

**FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE  
SANCTUARY**

**Sanctuary Advisory Council  
Meeting Minutes  
January 20, 2016**

**Meeting Attendance Roster:**

Jimi Mack	Recreational Diving	Present
Jesse Cancelmo	Recreational Diving	Present
Natalie Hall	Diving Operations	Present
Randy Widaman	Diving Operations	Present
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	Present
Larry McKinney	Research	Absent
Karla Klay	Education	Present
Jacqui Stanley	Education	Absent
Ellis Pickett	Conservation	Present
Jorge Brenner	Conservation	Present
James Sinclair	BSEE (non-voting)	Present
Mark Belter for Matt Johnson	BOEM (non-voting)	On Phone
Stephanie Cardenas	U.S. Coast Guard (non-voting)	Present
Rusty Swafford	NOAA Fisheries (non-voting)	Absent
Charles Tyer	NOAA OLE (non-voting)	Absent
Ben Scaggs	EPA (non-voting)	Absent
G.P. Schmahl	Sanctuary Superintendent (non-voting)	Present

**Total voting member attendance:** 12 of 16

**Others in Attendance:**

Leslie Clift, Kelly Drinnen, Michelle Johnston, Shelley DuPuy, John Embesi, Hunter Brendel, Travis Stearne, Ryan Eckert, Dustin Picard, Emma Hickerson, Bill Kiene, Frank Burek, Sharon Cain, Frank Wasson, Melanie Wasson, Julia O'Hern, Elaine Shen, Anna Knochel, Michael Saucedo.

**9:10** Meeting called to order by Clint Moore.

**9:10 Welcome and Announcements – G.P. Schmahl**

G.P. introduced new FGBNMS staff member ENS Dustin Picard, NOAA Corps.

### **9:17 Administrative Business – Clint Moore**

Added a 15-minute time slot for an update from the SAC subcommittee on visitor center. Adoption of Agenda – motion from Randy Widaman, second from Adrienne Simoes-Correa, no discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Approval of May Minutes – motion from Ellis Pickett, second from Randy Widaman, no discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

### **9:20 Sanctuary Updates – G.P. Schmahl**

G.P. addressed the public statement from November's meeting by Julia O'Hern regarding allegations of sexual harassment and/or discrimination aboard the *R/V Manta*. G.P. clarified that the allegations are currently under active investigation by the Department of Labor (DOL), and therefore it is not appropriate to discuss details of the case. The reason that the case is being investigated by DOL and not NOAA is that none of the parties that are involved in the allegations are NOAA employees. Ms. O'Hern was a contract employee of the company that provides vessel crew and services to NOAA, and all allegations are between personnel of the contracting company. While we cannot address specific details of the case, it must be noted that the statement by Ms. O'Hern that incidences of sexual harassment were reported to the FGBNMS office and the Sanctuary 'did nothing', is not correct. No allegations of harassment were reported to the sanctuary office while she was employed as a contractor, but rather surfaced months after she had been terminated from her contract position. In response to the issues raised by the allegations, FGBNMS has changed its policy about berthing on the *R/V Manta*, to require strict gender separation, and has updated the sexual harassment information that is provided to cruise participants.

Two proposed new national marine sanctuaries have been officially accepted into the Sanctuary process: 1) Wisconsin - Lake Michigan (shipwreck sites); and 2) Mallows Bay - Potomac River (natural areas and shipwrecks built for WWI).

In January 2016, the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an expansion proposal. Public comment will be taken through March 18, 2016. The NOI includes four different expansion 'models' with differing boundaries, for which NOAA requests public comment.

An updated ONMS document, National Facilities and Exhibits Master Plan Addendum, was released in December 2015. In this internal document, FGBNMS was identified with an increasing interest and desire to establish a visitors/discovery center in Galveston.

FGBNMS staff have been working on the development of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for sanctuary expansion. As part of this analysis, public comments have been analyzed. FGBNMS entered cooperating agency agreements with BOEM and BSEE, and FGBNMS has been working to address their comments. DEIS is anticipated to be released in Spring 2016.

