 hr @ FGBNMS office), but he did get to tour the R/V *Manta*. One of his goals is to dive in every NMS, and once he obtains his NOAA Observer Diver status, he wants to return to dive at FGBNMS, perhaps in July. Tim showed genuine interest in engaging with each FGBNMS staff he met. He was briefed on the DEIS and BEWG, and was invited to the May SAC meeting.

The documentary *Chasing Coral*, which includes highlights of coral spawning from FGBNMS, was showcased at the Rosenberg Library in Galveston on January 24. Two screenings of *Chasing Coral* will occur during the Inspire Film Festival, held in The Woodlands during February 15-19. The NMSF will sponsor a gallery exhibit of 20 dye-infused metal prints of underwater pictures from FGBNMS. Images are available for donation through the NMSF website.

Seaside Chats, an annual FGBNMS series, will start soon with the following dates, guest speakers, and topics: 1) Feb 21 – FGBNMS MARRISA NUTTALL – deepwater corals; 2) Feb 28 – Charles Messing – Okeanos Expedition 2017; and 3) March 7 – FGBNMS Michelle Johnston – Reef Resilience. This year's series will be held at Texas A&M University at Galveston in their waterfront pavilion.

NOAA Ocean Discovery Day is scheduled for Saturday, March 24 at the NOAA complex in Galveston. G.P. mentioned this opportunity may be the public's last chance to view the NOAA Turtle Barn due to funding.

The FGBNMS 2017 Research and Monitoring Report was finalized and emailed to the SAC.

A mini-symposium will be held during Feb 27-28, 2018, in Galveston to bring together research partners for a collaborative approach to causation and conclusions on the 2016 East Flower Garden Bank mortality event.

GP displayed a list of ~20 cruises planned for 2018, beginning in late April through early November. Cruises include partnership work, ROV cruises, long-term monitoring, and cruises funded by RESTORE Project.

GP showed several press/media articles and editorial published recently in the Houston Chronicle by Alex Stuckey, several of which mentioned the proposed sanctuary expansion, but also included one focused on manta rays in FGBNMS. The Giant Manta Ray also had a final ruling to be listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Birthing of manta rays occur in close proximity to FGBNMS, and FGBNMS serves as juvenile habitat. Critical habitat must also be designated for ESA, and Josh Stewart (Scripps) will be providing information re: young manta rays at FGBNMS. Marissa added FGBNMS is working with a student at Rice University to get the FGBNMS catalog online of the Manta Ray's "fingerprints" (i.e., the markings on the underside).

Highlights from the 2017 State of Deep-Sea Coral and Sponge Ecosystems of the United States include the following:

- 62 new species of deep-sea corals described since 2007.
- New diverse and dense deep-sea coral "gardens" discovered in every U.S. region, where new evidence points to their role as habitat for fisheries of national and international importance.
- Results of a major 3-year exploration and research campaign to previously unexplored U.S. Pacific Island slopes, oceanic ridges, and seamounts.

G.P. explained the "coral gardens" reference and displayed some publications/articles that described coral gardens in mesophotic and deep-sea coral communities. He added deepwater coral communities are very similar, regardless of the location in the world, in types of growth and structure. One example of a group who tried to define coral gardens (Bullimore et al. 2016 in ICES Journal of Marine Science) defined coral gardens as >0.1 colonies m². This definition has been a subject of discussion in the BEWG. G.P. displayed an image of a graph with banks in the proposed expansion area and their their mesophotic coral densities, some with 20-24 corals m².

G.P. mentioned an article written by Hughes et al. in the journal Coral Reefs (January 2018) on bleaching events. "Tropical reef systems are transitioning to a new era in which the interval between recurrent bouts of coral bleaching is too short for a full recovery of mature assemblages".

At the Science and Technical Committee's meeting for the GMFMC (Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council) in January 2018, Dr. Will Heyman reported a spawning aggregation of Cubera Snapper at the southeast corner of Sidner Bank, which is a bank in the proposed sanctuary expansion in Alternative 3. Buddy added Will has received information from the fishing industry that other species, jacks and other groupers, also

use this same spot for a spawning aggregation. Buddy reported that the more experienced fishermen do not visit the site to fish during spawning, but said a program for less experienced fishers is needed. Scott added that as the Peter Gladding recipient in GCFI, bringing fishermen together with scientists to cooperate is key to understanding and protecting these resources. Buddy added sanctuary designation and seasonal closures/regulations from GMFMC would protect spawning aggregations. G.P. noted there is a connection between habitat and fisheries.

