

**FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY**  
**Sanctuary Advisory Council**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**January 27, 2021**

**VIRTUAL MEETING**

**Meeting Attendance Roster:**

Sepp Haukebo, Recreational Diving, Present  
Jesse Cancelmo, Recreational Diving, Present  
Natalie Davis, Diving Operations, Present  
Frank Burek, Diving Operations, Present  
Ruth Perry, Oil and Gas Industry, Present (late)  
Steve Hamm, Oil and Gas Industry, Present  
Scott Hickman, Fishing - Recreational, Present  
Robert Kirschner, Fishing - Recreational, Present  
Shane Cantrell, Fishing - Commercial, Present  
Buddy Guindon, Fishing - Commercial, Present  
Adrienne Simoes Correa, Research, Present  
Michael Dance, Research, Present  
Brian Shmaefsky, Education, Present  
Sharon Kamas, Education, Present  
Joanie Steinhaus, Conservation, Present  
Jake Emmert, Conservation, Present  
James Sinclair, BSEE (non-voting), Present  
Alicia Caporaso, BOEM (non-voting), Present  
Keith Edwards, USCG (non-voting), Present  
Rusty Swafford, NOAA Fisheries (non-voting), Absent  
Vacant, NOAA OLE (non-voting), Vacant  
Brooke Shipley, TPWD (non-voting), Present  
Vacant, EPA (non-voting), Vacant  
G.P. Schmahl, Sanctuary Superintendent (non-voting), Present  
**Total voting member attendance:** 16 of 16 of voting members; 9 votes needed

**Others in Attendance:**

Nicole LeBoeuf (NOS), Robin Czerwinski (NOS), Katie Denman (NOAA ONMS), Kathy Broughton (NOAA ONMS), Shawn Choy (NOS), Fernando Calderón Gutiérrez (TAMUG), Leslie Clift, Emma Hickerson, Kelly Drinnen, Raven Blakeway, Irene Olivares-Arthur, Jimmy MacMillan, Michelle Johnston, Marissa Nuttall, Kelly O'Connell, Justin Blake, Sarah Stein (ONMS HQ), Michelle Nannen (BOEM), Matt Harlan (J Connor Consulting), Ken Fountain,

Gabrilie Jones, Ross Henderson, Gang Liu, Butch Henderson, Pam Plotkin, Thomas Bright, Sharon Hoyt, Crystal Capps, Matthew Walia

**9:00 Welcome and Announcements – Kelly Drinnen/G.P. Schmahl**

Today’s virtual meeting is being run through a webinar and is not being recorded.

Roll Call

**9:15 Administrative Business – Scott Hickman**

Call to order @ 9:15am.

Adoption of Agenda – Motion from Jake Emmert, second from Frank Burek. No objections on the draft agenda, motion approved.

Adoption of Minutes – Motion to approve minutes from July 30, 2020 meeting from Joanie Steinhaus, second from Jake Emmert. No objections on the draft minutes, motion approved.

Adoption of Minutes – Motion to approve minutes from November 18, 2020 meeting from Frank Burek, second from Jake Emmert. No objections on the draft minutes, motion approved.

**9:20 NOS Acting Assistant Administrator - Nicole LeBoeuf**

Nicole congratulated and thanked everyone for the work on the FGBNMS expansion which represents a balance of protection with multi-use stakeholders. She also touched upon the next steps following expansion including the FGBNMS Condition Report and updating the FGBNMS Management Plan.

Discussion followed. Scott Hickman asked how FGBNMS could reach the NOS goals of diversity and inclusion from the Advisory Council level. Nicole responded Advisory Council members are the “eyes and ears on the ground” who can help community members have a voice who otherwise might be marginalized or have a gap in understanding of national marine sanctuaries. Jake Emmert asked how zoos and aquariums could further the messages of NOS, ONMS, and FGBNMS. Nicole pointed to the educational authority zoos and aquaria have to promote messages of resource protection. Adrienne Correa asked about the potential to focus on obtaining baseline data on microbial communities in corals. Nicole mentioned the need to persist and adapt messages as the natural resources change. Nicole described the FGBNMS expansion with multi-use stakeholders as a “purchase of goodwill” and encourages this collaboration to continue.

**10:00 Public Comment**

No public comment.

FGBNMS Advisory Council recognized the passing of former FGBNMS Advisory Council Member Capt. Randy Widaman (Diving Operations) with a moment of silence and words shared by FGBNMS staff and Advisory Council members.