A new study by a student at Duke University, Stephanie Stefanski, was recently published and titled "Valuing Marine Biodiversity in the Gulf of Mexico: Evidence from the Proposed Boundary Expansion of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary." One of the questions her study asked was, "How much would you be willing to pay to protect additional areas in the Gulf of Mexico?" The answer ranged from \$35 to \$107,

which equates to \$16-18 billion over the next 4-5 years.

Deepwater Horizon Programmatic Restoration Plan was released in October 2015. It outlines restoration strategies for injured resources within various categories over a 15 year timeframe. Mesophotic and deep benthic coral communities would be included in the injury assessment categories with monies totaling \$273 million. Funds could be distributed not only to direct restoration, but also to 'protect and manage' these communities as marine protected areas. FGBNMS was specifically referenced in this goal.

FGBNMS Facebook page reached over 18,000 likes, the second highest in ONMS.

FGBNMS Seaside Chats are scheduled for Wednesday evenings on February 10, February 17, and February 24, and will be held at Sea Scout Base Galveston. Ocean Discovery Day is scheduled for March 12, held at NOAA Campus in Galveston.

R/V Manta scheduled for annual yard maintenance in March 2016.

FGBNMS Advisory Council recruitment will be published in Federal Register on February 1, 2016, and open until February 29, 2016. Four seats (recreational fishing, research, education, and conservation) will be open.

G.P. shared information on signing of agreement between Cuba and the US in November 2015. More specifically, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for cooperation in the conservation and management of marine protected areas (MPA) between NOAA, National Park Service, and the Ministry of Science in Cuba. It sets up a sister MPA relationship and will focus on Guanahacabibes National Park (in particular the Banco de San Antonio, which shares similarities with FGBNMS), and FGBNMS and Florida Keys NMS. This MOU is the first official agreement since the relaxation of sanctions between the two countries. Research and management priorities were identified. FGBNMS is hoping to get Cuban colleagues out to the Sanctuary.

### **9:55 No Reef is an Island – Jorge Brenner**

Jorge's presentation focused on a modeling paper he co-authored and published on a coral reef connectivity study. A more detailed study of the connectivity in the Gulf of Mexico will be analyzed next. The paper can be viewed or downloaded at <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0144199>. The question of the study was, "Where is dispersal and recruitment most likely to occur?" and looked at hermatypic corals and not at one species to answer this question. The study area was 10 ecoregions and 32 EEZs (exclusive economic zones) in the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, and Atlantic Ocean. Settlement is influenced by reef area, circulation patterns, and geographic location and these 3 factors drive the model. The US (largely driven by FKNMS), Cuba, and Mexico modeled as important areas of coral reef connectivity. The study also calculated best solutions for a 30% protection goal.

Clint Moore asked about the 2011 animation and if its SW bearing was normal. Emma responded that annual variability and diversity does exist, based on drifter studies. Jesse asked about connectivity between FGBNMS and Veracruz, and asked about any connections with FGBNMS to reefs in Mexico. Jorge showed the connection between

FGBNMS and Meso-American reef (north of Cancun, Mexico). Emma added that genetic connectivity exists between Veracruz and FGBNMS (e.g., Derek Hagman's study on fish), and coral genetic connectivity between Dry Tortugas in FKNMS and FGBNMS.

### **10:30 Mesophotic reefs and deep-sea coral habitats in the Gulf of Mexico – Peter Etnoyer**

Dr. Peter Etnoyer, NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, presented a webinar titled, "Forests in the Deep: Deep Coral Habitats in the Gulf of Mexico." His presentation included research from Lophelia I and II cruises, spanning from 2006 to more recent years.