G.P. explained the ongoing recent discussion in the BEWG regarding boundaries, and displayed a map of Alternative 3 boundaries vs. BOEM's NAZ (no activity zones). G.P. added NAZ do not include all areas of nationally significant areas in the proposed sanctuary expansion areas. As an example, G.P. showed an image of the NAZ at the EFGB (East Flower Garden Bank) and WFGB (West Flower Garden Bank) where the NAZ is a larger area than just those areas above the 85 m contour lines. Clint added that no one in the BEWG has proposed just using the NAZ.

10:45 Southeast Deep Coral Initiative Efforts in the Gulf of Mexico – Dr. Daniel Wagner

Canceled due to technical difficulties.

11:15 Education Outreach Tools – Natalie Davis, Jesse Cancelmo, Scott Hickman Natalie Davis – Visitation Permit Program

In January at the SAC Chairs Summit, Clint presented the draft Visitation Permit Program developed by the FGBNMS Visitation Permit Program Working Group. Clint added participants at this Summit requested documents drafted by this working group.

Natalie explained the timeline, and how the working group placed this program on the sidelines while the expansion DEIS (Draft Environmental Impact Statement) was released. The working group is ready to advance the program again. Natalie has been recently conducting outreach to different fishing groups for their input, and asked the SAC for ideas on how to engage the public beforehand to garner feedback. Joanie asked for specifics on the negative feedback Natalie has received. Natalie responded she heard phrases and words such as “not wanting additional oversight” and “propaganda”.

Scott said notices at marinas and boat ramps are needed certainly, and outreach has already occurred. Public meeting notices with public comments are part of this process, and if the fishing communities want to engage, they have had opportunities. Natalie hopes the full SAC will approve the draft permit application and form at a future SAC meeting. She requests Council members to email her, as this working group's Chair, with information on groups to contact now or in the future. Charles agreed with Scott's comments, and reiterated Natalie's efforts are sufficient, and that the process through the *Federal Register* will notify interested parties. Charles said many fishers in the Gulf are and will be accustomed to using a phone app, and perhaps one could be adapted

and piggy-back the FGBNMS visitation permit onto an existing one. Jake asked if FGBNMS will have an additional staff person for the permits, and if there is one location where all information on permits will be housed, and could the focus be on this program as a citizen science process instead of regulatory, and asked how NOAA OLE would know a permit has been issued. Shane asked G.P. about the next step in this process. G.P. responded the official process (regulatory action) would be started by preparing a Proposed Rule to be published in the Federal Register, with a public comment period. An environmental impact statement (EIS), including analysis of socio-economic impact, will have to be prepared as well. Shane asked how to get that process started. G.P. responded an official direction (i.e., motion and vote) from the SAC is needed. Scott stated there is a lack of information on recreational fishing at FGBNMS. He added the intent of this program is to learn who is visiting FGBNMS, and this process goes hand in hand with the proposed sanctuary expansion.

Jesse Cancelmo – Underwater Web Cameras

Jesse explained this project's genesis in 2013 at a dive show where he met Teens4Ocean students and Trevor Medelow, owner of View Into the Blue. Their technology solution for transmitting high bandwidth video from 100 miles offshore impressed Jesse. With assistance from FGBNMS Bill Kiene and G.P., Jesse pursued a webcam project for the EFGB, and organized a conference call in February 2015 to discuss this possible project. Outcomes from this conference call were a project overview description, technology solution, equipment list with 2015 pricing, potential funding sources list, project responsibility matrix, and project contacts list. Jesse maintains the technology solution is radio, not satellite. The box could be stationed on HI376A and Fieldwood Energy agreed to house the equipment. The cost of the buoy is high (\$115K total). Maintenance and installation would be additional, with 5 years of maintenance. The project was put on hold in 2015 because of a quandary over system ownership and maintenance responsibilities.

