

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY  
**Sanctuary Advisory Council**  
**Draft Meeting Minutes**  
**November 30, 2011**

**Meeting Attendance Roster:**

Frank Burek	Recreational Diving	Present
Jesse Cancelmo	Recreational Diving	Present
Cher Walker	Diving Operators	Present
Frank Wasson	Diving Operators	Present
Clint Moore	Oil and Gas Industry	Present
John Hoffman	Oil and Gas Industry	Present
Irby Basco	Fishing – Recreational	Present
Matt Bunn	Fishing – Recreational	Present
Joe Hendrix	Fishing – Commercial	Present
Mike Jennings	Fishing – Commercial	Absent
Will Heyman	Research	Present
Larry McKinney	Research	Absent
Dale Loughmiller	Education	Present
Jacqui Stanley	Education	Present
Ellis Pickett	Conservation	Present
Page Williams	Conservation	Present
G.P. Schmahl	Sanctuary Superintendent (non-voting)	Present

Others in attendance:

Melissa Gaskill  
 Kristine Lynch  
 John Embesi  
 Kelly Drinnen  
 Emma Hickerson

Michelle Johnston  
 Marissa Nuttall  
 Bill Kiene  
 Shelley DuPuy  
 Jennifer Morgan

Herb Leedy

A full council meeting of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS) Advisory Council was held on Wednesday, November 30, at 9:00 AM, using a webinar format. Only sanctuary staff were present at the FGBNMS Headquarters offices in Galveston, Texas. Council chair, Larry McKinney was not present. Council vice-chair, Frank Burek, presided over the meeting with technical assistance provided by Kelly Drinnen.

The meeting began at 9:05 AM with Kelly providing tips on how to use the webinar features. G.P. Schmahl, Sanctuary Superintendent, welcomed the meeting attendees and thanked everyone for participating in this webinar experiment. He added that it is a format that will work well for certain types of meeting, particularly meetings where the main purpose is to pass on information. He explained that today's meeting has a light agenda and that meeting attendance was expected to be light.

Jacqui Stanley moved to adopt the meeting agenda. Clint Moore seconded the motion and the agenda was adopted without changes. Jacqui Stanley and Clint Moore asked for minor editorial changes to be made to the minutes of the September 2011 meeting. After such changes were noted by Jen Morgan, Clint moved to adopt the minutes of the September 2011 meeting as modified. Jesse Cancelmo seconded the motion and the minutes were approved as modified.

G.P. Schmahl gave a state of the sanctuary report, providing updates on staff activities since the previous council meeting. G.P. addressed the following topics during his presentation:

- Draft to Final Management Plan (DMP). The DMP was released in October 2010. The final plan is in the last stages of clearance. Following its release, staff will quickly move to the next step of conducting the activities in the plan. We will proceed with the process of sanctuary expansion, with the need to prepare an environmental impact statement and conduct a full public rule-making process. G.P. noted that many people commented negatively on the plan due to an assumption that new sanctuary areas would have limiting fishing regulations. However, the DMP did state that there could be site-specific regulations. G.P. will rely on the council to be the primary method for getting input from the public. G.P. reviewed the rules (regulatory changes) that will be published with the final plan and explained that sanctuary and headquarters staff closely examined the comments on the dive flag rule and the ray and whale shark rule. In response to council member questions, G.P. explained the intent of the regulatory language regarding interactions with rays and whale sharks. He stated that the intent is not to make illegal the situations that many divers encounter. The preamble of the regulations tries to explain the intent of the rules. The wording of the rule is final at this point. G.P. also reviewed the revisions to the discharge regulations. Changes were made to make FGBNMS regulations consistent with those of other sanctuaries. Concern was expressed by the oil and gas industry, so our language adds and exemption for discharges consistent with the NPDES general permit.