The outline of his presentation was the following:

- Deep-water corals in the Gulf
  - mesophotic habitats 30-100 m deep (wide band; far from shore)
  - deep-sea habitats 200-1,000 m deep (narrow band)
- Key species
  - stony coral (calcareous; fragile; framework forming) and black corals (proteinaceous; live 1,000's of years; valuable)
  - octocorals (proteinaceous; live 100's of years; structurally complex; not managed by regional Fisheries Management Councils)
- Patterns of distribution
  - mesophotic examples (Pinnacles Trend, FGBNMS)
  - deep-sea examples (Lophelia II; Reefs, Rigs, Wrecks)
- Recommendations for management

Heterotrophic soft corals are abundant and diverse in the mesophotic zone of the north central Gulf of Mexico. Stony corals (*Madracis* and *Oculina*) are present but relatively uncommon. In the deep-sea, *Lophelia pertusa* is the 'flagship' and is a reef-building, habitat-forming scleractinian found in 300-800 m depth. *Leiopathes* are the large black corals, are up to 1,600 years old, found from Texas to Florida (including the Viosca Knoll area, seaward of Pinnacle Trend), and these can be abundant on raised hard substrates in the 300-600m depth range.

Octocorals are broadly distributed and exist from shallow intertidal zones to deep abyssal plains. 162 known species of octocorals with 48% occurring in waters deeper than 200 m. Deep-water species are heterotrophic, they feed on surface plankton that rains down from above. Most species recruit onto hard topographic highs including seep-associated authigenic carbonates associated with chemosynthetic communities. Octocorals will also attach to coral/rock rubble and dead shells in fairly flat areas. Others anchor in soft substrates (e.g., sea pens, some bamboo corals). *Lophelia pertusa* dominate reef-forming coral in deep Gulf of Mexico, but octocorals (and black corals) increase habitat heterogeneity and extend deeper (~3,000 m).

Octocoral assemblages differ with depth. Highest diversity is in the 50-200 m zone which is a relatively stable environment compared to shallow water. A few deep (> 200 coral-fish associations exist with octocorals and black corals such as Barrelfish,

Snowy Grouper, and Tilefish. A few deep (> 200 m) coral-invertebrate associations also exist such as Squat Lobsters, Red Crabs, Brittle Stars, and scyliorhinid Catsharks.

Northwestern Gulf of Mexico Banks (Texas to Mississippi) have 130 banks and mounds on the Outer Continental Shelf found 50-200 m deep, and his study question looked at how to prioritize the protection of them. ROV transects, collections, and identification of images were used on West Flower Garden Bank. Study results showed that not all banks had the same assemblages so as many banks as possible and the area between the banks should be protected. Summary of FGB work showed: 1) 28 octocoral species in FGB; 2) octocorals were broadly distributed, but species composition varied markedly; 3), place-based management is justified because similar habitats have different diversity and abundance.

#### Pinnacles Trend area

Study looked at mesophotic sites (65-90 m deep) near the Mississippi Delta that were located below Deepwater Horizon (DWH) oil slick. Anthropogenic impacts from flock and dispersants were present on corals at 1,300 m deep. Many corals were injured, not entirely killed. Two of the sites in the Pinnacles Trend area with coral injuries observed were Alabama Alps and Roughtongue Reef, which have 15-20 m reliefs, occur at 65-90 m depth, and are 500 m wide. Pre-spill, 5-10% of large octocoral colonies on Pinnacle Trend exhibited injuries. Post-spill, 30-50% of colonies had visible injuries. Far from the wellhead, corals also had visible injuries pre-spill which was attributed to fisheries damage. In summary, there was high coral abundance and diversity on Pinnacle Trend, but relatively high rates of injury post-spill compared to pre-spill, yet there is potential for recovery because 50% of the colonies remain and husbandry efforts are working.