For a restart, the work left to do includes:

1. Reconnect with Fieldwood for a renewal of their 2015 verbal/email commitment. Formalize agreement. Possible contact: John Seeger VP Decommissioning (Cheryl Powell left Fieldwood.)
2. Reconnect with View Into the Blue and obtain 2018 recommendations for technology and equipment with updated pricing and cost estimate for total project installed that includes installation, commissioning, and at least 5-year maintenance costs.
3. Determine ownership of equipment and maintenance obligations.
4. Determine location of buoy/webcam at EFGB.
5. Obtain project funding.

Jesse noted if Item 3 cannot be resolved for EFGB, an alternate is to locate webcam on HI389A with the State of Texas as the owner. Jesse already floated this idea with Dale Shively and Chris Ledford with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The downside is that this project's functionality hinges on Fieldwood platform and its life

expectancy. Clint said this platform should be around for a long time (5+ years). Charles asked why we are relying on Fieldwood and if it is dependent on the distance from EFGB. Jesse replied that HI376A is the closest platform, and Cheryl, formerly with Fieldwood, was receptive to the idea. Jesse added this project could also include scientific data collection as one package. Natalie asked about funding and if there is an opportunity for a university to add grant funding to the package Buddy suggested looking at RESTORE funding. Scott suggested contacting Shell Oil or BP for funding. Natalie mentioned fixed cameras on platform jackets, and asked if those cameras could be used. Jesse responded they may have cameras, but they're not live webcams. Jacqui added live webcams are offshore in the Pacific Northwest, and are located 100 miles offshore.

Jesse has been in contact with Diego Figueroa, a professor at University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, who is looking to start a webcam project, but Figueroa's team recently changed its proposed location to the Caribbean.

Clint asked for volunteers for a working group: Bill Kiene, Brian Shmaefsky, Buddy Guindon, Jacqui, Rod Stanley (Jacqui Stanley's husband), and Jesse volunteered. Brian and Jesse will serve as co-Chairs. **Buddy motioned, seconded by Scott, to form the FGBNMS Underwater Webcam Working Group with the aforementioned volunteers and co-chairs. All in favor, none opposed. Motion approved.**

Scott Hickman – FGBNMS Visibility

Scott urges more can be done to improve the visibility of FGBNMS such as more signage in Galveston. He suggested approaching the NMSF for funding, or finding it within the ONMS budget to increase awareness. He and Buddy recently visited Belize, where he saw numerous signs of their offshore coral reefs.

Natalie echoed this information is important to be on Galveston, which is closest to FGBNMS, but also for the surrounding areas where people do not necessarily visit Galveston, but may be divers and should be made aware of FGBNMS.

Jacqui noted education/outreach to children who may never come to Galveston is also important. Brian, while recently working in Puerto Rico, saw government-backed funding for signage. He added the Houston Tourism Council doesn't list FGBNMS on their webpage as a resource, nor does he see FGBNMS brochures when he visits other parks in Texas. G.P. responded that during the DEIS, FGBNMS opted to wait on reprinting the brochure due to the potential expansion of the sanctuary. Jacqui suggested license plates. Bill Kiene mentioned the efforts (including legislative) of John Nau (Budweiser) and Jim Blackburn (SSPEED Center) to establish Galveston as the center of the Lone Star Coastal National Recreation Area (LSCNRA) which could include FGBNMS. Jimmie asked about designating a "FGBNMS month", to be used as educational opportunities for visiting schools and giving presentations. Clint asked for volunteers for a working group: Jacqui, Scott, Buddy, Brian, Shelley, Stacy McNeer, Kelly, and Jimmie volunteered. Scott and Jacqui will serve as co-chairs. **Buddy motioned, seconded by Jake, to form the FGBNMS Visibility Working Group with**

the aforementioned volunteers and co-chairs. All in favor, none opposed. Motion approved.

12:15 Break for Lunch

SAC Chairs Summit Presentation – Clint Moore

Clint attended the Joint Marine Protected Area (MPA) Federal Advisory Council (FAC) and National Marine Sanctuary (NMS) Advisory Council Chairs Summit in San Francisco, California January 17-19, 2018. The opening and closing ½ day sessions were scheduled with 25 MPA FAC. Fourteen SAC Chairs and 20 NMS management team staff attended this event. The objective of the SAC Chair Summit meeting was to “provide an opportunity for SAC chairs to discuss and present relevant topics that impact the present and future of our sanctuaries.”