### **10:10 FGBNMS from the Eyes of a Diver Volunteer - Fernando Calderón Gutiérrez**

Fernando Calderón Gutiérrez was FGBNMS 2020 Volunteer of the Year. Fernando is a Ph. D. Candidate at Texas A&M University, Galveston. He began working on the Reef Fauna Project during his undergraduate work in Mexico, and now dives as a NOAA volunteer diver with FGBNMS. He described some of the offshore activities he has been involved with through FGBNMS including sea turtle releases, mooring buoy maintenance, and photo surveys. He congratulated everyone on the sanctuary expansion, and shared his vision for FGBNMS to include more mesophotic and deep coral ecosystems, to examine natural phenomena impacts, and to engage in transboundary cooperation.

### **10:45 Sanctuary Update - G. P. Schmahl**

FGBNMS remains under a Mandatory Telework order for all staff. Public access to facilities is closed until further notice. Vessel operations and NOAA Diving are suspended except for mission critical activities.

Two expiring seats (Commercial Fishing: Shane Cantrell and Conservation: Joanie Steinhaus) will be posted soon for recruitment on the FGBNMS Advisory Council. G.P. reminded the Applicant Review Panel for this round consists of Robert Kirschner, Steve Hamm, and Brian Shmaefsky.

FGBNMS expansion's Final Rule was published on January 19, 2021. G.P. explained the Regulatory Impact Review (RIR), its reason for publication (11/23/2000), and the re-opening of the public comment period. Comments were requested on the RIR only (not expansion in general). Public comment was accepted through December 8, 2020. Eight comments were received: 2 N/A; 1 supported expansion; 5 raised concerns about the RIR notice or expansion process (requested reconsideration of the revised preferred alternative, RIR comment period too short, and RIR outdated and inaccurate). The FEIS (posted 12/11/2020) contains responses to public comments received for both the DEIS (June 2016) and Notice of Proposed Rule (May 2020). The designation and regulations will take effect after the close of a review period of 45 days of continuous session of Congress. On January 20, 2021, the Office of Management and Budget directed agencies to consider up to a 60 day review period for rules that have been published but are not yet effective (which includes the FGBNMS expansion rule). This requirement will add some time to the effective date.

G.P. demonstrated the new Mapping and Exploration Tool on the FGBNMS webpage for displaying geographic information about the sanctuary's reefs and banks. Revision of the FGBNMS Management Plan will focus on sanctuary expansion, education and outreach, research and monitoring, resource protection, visitor use, and operations and administration.

Seaside Chats will resume in February 2021, but will be virtual only, beginning with a presentation on February 3 by FKNMS Superintendent Sarah Fangman on the "Mission Iconic Reefs" effort. Dr. Josh Stewart with the Manta Trust will present on manta rays on February 10. Dr. Adrienne Correa with Rice University will present on Gulf Coast reefs following Hurricane Harvey on February 17. Ending the program on February 24 will be Dr. Suzanne Fredericq with the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, who will present on remarkable algae at FGBNMS.

Texas now has five Ocean Guardian Schools, one of which is Yorkshire Academy with lead teacher Jacqui Stanley (former FGBNMS Advisory Council member). This year, Jacqui's students developed a calendar featuring the national marine sanctuaries, which was sold as a fundraiser through the school's online store.

G.P. raised the issue of marine debris, particularly as this issue was raised during the September FGBNMS Advisory Council meeting, and a working group was created. G.P. shared FGBNMS staff have been analyzing years of ROV footage of transects, and creating/maintaining a marine debris database.

G.P. shared that Gray's Reef NMS recently had a visitor use study conducted by Matt Kendall et al. with NCCOS. The project used video, satellite images, underwater sound (aka sound traps) to assess visitor use in the national marine sanctuary.

Discussion followed. Jesse Cancelmo asked about international collaboration with Mexico and Cuba in the Gulf of Mexico, and if this scientific collaboration work is still ongoing, future plans for it, and having it on the agenda for a future FGBNMS Advisory Council meeting. G.P. reminded everyone about the MOU with Cuba. However, government interactions with Cuba were severely restricted during the last Administration. G.P. hopes communications will be reinstated in the near future with Cuba and Mexico. Shane Cantrell asked when it comes to passive acoustic observation in sanctuaries, is that something that is expected to be done via human capital or is this an opportunity to leverage Artificial Intelligence once audio signatures of different vessel types can be identified? Sepp Haukebo said Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) has a pilot underway in Oregon using passive acoustic monitoring, smart cameras, and machine learning to identify and enumerate recreational fishing vessel traffic accessing offshore fisheries in Oregon. Sepp said EDF will have a report available soon to share.