#### Lophelia II Project

Looked at octocorals in the deep Gulf of Mexico. Robert's Reef in Viosca Knoll 826, an extensive *Lophelia pertusa* reef and nursery habitat for black corals, was discovered in 2009, despite numerous mapping and research efforts. More reefs like Robert's may exist, but haven't been located yet. Viosca Knoll 862 is a mixed community of chemosynthetic organisms and *Lophelia*, and represents the best targets of biodiversity and thus, protection. Although they were below the oil slick for more than a month, injury was not documented. Sampling yielded 53 species of octocorals, 12 of which were not previously recorded in the Gulf of Mexico. At least 4 (possibly 8 total) new species were collected. The most abundant species were in two genera: *Callogorgia* and *Paramuricea*. Species richness was highest at the deepest site (~2,400 m) in the Desoto Canyon Area and at a site that was the shallowest (250-325 m), which may have been a transition site between shallow and deep sea species. Octocorals create important habitat, supporting a diversity of fishes and invertebrates throughout the Gulf of Mexico to depths far greater than *L. pertusa* occurs. Longevity and slow growth suggest high susceptibility to anthropogenic disturbances. Octocoral community structure is primarily influenced primarily by depth and secondarily by geography.

Etnoyer's recommendations are the following:

1. Designate HAPCs or deep-sea coral zones for diverse and abundant deep-sea coral habitats in deeper water (200-2,000 m).
2. Embrace full diversity of deep coral habitat types.
3. Develop a network of protections for hard-bottom habitats in each of the two biogeographic regions, Northwestern Gulf and Florida Escarpment.
4. Recognize that mobile and fixed gear in demersal fisheries can damage deep-coral and sponge colonies.
5. Consider bottom-contact restrictions in the NW Gulf for large coral aggregations at: VK862/906 (*Lophelia*, *Leiopathes*, bamboo corals), AT357 (*Paramuricea*),

MC885 (shark nursery), MC751 (*Callogorgia*, *Paragorgia*)

6. Consider bottom-contact restrictions along West FL shelf break 400-600 m, where *Lophelia* and black corals are abundant.

Shane Cantrell would like to see pictures of fishing impacts and would like to hear a quantification of those impacts. Peter responded with a graph of fishing line observed at sites near and far from Macondo 252 wellhead, and offered to provide images. Fishing line was observed at 1,500 m near Macondo 252, but is difficult to assess when and from where it originated. Madison-Swanson exhibited the highest observations of fishing gear per minute of ROV transects. Buddy Guindon said that old line is often encrusted and could be aged based upon what is growing on it, and that education of fishers could help minimize bottom contact. Adrienne Simoes-Correa asked about extraction and transplantation of affected corals, either to a different site or to a laboratory. Peter responded that this is feasible, and preliminary attempts at extraction and husbandry of *Swiftia* sea fans from mesophotic sites in the Straits of Florida have been successful.

### **11:57 Visitation Permit Program – Frank Wasson**

Frank Wasson, former SAC Chair, used to work in FGBNMS but is now running his business in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) and, in particular, the Dry Tortugas which uses a vessel permit program. A FKNMS permit is obtained by phone 72 hours before going there. Operating without a permit could result in a ticket. To request a permit, you call the sanctuary and sanctuary fills out your permit with the number of divers, and when the vessel is entering and leaving the area. Permits are good for 2 weeks, and the boat reports how many times they will be there during that 2 week period. Frank added that the FKNMS Code of Federal Register says that vessels entering Tortugas must contact the sanctuary representative at Garden Key, but the problem is that there is no sanctuary staff at Garden Key. Frank said he does not call into FKNMS when he sees a violation because law enforcement won't answer. The National Park in FKNMS has a different set of reporting requirements from the sanctuary, and it's onerous. Frank's wife, Melanie, spends 5 days a year creating the report that must be reported to the park each year. Frank said what's important is for the SAC and for staff to figure out what you want a visitation permit program to accomplish and make some common sense rules of how you are going to accomplish it. If you are going to come up with a rule, you have to enforce the rule. If you want data, ask for it, but know what you want and follow up on it.

Karla Klay commented that in Indonesia the dive operators sold the permits then gave the money back to the marine reserve. Each person got a tag/badge that got attached to the SCUBA tank or BC and was a keepsake.

Frank – In 2005 at the 2<sup>nd</sup> SAC meeting ever, the SAC talked about selling tags like several other places. You have to convince the dive operators to do that job. With the Dry Tortugas park, the Spree gets to share in the per person fee for divers.