NOAA’s new goals were presented by John Armor, NOAA NMS Director: 1) lead the world in weather services; 2) minimize impacts of severe weather; and 3) sustainable resource management. ONMS Program funding is “flat.” Two new sanctuary processes are underway: Mallows Bay and Wisconsin – Lake Michigan. The NMS Program (NMSP) will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2022. NMSP goals are to: 1) support coastal communities; 2) maintain healthy ecosystems; 3) manage expanding ocean uses; and 4) engage users in stewardship.

Clint presented the proposed Visitation Permit Program for FGBNMS. Gray’s Reef NMS also presented during this session regarding their pathways and data from collecting information on visitation at their sanctuaries. Channel Islands NMS presented on their Marine Shipping Working Group, and reducing co-occurrence between shipping and whales. Summit participants were encouraged to “navigate” the Greater Farallones NMS by traveling California Highway 1, with signage at the view points along the route.

Clint showed an image of a billboard sign in Alpena, Michigan for Thunder Bay NMS. The Sanctuary served as a catalyst for development in this small town. Thunder Bay NMS has a free shipwreck museum in Alpena. Joanie mentioned the Galveston Parks Board, on which Shane is a committee member, that could develop a high-quality video for education/outreach on FGBNMS for use on the visitors channel shown in hotels in Galveston. Joanie also suggested Moody Gardens could create a video loop of FGBNMS that could be shown at their “fake lab” exhibit.

FKNMS developed the Blue Star Operator program, which has been in place for a few years for the diving industry, but now they are working on a similar program for the fishing industry to be rolled out in 2018. ONMS also has a Dolphin SMART program to promote responsible stewardship of wild dolphins in coastal waterways.

Consistent types of SAC seats across the NMSS (National Marine Sanctuary System): commercial fishing, recreational fishing, recreational diving, commercial diving, conservation, education, and research. FGBNMS is the only sanctuary with oil & gas seats. Non-consistent types of SAC seats across NMSS: commercial shipping, marine

business/transportation, ocean recreation/boating industry, maritime activities, tourism/eco-tourism/heritage tourism, economic development/business/commerce/industry, submerged cultural resources, maritime archaeological research, whale watching, agriculture, public/community/citizen-at-large, elected county official, youth seat (non-voting; ages 14-18). Working groups and subcommittees across the NMSS: Research Activities Working Group (WG) (CINMS), Marketing Subcommittee & Marketing Team (CINMS), Sanctuary Education Team (CINMS), Marine Debris WG, Science Advisory WG, Connectivity WG, Kelp Recovery, Sediment-Beach, Overflight WG (GFNMS), Climate Change WG (GFNMS), Recreation & Tourism WEG (MBNMS), Ocean Acidification Sentinel Site (OCNMS), Business & Tourism Subcommittee (SBNMS), Small Boat Interaction WG (whales; SBNMS), and Maritime Heritage (SBNMS). Several Boundary Expansion WG and several working groups for conservation and fishing.

There are no visitor use permit programs except FKNMS and the one being developed by FGBNMS. Most sanctuaries have visitor centers, and have their own Foundations.

Scott thanked Clint for his representation of the SAC at the SAC Chairs Summit. Scott asked if John Armor spent much time on the new policy on the recreational fisheries, and if any talk occurred on what kind and how much weight is given to the Advisory Councils. Clint replied no one directly asked John Armor about SAC weight, and that John Armor did end his talk by highlighting the need for sanctuaries to work with recreational fishers.

1:00 Public Comment and Q&A Period

Frank Burek – Frank presented Clint Moore with the Texas Gulf Coast Council of Diving Clubs' (TGCCDC) Lifetime Achievement Award for his involvement in, and long-time support of recreational diving, and for his leadership and participation in the FGBNMS Advisory Council. Frank explained the different aspects contained within the TGCCDC logo, and its 50+year-history. Clint has 26 years of club membership, and over 20 years of leadership positions with the SAC. Jesse and Frank presented the award to Clint. Scott asked Frank if he was in favor of the FGBNMS Visitation Permit Program. Frank responded yes, and thinks it is very important.