Jake Emmert asked about FGBNMS' interest in connectivity studies, and G.P. responded affirmatively.

### **12:10 Diversity & Inclusion - Scott Hickman**

Scott Hickman relayed the need and objective identified during the last SAC Chairs call on diversity and inclusion.

FGBNMS Leslie Clift read aloud the diversity and inclusion statements posted on the FGBNMS Advisory Council's recruitment webpage (<https://flowergarden.noaa.gov/advisorycouncil/recruitment.html>), and updated the Advisory Council on her recent efforts with FGBNMS Kelly Drinnen, focused on diversity and inclusion, to update the email list that is used for the distribution of information regarding SAC recruitment. Leslie will distribute the draft list to the FGBNMS Advisory Council for their review and input.

Sepp and Scott provided a brief on an EDF initiative named Everyone's Gulf and the efforts to inspire a new generation of ocean advocates by connecting kids to the coast, taking them fishing, and then have a cooking class. Due to the pandemic, Everyone's Gulf shifted events shifted online, and recently conducted an online event for Houston, Texas.

Adrienne Correa noted disparity in access to the marine environment can start being addressed with gear donations (e.g., snorkeling equipment) and snorkeling opportunities in community pools for underprivileged student populations.. FGBNMS Michelle Johnston is on ONMS' Diversity and Inclusion group and will check in with other sanctuary sites on initiatives they might be undertaking. Joanie Steinhaus commented on Turtle Island Restoration Network's (TIRN) efforts with the Teach a Kid to Fish program as another great avenue to increase diversity and inclusion. She reported TIRN participates in this program with Galveston Island Fishing Pier. Many students never fished before they participated in the program.

### **12:30 FGBNMS Condition Report - Kathy Broughton**

Kathy Broughton presented an overview of the ONMS Condition Reports. She reported all sites have completed at least one Condition Report, and the last one for FGBNMS was published in 2008. The framework for Condition Reports is Driving forces-Pressure-State of the Resources-Ecosystem services-Response (DPSE). The next generation of Condition Reports has begun (Stellwagen Bank NMS and Channel Islands NMS completed) and this year, FGBNMS is one of the two sites kicking off their updated Condition Report. Condition Reports will be a supporting tool during the management plan review process, serving to inform and educate, and to be a reporting mechanism. The two big chunks of the report are assessment of the state of resources and an assessment of ecosystem services. The state of resources asks 15 questions regarding human dimensions, water quality, habitat, living resources, and maritime heritage resources. Workshops are planned for FGBNMS in 2022. The rating system scales from good to poor, and is applicable throughout the ONMS system. Ecosystem services include Cultural (non-material benefits; e.g., sense of place, non-consumptive recreation, education), Provisioning (material

benefits; e.g., commercial harvest, subsistence harvest), and Regulating (buffers to change; e.g., coastal protection). New to this year are confidence scores for each rating, which are based on evidence and agreement. A Status and Trends Workshop will be scheduled for FGBNMS in Fall 2021. The FGBNMS Condition Report is slated to be finalized by Fall/Winter 2022. The process relies heavily on consultation with experts. FGBNMS Michelle Johnston is the point of contact locally, while Kathy is the point of contact at NOAA HQ. The role of Advisory Councils varies from site to site.

Discussion followed. G.P. said this process will be scientific in nature with experts on subject matter, and all Advisory Council members are welcomed and considered experts on FGBNMS. Sharon Kamas remarked on what a great way to connect students to data from national marine sanctuaries via Condition Reports. Discussion turned to wahoo fishing and specifically, fishing of wahoo aggregations. Scott said due to change in technologies, the wahoo aggregations are being overfished more easily. He urged more research on the aggregation.

### **1:11 Meeting Adjourned**

Jesse Cancelmo motioned to adjourn, seconded by Brian Shmaefsky. All in favor. Approved.

Next SAC Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 21, 2021.

## **FGBNMS Advisory Council's Constituent and Working Group/Subcommittee Updates**

The following updates were provided via email by FGBNMS Advisory Council members:

Frank Burek (Diving Operations):

- Developed a video for the SAC that familiarizes them with the marine life of the East Flower Garden Bank and Geyer Bank. Due to agenda limitations that presentation has been delayed to later this year.
- Developed a New Member Packet program for the SAC, currently under review by the FGBNMS staff.
- Chaired a Texas Gulf Coast Council of Diving Clubs (TGCC) meeting to review and comment on the Propose Rule on FGBNMS Expansion, and also provided updates on the progress of the FGBNMS Expansion to Houston Underwater Photographic Society (HUPS) and the TGCC. The current dates for the Houston Underwater Film Festival (HUFF) is now April 17 & 18, 2021.