Scott Hickman – Do you see a value in an annual permit?

Frank – What data are you going to collect? What do you want it to do for you? If you don't know what you want, the length of the permit doesn't matter.

Scott – We want to collect information that we can't collect under present terms because

recreational fishers don't report anything. We want to reach out and get that data that we can extrapolate to understand what the activity is in the sanctuary so scientists can better manage.

Frank – In FL it took 10 years of pretty severe management to get things running. Patrol boat was out there 7 days a week. Somebody's got to enforce the rule. A problem exists with people who visit, but don't consider 2 hours trolling around the edges as visiting the site.

### **12:15 Adjourn for Lunch**

Frank offered presentation on the *M/V Spree* to Cuba at 12:35 for those interested.

### **1:04 Visitation Permit Program continued – Natalie Hall for SAC subcommittee**

Natalie, Chair of the Visitation Permit Program Subcommittee, called Sharon Cain with the *M/V Fling* to get their input. Sharon requested an easy application for her crew.

The goal of the visitation permit program is to establish a mandatory permit program to visit the FGBNMS and a reporting system. The users would provide feedback on vessel size and type, activities conducted at FGBNMS, and frequency of visits. Two types of permits: 1) annual permits for commercial and charter fishing, diving charters, and a required mandatory reporting form that has to be submitted for a permit renewal; and 2) temporary permits (2-week duration) for most recreational visitors, could be used for commercial and charter use, and a reporting form would be sent to permit holder after the 2-week period. Failure to submit the reporting form would prohibit a permit renewal. Permits could be obtained on FGBNMS website or by calling the FGBNMS office. Mooring buoys could be painted with permitting information.

Adrienne asked about getting information on multiple uses and multiple days. The reporting form was designed to be as simple as possible to capture basic visitor usage.

Buddy suggested annual permits be issued for commercial vessels (commercial fishers, charter for hire, and commercial divers), and temporary permits for recreational users.

G.P. would like to send the visitation permit program to HQ for review, now that the basic framework has been developed. Karla Klay urged SAC to consider a user fee. Clint Moore asked if a user fee would institute a higher level of HQ review and GP responded yes, because implementing a user fee for a sanctuary would be a precedent.

Jesse Cancelmo said that in his world travels, most marine parks have a fee. He is opposed to a fee at FGBNMS, but that a monetary penalty should be applied to those found in the sanctuary without a permit. In this manner, FGBNMS gets information from the people who embrace the no-cost permit, but receives money from users who neglect the permit application process. Scott Hickman said the permit should be no cost. Clint asked G.P. where the money for a permit would go. G.P. responded that penalties would need to be specifically set up in order to go back to the sanctuary in which the violation occurred. Adrienne Simoes-Correa pointed out the study that G.P. mentioned at the beginning of this SAC meeting where a survey of people said they would pay to protect the marine resources. Karla said mandating a fee is reasonable because those monies would help maintain those marine resources that the visitors use. She also pointed out

that the visitation permit program will cost money, and that having a user fee would help offset those costs. James Sinclair said it's reasonable for people who are using a resource to pay a fee.

Sharon Cain from the *M/V Fling* commented from the public, and has talked to her former and current captains and dive shops. If there is a fee, it will be passed on to the customers and they will not be happy. The vessel has only 2 hours in between trips. As such, there is no way to do a reporting form after each trip. The Fling crew said they will not be the enforcers on the water and will not ask other vessels if they have a permit. Her main concern and question is, "How it will be enforced?" Scott Hickman said he sees a lot of illegal activities, and thinks that if a few penalties are issued, the word will get out. He believes a trip report form for each trip is needed and reasonable, will give more information to manage the resource, and that annual reporting forms will not be as useful. Jesse too agreed that an annual trip report form would not be as useful, but perhaps a weekly trip report form for those users that often visit the sanctuary and a trip report form for infrequent visitors. Shane Cantrell urged the visitation permit program require a reporting form per trip. Otherwise, the sanctuary will not get as much data. Karla thinks a fee and a reporting form per trip, though it may initially cause resistance, will allow FGBNMS to better steward its resources. Scott Hickman stated the original intention of the visitor permit program would be provide the sanctuary with more information.