1:58 National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) – Dan Dorfman FGBNMS Boundary Expansion Integrated Analysis

The NCCOS team working on the FGBNMS Boundary Expansion Integrated Analysis has now increased in number of staff from 4 to 7. Dan reported 20,000 in-situ biological and ecological observations were added to the GIS database. The datasets include over 500 ROV (remotely operated vehicle) dives.

The study area created by the BEWG are banks within Alternative 3 with a 10km buffer zone around each NAZ (no activity zone). The BEWG also added Horseshoe Bank which doesn't have a NAZ. He integrated the AIS (automatic identification system)

shipping fairway layer, which showed less shipping traffic than expected just south of two of the proposed banks (Geyer and Elvers). Dan's group looked at oil and gas infrastructure and fishing use as the main human use conflicts. The site selection algorithm chose areas with low conflict between human use and ecology. When Dan ran the analysis in the second scenario, the criteria weighting for Core Sensitive Zones was lowered to 60% but with 100% ROV biological data, and a higher contiguity weighting. The MARXAN analysis resulted in 19 polygons. After the BEWG removed 29 Fathom Bank, the number of polygons decreased to 18.

The BEWG now has to create design rules for creating boundaries, and options include buffering, using a GIS vertices-removal technique, or manually creating them such as Clint did when he developed a set of maps. Dan and his group will rerun the analysis and present three options. In 3 weeks, the BEWG will meet again where hopefully they will select a product they can bring to the full Council for its consideration. Jake asked how many oil and gas platforms are in the NAZ 5,000 ft (feet; 1,500 meters (m)) ring around the proposed banks. Clint responded several exist, including around the Bouma, Rezak, Sidner Bank complex. Scott asked Clint if the NCCOS MARXAN process would incorporate what the oil and gas industry needs, and Clint's response was positive. Clint showed the maps termed NAZ Plus Plan (NPP) that he created in January 2017. Shane mentioned the regulatory package promulgated will be most important to his industry (commercial fishing) because fishers want to maintain access. Joanie said it would be of great value to explore all the options (Alternatives 4 and 5), instead of the BEWG limiting the study area to Alternative 3. Joanie asked G.P. about the NMS resources for Alternatives 4 and 5. G.P. responded without additional funding, Alternative 3 is the maximum of what the Sanctuary could effectively manage. He added the SAC could provide direction however to the BEWG to consider alternatives beyond Alternative 3. If money became available, then the larger alternatives are environmentally preferred by NOAA. Buddy suggested the support of any alternative will have to be acceptable to all stakeholders, and considering Alternatives 4 and 5 as the study area would not be a good use of time and money. Jake said Clint's maps do not take biology into account, and Clint disagreed. Jake added he shared Joanie's concern about not taking in the larger areas into consideration, but he is willing to wait to see what the NCCOS models develop.

Clint reported directional drilling below 10,000' is problematic, and explained his industry's need to be on top of the flanks in order to access the oil and gas resources. Using the Rankin, 28 Fathom, and Bright Banks complex, Clint stated the large area between the eastern bank and two western banks would render it nondrillable. G.P. responded Clint's statement is not accurate, because FGBNMS regulations allow drilling within the sanctuary. Clint disputed this, saying he believes the NMS would never issue a permit for a new, stand-alone wildcat location in the sanctuary. G.P. responded since the existing sanctuary has been in place, new wells have been drilled inside the borders of FGBNMS. Clint responded that these new wells have originated from an existing platform (i.e., HIA389A), and not a new, stand-alone platform.

Scott shared the history of the reactions of stakeholders and industries after the release

of the DEIS, and stated all stakeholders will have to compromise now that the new presidential administration is in place. Clint stated he embraced Alternative 3 and all the banks in it, but wants compromise on the boundaries so that the oil and gas industry can locate potential future platforms closer to the flanks of the banks. Clint said, based on Alternative 2, his company leased a block and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on the lease block and then hundreds of thousands dollars more on seismic exploration. When the DEIS was released, Clint's company did not make the pending lease payment and relinquished it because he and his industry think new drilling would never be allowed within the sanctuary. If boundaries were accepted as is from Alternative 3, Clint said he and his entire industry would do everything within their power to fight it. Emma reminded the SAC that the DEIS produced a "starting point" from which boundaries can be negotiated. G.P. noted the 2007 SAC recommendation stemmed from the FGBNMS management review plan. He added the SAC is an advisory body, not managerial, yet the FGBNMS will take their recommendation for expansion very seriously. The DEIS is no longer in a public comment period, but the Sanctuary felt it was important to get the SAC to weigh in on the alternatives. Emma commented on the additional information the Sanctuary has obtained in the last 10 years between the SAC's recommendation in 2007, to the release of the DEIS in 2016, which was integral to the selection of NOAA's preferred Alternative 3. Buddy urged the SAC to think more along the lines of business of what the Sanctuary's budget and personnel can handle. He added a strong opposition force faces the expansion.