- NEEMO. G.P. and Emma Hickerson had to opportunity to be involved in this project as deep worker pilots. NASA is trying to develop possibilities for exploring near-Earth asteroids. NOAA is interested in the science side of the project, which allows for assessing reef ecology and health and investigating chemical gradients. They are also working on real-time tracking of deep workers. NASA uses xGDS...something that we could eventually use for sanctuary ROV missions
- Potentially Sensitive Biological Features (PSBFs). PSBFs are outside of No Activity Zones but within core biological area of 12 banks of interest. We are working to characterize the biological communities associated with these areas. James Sinclair stated that the project budget is just under 1 million dollars for 3 years of work. G.P. reviewed site selection and transect methods.
- October 5, 2011 release of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force preliminary Gulf of Mexico regional ecosystem restoration strategy. It includes offshore areas including FGBNMS and other areas of interest. The final report is to be released in December 2011.
- FGBNMS partnership with Harte Research Institute and TAMU-CC on a grant proposal. NOAA awarded money to TAMU-CC in partnership with Florida A&M University.
- NOAA's iGulf website. A new information and news website is now available.
- State of the Gulf of Mexico Summit. This conference will be held in Houston December 4-8. Some council members will attend as well as FGBNMS staff.
- Designation of Gray's Reef NMS Research only area. The designated area within the sanctuary is set aside as no activity allowed except as permitted for research purposes only. Clint Moore expressed concern about a push for very restrictive areas and a possible conflict with our multiple-use mission. G.P. explained that this has been done in several sanctuaries. Some information that we need to know to effectively manage sanctuaries can only be learned without the influence of other activities going on in the area. Gray's Reef and Stellwagen Bank are both doing this with the thought that research areas are something that is appropriate and within the range of something acceptable. This topic generated further discussion of possible restrictions and research areas within FGBNMS and the public process necessary establish such an area. G.P. also gave the highlights of the Fagatele Bay DMP published in October 2011 and the Olympic Coast FMP also published in October.
- R/V Manta Field Operations. In 2011 there were 25 missions and 103 days at sea. Fourteen of those missions were ours; others were with partners. G.P. highlighted the following cruises and research projects: Steve DiMarco's studies

of hypoxia off the TX and LA coasts; baseline fish and benthic surveys with NCCOS; site refurbishment as part of the long-term monitoring effort at East FGB; installation of anchors at Stetson Bank by the Spree; Stetson debris removal; concern over algal mats at Stetson; Soldiers to Science event celebrating 100 years of Ft. Crockett; and FGBNMS 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012.

Jacqui Stanley presented an update on the efforts of the Youth Working Group Subcommittee. Cher Walker and Jacqui have had conversations regarding recruiting candidates for the working group. They decided to align with a group that already has interest and involvement by students. They were not overly successful with their National Ocean Sciences Bowl contacts, but things look promising with Moody Gardens. The Moody Gardens education curator has a group of very interested and dedicated students. Jacqui and Cher are working on a Starbucks grant to support the activities of the working group. Frank Wasson added the True Dive Team organized by Dave Palamdro in Florida is a good example of student involvement. Dave recently re-located to Houston and is interested in getting students more active in marine science.

Frank Burek provided an update on the work of the artificial reef working group. Frank stated that the objectives of the working group are to examine artificial reef options from the perspective of the sanctuary and the SAC, make a decision flow chart, and create a digital library. Potential and current group members were listed as: Burek, Embesi, Hickerson, Hoffman, Daniel Leedy, Rebecca Nadel, Paul Sammarco, James Sinclair, and a possible W&T staff. Frank reviewed the methodology for the working group and the current contents of the digital library. Page Williams pointed out that Mary Wicksten is working on a report with Dick Zingula on photos of life on platforms. Clint Moore provided the status of the HIA389A platform. The lease expired this summer and the platform was on 1-year decommissioning schedule. Production has ceased, but W&T has an additional well about 6 miles away and the product is being processed on that platform. The platform will not disappear while it is being used as support for the subsea well. Several platforms that would be in the expansion areas are on similar decommissioning schedule.

A public comment period was opened at 11:25 AM. Kris Lynch from Shell thanked everyone for their information and the opportunity to join the webinar. G.P. Schmahl introduced Melissa Gaskill, noting that she has just published an article on FGBNMS in Texas Coop Power magazine and that she participated in DUOY this past summer. Melissa thanked G.P. for bringing attention to her article.

James Sinclair addressed the division of BOEMRE and the associated internal agency changes and processes. Council members engaged in further discussion of issues related to platform decommissioning and Save the Blue.

Page Williams announced that the Houston Underwater Club has folded. She asked for information on lionfish, tiger shrimp, and any relationships between algal cover, overfishing, and menhaden. G.P. and Emma discussed extraction of lionfish, but indicated that they do not have additional information on tiger shrimp.

---

Emma described the single use bag initiative in Galveston. Michelle Johnston and Emma are involved on a working group with city council and have also been working with the chamber of commerce. The objective is to keep the island clean. FGBNMS has officially become a sponsor. The effort was organized by Surfrider. The model is to charge a fee for single use bags, with funds going to businesses to cover costs and to the city to help with clean-up.

Frank Wasson moved to adjourn. Jesse Cancelmo seconded the motion. The webinar meeting was adjourned at 12:05 PM