## **2:00 Public Comment Period**

The time for public comment period was moved to 2pm to allow the visitor program update from Natalie Hall.

Sharon Cain's public comment was given in the visitation permit program update.

### Jesse Cancelmo

Jesse shared the publication of his new book titled, "Glorious Gulf of Mexico." The idea for his book came to Jesse when he listened to a DWH update to the SAC in 2010. He thanked FGBNMS Staff Marissa Nuttall for the maps she contributed. Jesse visited several sites around the Gulf of Mexico and compiled underwater photographs from his travels during the 4 years. FGBNMS is Chapter 5. His dream is that his book can help people in the 3 countries [US, Mexico, and Cuba] understand that we are all connected by one small body of water which is the Gulf of Mexico and to forge relationships to work together.

### Buddy Guindon

Buddy invited everyone to the premiere of Big Fish Texas on January 31 at the Galveston Opera House.

### Frank Burek

Frank repeated the call for the FGBNMS Management Plan to include support of artificial reefs in the sanctuary. As the FGBNMS's management requirements increase with "boundary expansion", so should it increase with respect to the additional marine assets that eventually will accompany that expansion. His seven points involving Texas Gulf Council of Diving Clubs (TGCC) position on artificial reefs:

1. Artificial reefs within the boundaries of the FGBNMS sanctuary should be cut in a manner that retains all of that platform's marine life and minimizes the impact on



- it during any partial removal of that platform. In short – a cut above the water line!
2. TGCC's believes that its artificial reef position is identical to the SAC preferred model for decommissioned oil and gas platforms in the FGBNMS.
  3. TGCC and the SAC's only apparent difference on this matter is that TGCC is actively trying to seek regulatory changes and assignment of responsibilities that would increase the possibility of that artificial reef alternative. While the SAC has taken a position on artificial reefs, it has not taken steps to increase the possibility that it could be implemented.
  4. Regulatory changes are necessary to have the SAC preferred model succeed. The NMS must have the option of managing artificial reefs within its sanctuary boundaries.
  5. The NMS is the best positioned government agency for the supervision and managing of artificial reefs within its boundaries. The FGBNMS management also has a proven track record of dealing with platforms within its boundaries and of handling such a responsibility.
  6. Because the FGBNMS boundaries presently are offshore from both Texas and Louisiana - both States would be involved in rigs-to-reef program artificial reef solutions for platforms within the FGBNMS. With future expansion the number of States and the number of platforms may increase. The existing complexity alone warrants a better alternative – NMS control of future artificial reefs in its boundaries.
  7. The best time for such clarifications to artificial reef procedures is during the FGBNMS Expansion Plan process.

Frank added that they would like to see the SAC help move the FGBNMS management team into a position where they have management responsibility for all the marine life environments within their boundaries.

Jesse pointed out that regulatory changes would be required, but also a larger liability hurdle exists. Frank said liability does not transfer with sell of platform. Jesse pointed out by cutting off HI389A platform below the water line, liability dramatically decreased and the state of Texas accepted liability with the federal government's acceptance of this. However, when the platform is left standing in place (not cut below water level), then hurdles immediately present. Clint asked how the FGBNMS SAC Working Group report on artificial reefs was received at HQ. G.P. responded that liability issues are quite severe and NOAA would not accept liability for decommissioned platforms left standing in place above the water. Clint commented on the 3 platforms located within the SAC's alternative for expansion: 1) HI371A was completely removed from onsite and moved to a rigs-to-reef area; 2) West Cameron 663 is no longer producing for bankrupt ATP, but now owned by a Bankruptcy Trustee working for a BSEE Trust Fund established by ATP, and 3) HI384A (north side of West FGB) is still producing.