Joanie, coming from one of the SAC's conservation seats, urged again that data from all alternatives should be presented to the full Council. Otherwise, the BEWG is leaving a lot out and is not considering all options. Shane countered asking why the BEWG would consider an alternative when the Sanctuary would not be able to manage with its current funding.

Jesse said his optimal choice would be Alternative 5, but it is not realistic because if Alternative 5 was sent to Washington DC, it would be knocked down by the Administration. He hopes the SAC and FGBNMS can work collaboratively to get "something" for the expansion. Jesse would like Clint to open his mind a little more to not be so constrained on the boundaries because groundtruthed data does not exist on where these potential future reserves are located. Buddy countered he thinks Clint is advocating what his industry wants because if Clint is not successful, then the oil and gas industry could squash all expansion.

Shane added some areas in the DEIS are also being considered by GMFMC as HAPC (habitat area of particular concern), and lots of overlaying management exists. Even if areas in the BEWG process are left out of the process, some of them may still garner protection (fishing regulations only) by other measures. GMFMC is considering two amendments from Pulley Ridge, across the Gulf, to south Texas, and looking at all areas for consideration to be designated as HAPC.

Joanie echoed Jesse's comment on supporting Alternative 5. Joanie stated she represents her concerns in one of the SAC's conservation seats. As the SAC, the best

recommendations can only be done when everything is considered, making sure the most informed decision is made.

Natalie too thinks Alternative 5 would be great, but questions if enforcement would even be possible. Charles responded NOAA OLE has not researched beyond Alternative 3, but could do this. He also added that from a law enforcement perspective, NOAA OLE advocates the fewer boundary points as possible, with no embayments or peninsulas, and has reminded the BEWG about this several times.

Clint commented he originally wanted Bright, Sonnier, and Geyer Banks protected, and has come a long way since he began on the SAC. He added millions of features on the Gulf of Mexico seafloor exist but that does not make them ecologically significant. Clint said his industry will not want to loan their ROVs anymore because ONMS will carve out areas and restrict access forever. He believes in protecting only “nationally significant” sites as stated in the NMSA (National Marine Sanctuaries Act).

Joanie pointed out the percentage of the Gulf that would be protected in any alternative in the DEIS is very small when compared to the total area of the Gulf. Buddy responded yes, the areas are tiny, but all of the uses are concentrated in those specific areas. GP cautioned on Clint discounting areas as nationally significant. Clint said all the areas are ecologically significant, but questions the national significance, and is not willing to put ecologically significant in boundaries or sanctuaries unless it's truly nationally significant.

3:30 FGBNMS ROV Cruise – Dr. Brian Shmaefsky

Brian, as an environmental scientist and environmental policy analyst, participated in the October 2017 ROV FGBNMS cruise, along with Buck Buchanan from Lone Star Community College. Brian said this cruise was one of the best missions in which he has ever participated. His job was the shutter control for the lower camera on the ROV, spotting things to video, measuring with the laser, turning on/off the laser, and underwater collecting/sampling. Many team members worked to run the operation smoothly from ROV operators, cable tending, data management, and vessel crew. Brian also helped deploy and retrieve the ROV from the deck of the R/V *Manta*. In his off time, Brian became more familiar with the coral and fish from the areas the ROV was exploring. Brian will be taking his presentation to others through education/outreach events and into his classrooms. He will also be developing a training ROV curriculum to include how to collect data from these reefs so that knowledge is not anecdotal.

3:52 New Business

No new business.

3:53 Meeting Adjourned – Natalie motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Charles. All in favor. Approved.

Next SAC Meeting scheduled for May 9, 2018.