Jesse Cancelmo (Recreational Diving):

- Sent updates of the recent news of the Sanctuary Expansion is nearing designation to all Houston-area dive club contacts.
- Gave virtual presentation to the Woodlands High School Scuba Club on "Diving & Photographing the FGBNMS".
- Sent a notice to Houston-Area dive clubs that my term as a Recreational Diving Rep on the SAC will end in July-'21 so a space will be open for a newcomer with fresh ideas.
- Interviewed, along with others, by photojournalist Brooke Morton for her article on HIA-389A published in the December '20 issue Scuba Diving magazine.
- Forwarded a heads-ups to my constituency about the virtual SAC meeting on January 27th.

Jake Emmert (Conservation):

- Worked with Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), FGBNMS, and National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF) on collaborative efforts in the sanctuary and expansion areas.
- Engaged in conversations with multiple zoo and aquarium dive programs on the facets of scientific diving and supporting sanctuaries with their management efforts.
- Completed the first three year term partnership with Rice University titled, "Coral Research Program". Includes training, field support, and outreach components. Set to renew agreement for another three years beginning this year (2021).

Brian Shmaefsky (Education):

- Attended virtual meetings with other environmental education group and distributed FGBNMS literature to environmental education groups, local museums, and nature centers.
- Will be representing FGBNMS at the Jesse Jones Park NatureFest either in person or virtually in March 2021.

- Represented the interests of FGBNMS at the ASTM F477 committee on commercial space flight, where I voiced concerns about the environmental impacts of commercial spaceflights and spaceports on the Gulf of Mexico, because any impact incidents would directly affect the FGBNMS.

#### Joanie Steinhaus (Conservation):

- Presented to schools, adult clubs and organizations through online formats, with focus on single-use plastics with the increase of use with the pandemic, waste not being disposed of properly, and ultimately impact on wildlife and the Gulf of Mexico.
- TIRN received funding from NOAA Planet Stewart program for outreach for our microplastic citizen science project. Presentations to Ocean Guardian school- Yorkshire Academy.
- Coordinated three zoom presentations; Oct. 21 Kelly Drinnen NOAA FGBNMS; Oct. 28 Jace Tunnel, Director, Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve UT Austin Marine Science Institute; Nov 4 Dr. Maia McGuire, University of Florida, Florida Sea Grant and Founder of the Microplastic Project.

#### Charter Subcommittee:

- Developing, presented and had the SAC approve an amendment to its Charter with an additional section covering the “Duties and Responsibilities” of the SAC Voting Members.
- Scott Hickman has joined the Charter Team. Team members currently are Frank Burek (Co-chairperson), Brian Shmaefsky (Co-chairperson), Jake Emmert, and Scott Hickman.
- The team is currently developing alternative descriptions for post expansion FGBNMS.
- At a future SAC meeting, the Charter Team will present for the SAC’s review an amendment to our charter to update its “Office of National Marine Sanctuaries” and “Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary” descriptive sections.

#### Artificial Reef Working Group:

- Effective January 1<sup>st</sup> two changes to the staffing occurred: Dale Shively (TPWD, retired) became one of the team’s consultants, and Brooke Shipley (TPWD) joined the team. Team members are currently Frank Burek (Chairperson), Buddy Guindon, Paul Sammarco, John Blaha, Dale Shively, James Sinclair, Ruth Perry, and Brooke Shipley.
- James Sinclair (BSEE) gave an AR Team presentation to the SAC in November on platforms in and around the newly expanded FGBNMS.
- Compiled a list of 19 AR related subjects that they will be developing for discussion with the SAC in the future.
- At a future SAC meeting, the team has arranged a 30-minute presentation by Mike McDonough, the Louisiana Artificial Reef Program Coordinator. He will cover the progress and objectives of the State of Louisiana’s Artificial Reef Initiative.



- Dr. Paul Sammarco is preparing a 45-minute presentation for the November 17, 2021 on several of the items on our research list.

Underwater Webcam Working Group at HIA-389A:

Inactive working group since Ocean Power Technology (OPT) made a decision last year to abandon the plan to do sea trials of their hybrid buoy at HIA-389A and instead, test it elsewhere.