#### Julia O'Hern

Julia provided more information on SB2206, a Senate bill entitled "NOAA sexual harassment and assault prevention act". It made its way through the committee and is in the Senate. Because of the investigation, a loophole in the law was identified for contracted employees when they harass or discriminate people who are not federal employees. Julia encouraged sanctuary advisory councils across the nation to look into their policy with complaints and how/where/who to report these complaints when they are not federal employees. Who enforces fair practices among contracted employees? Why does NOAA continue to use contracted employees when NOAA cannot protect them?

Julia will present this issue at the Ocean Sciences Conference in February. G.P. asked for Julia's recommendation to the best way to address this issue. Julia responded that NOAA should take responsibility for any staff they put onboard that vessel, including nonfederal employees. G.P. asked for further clarification. Julia responded that the bill addresses some of this by defining the person to whom a complaint would be reported. NOAA should provide information and define the process to anyone walking on the boat on who to report complaints to. She asked for protection from retaliation so that a person who files a complaint is not without a job, which can take a long time due to lengthy investigations.

### **1:30 Oil platforms In and Near FGBNMS: What We Know and What We Need to Know - Adrienne Simoes-Correa**

Tabled for the next SAC meeting due to time constraints.

### **2:45 Visitors Center Update – Shane Cantrell for SAC subcommittee**

Subcommittee (Shane Cantrell (co-chair), Jacqui Stanley (co-chair), Clint Moore, Adrienne Simoes-Correa, and Ellis Pickett as SAC members and G.P. Schmah, Shelley Du Puy, and Leslie Cliff as FGBNMS Staff) had a phone conference. The SAC subcommittee suggests casting a broad net for visitors, pull learning opportunities from other visitor centers at other sanctuaries. They requested G.P. to ask for Bob Leeworthy's assistance to gather information on socioeconomic data. Bob's report lent Monterey Bay Aquarium valuable information on the exact location to build. A visitor's center would provide education but secondarily could host events. Two basic paths exist for funding – a National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Chapter which requires 12% overhead payment to their Foundation; and 2) or a separate private foundation which would not require 12% overhead be paid to the NMSF, but would have its own costs. Three action items were identified: 1) get Bob Leeworthy involved; 2) get information from other sanctuary visitor centers; 3) establish foundation pathway.

Karla Klay had 2 points: 1) concurrent efforts on the island that are ongoing (e.g., Parks Board on the East End Lagoon, Sea Scout Base Galveston, ArtistBoat land on the west end) should be considered by the subcommittee; 2) the funding pathway should be a National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Chapter. Karla recommended a retreat with multi-agency representation. She does not want duplicative efforts. She requests the SAC ask for presentations from Parks Board, Sea Scout Base Galveston, and ArtistBoat. Natalie Hall asked about the socioeconomic study. Clint Moore responded that Bob Leeworthy has a history of doing socioeconomic studies for other sanctuaries' visitor center planning.

Natalie Hall – did you consider a small booth, like a section of a souvenir shop? Shane Cantrell – we did not get into discussion of locations without understanding what other sanctuaries have done and understanding who we want to reach.

Karla – a lot of money is coming online from the BP spill. The city is putting together a group to discuss synergy on the island to apply for that money. Traditional visitor center has a gateway view of the natural area it is representing – a sense of something bigger than yourself—targeted at visitors to the area. An interpretive center is something different where you go to learn more about the environment – a destination for people who live in the community.

Shane – we need data before we make decisions—to get money, to make plans, to meet audience needs. Monterey Bay Visitor Center considered 23 different locations around the bay area, and selected their location based on socioeconomics.

Committee Motion by Clint Moore. Seconded by Shane Cantrell: Ask the Superintendent, G.P. Schmahl to request that ONMS Chief Economist Bob Leeworthy provide the FGBNMS staff and SAC with their past summary information on other national marine sanctuary visitor centers that they have helped create. 9 present. All approve. Motion carries.

### **3:15 SAC Chairs Summit – Clint Moore**

SAC Chairs Summit was held in Annapolis, Maryland from January 12-14, 2016 and was three days (about 20 hours) of interaction with other SAC Chairs and presentations by ONMS and NOAA.

Lead speaker David Holst – NOAA NOS Deputy Assistant Administrator

- Key to success is connection to communities
- Flat budgets for this year and next (~\$50 million)
- Developing 10 year strategic plan because current one ended in 2015.
- Coastal intelligence – using all of the resources available, not just sanctuaries, to gather information
- Coastal resilience – impacts and effects on MPAs

John Armor, Acting ONMS Director

- Protecting Mom & Apple Pie type brand which enjoys bipartisan support
- Not clear how to get the rest of government to consider ONMS as a “got to have” as opposed to a “nice to have”
- FY2018 budget may increase by \$4-5 million, in order to pay for the establishment of two new sanctuaries
- Strong community support for Mallows Bay and West Lake Michigan proposed sanctuaries.
- ONMS 50th anniversary in 2022
- Variety of ONMS program statistics

Reed Bohne – NE Region Director

- Several other areas submitted for nomination as sanctuaries are being reviewed
- Expansions underway at FGBNMS and MNMS

Jim Landon – OLE Director

- Provided statistics on law enforcement efforts and areas
- Only 88 special agents, 38 enforcement officers to cover 3.3 million sq miles
- Enforcing 39 federal laws

Climate Change in Sanctuaries

- Concerns for impacts, effects & mitigation
- Coastal risk assessment & disaster preparations
- Most sanctuaries are carbon sequestration sinks
- Need more monitoring and data acquisition

- Pros & cons of climate policy advocacy. We risk the Mom & Apple Pie brand and bipartisan support if we become aggressive advocates for public policy positions

#### Funding Future Wish List

- Create FGBNMS Foundation/Friends Group
- Develop project list & prioritize objectives
- Recruit talented volunteer trustees
- Develop strategic & business plan
- Recruit talented development team
- Raise funds for successful outcomes

#### Visitor/Discovery/Exploration Center

- 10 of 14 sanctuaries have one
- FGBNMS subcommittee underway

#### Bob Leeworthy – ONMS Chief Economist

- Socioeconomic analysis helps find nexus of sanctuary and the lives and livelihoods of people in the communities.

#### ONMS Communications & Messaging Tools

- Websites, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumbler – one national staff person
- Print Media – magazines, newspapers
- TV – Golf Channel initiatives & newsfeeds
- Hispanic communication & messaging initiative

#### Hokulea World Voyage

- Double hull replica Polynesian canoe could come to Galveston this year IF we want to sponsor “Sailing for the Oceans and Planet”

### **4:04 Agency Reports**

**Stephanie Cardenas** (USCG) – *Dauntless* was at the FGBNMS in November and saw no violations (report given early)

**Rusty Swafford** (NMFS) – absent

**Matthew Johnson** (BOEM) – Mark Belter had virtual presence on phone. No report.

**James Sinclair** (BSEE) – W&T Offshore has finally revised application for HIA389A, which no longer says they will use explosives, but will cut it at about 65 feet, just above the 72-foot cross-members.

### **4:09 New Business**

Karla Klay - Park Board Trustees will be celebrating World Oceans Day on June 8. This is the first celebration of World Oceans Day in Galveston and it will be a day of activities. The location is Stewart Beach Pavilion and Beach from about 3 p.m. to sunset.

Randy Widaman – Texas Dive Show in Frisco this weekend at Embassy Suites.

Jimmi Mack – YES annual event through NABS occurs in June every year, sponsoring 30 youth, ages 10-17 years old, who are interested in marine sciences. Most of the recent summits have been around sanctuaries, but this year it will be in Honduras. Kids in this area need sponsors to help them participate--\$800 plus airfare per student.

**4:20 Meeting Adjourned** - Motion by Shane Cantrell, second by Randy Widaman. All in favor. Approved.

Next SAC Meeting scheduled for April 20, 2016.