

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY
Sanctuary Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2012

Meeting Attendance Roster:

Jimmie Mack	Recreational Diving	Present
Jesse Cancelmo	Recreational Diving	Present
Cher Walker	Diving Operators	Absent
Frank Wasson	Diving Operators	Absent
James Wiseman	Oil and Gas Industry	Absent
John Hoffman	Oil and Gas Industry	Absent
Irby Basco	Fishing - Recreational	Absent
Keith Love	Fishing - Recreational	Present
Patrick Riley	Fishing - Commercial	Absent
Mike Jennings	Fishing - Commercial	Absent
Will Heyman	Research	Present
Larry McKinney	Research	Present
Dale Loughmiller	Education	Absent
Jacqui Stanley	Education	Present
Ellis Pickett	Conservation	Present
Page Williams	Conservation	Present
James Sinclair	BOEMRE (non-voting)	Present
Joseph Prado	U.S. Coast Guard (non-voting)	Present
Rusty Swafford	NOAA Fisheries (non-voting)	Present
Charles Tyer	NOAA OLE (non-voting)	Present
Ben Scaggs	EPA (non-voting)	Absent
G.P. Schmahl	Sanctuary Superintendent (non-voting)	Present

Others in attendance:

Marsh Armitage
 Clint Moore
 Jen Morgan
 Bill Kiene
 Kelly Drinnen
 John Embesi
 Marissa Nuttall
 Shelley DuPuy
 Ryan Eckert
 Michelle Johnston
 Emma Hickerson

Administrative Business

A regular meeting of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS) Advisory Council was held on Wednesday, November 14, 2012, at 9:00 AM, at the NOAA Galveston Lab. Council Chair, Larry McKinney, was present. The meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM. Jen Morgan, Council Coordinator, welcomed the council and the public, gave a brief “safety moment”, and then introduced the staff and guests. She announced that Ben Scaggs, Director of the U.S. EPA Gulf of Mexico Program at Stennis Space Center, was appointed as the EPA seat holder on the council

Larry asked for any changes to the agenda. Hearing none, Jacqui Stanley moved for approval of the meeting agenda. The motion passed. Approval of meeting minutes was delayed until more members were present to allow a quorum.

Sanctuary Update

G.P. Schmahl, Sanctuary Superintendent, presented an update on sanctuary activities since September 2012. G.P. began with recognition of the 20th anniversary of Flower Garden Banks NMS, giving a timeline overview of the highlights and major accomplishments. The 40th anniversary of the sanctuary program was also recognized. G.P. described the research cruises that have occurred since May 2012. Those cruises included: long term monitoring, West Flower Garden Bank long term monitoring site refurbishment, mooring buoy installation, CRCP/NCCOS/UNCW/FGBNMS ROV cruise, two coral spawning cruises, USS Hatteras support, PSBF II and III cruise with ROV, CRCP/NCCOS/FGBNMS tech diving cruise (3-year project end cruise for baseline data on fish populations), and water quality/ciguatera and mercury sampling. Similarly, he reviewed the research activities of the sanctuary including: long term monitoring report draft, lionfish tracking, FDA collaboration to study ciguatera, providing fish tissue samples, collaborations with GotMercury.org to study mercury in fish, new publication DeBose, Nuttall, Hickerson, Schmahl (2012) *A high latitude coral community with an uncertain future: Stetson Bank, northwestern Gulf of Mexico*. Coral Reefs.

G.P. also commented on the health of East and West Bank as determined by long term monitoring. Both banks are still in very good shape with high coral cover. Coral cores are taken every couple of years to examine growth rates. There are signs of increases in coral cover. G.P. and Michelle Johnston briefly discussed the status of lionfish around the sanctuary. Close to 300 have been seen in the vicinity of the sanctuary and 192 in the sanctuary; 80 of that 192 were removed. Gut content analyses have shown juvenile snapper and grouper even in small lionfish. Council members discussed various approaches to lionfish control.

G.P. congratulated Shelley DuPuy, Michelle Johnston, and Jacqui Stanley for their involvement with the NABS-YES summit (National Association of Black Scuba Divers-Youth Education Summit). Due to the successes, the summit will return to Galveston next year. Shelley and Michelle received NABS summit 2012 awards. Additionally, Jimmi Mack was recently inducted into the NABS Hall of Fame.

G.P. noted that Bill Kiene will attend a workshop in Miami to expand telepresence throughout the Caribbean. Bob Ballard will be involved in this international effort.

G.P. concluded the sanctuary update with a very brief history of NOAA and a description of the Treasures of NOAA's Ark exhibit at the Texas Seaport Museum.

Having a quorum present, Larry McKinney called to approve the minutes of the September meeting. Page moved to accept the minutes as written. The motion passed.

Youth Working Group Update

Jacqui Stanley presented a Youth Working Group report. To further recruitment, Jacqui visited Ball High School with Emma Hickerson to talk about the council, the sanctuary, and a youth working group. The first meeting of the working group was held on November 7th. Fifteen applications were received and 7 students attended the meeting. The students were described as bright, interested, and eager to participate. The students hope to learn more about boundary expansion. The next meeting is scheduled for December 10th.

Jacqui noted her other recent SAC education related activities including a trip to Alaska for an educators meeting, a conference in San Antonio, and a mural activity at Oppe Elementary.

Artificial Reef Working Group Update

Jesse Cancelmo provided an Artificial Reef Working Group Report. He gave a four part presentation which included: the online survey and results, the status of other inputs/analyses to the study, the work remaining and the target completion date, and a special recommendation for HI-A-389-A. The survey was conducted from Sept. 5 through Oct. 1st. Nine questions were answered by 432 participants. Jesse found that 92% of the people taking the survey prefer to keep HI-A-389-A in the sanctuary. Also, the most preferred option was having a platform out of the water and about 40 feet above the surface of the water. Some have concerns about the validity of the survey. Some argue that the survey was not widely distributed and that those taking the survey were not fully informed on the issues and lacked information to make sound choices. Others argue that the survey is quite valid, as those completing the survey were sanctuary users. Jesse feels that the survey has merit even though it is opinion based. He plans to post survey results on the FGBNMS website. These points were discussed thoroughly by council members.

Jesse began the final part of his presentation with the definition of a reef given by Quenton Dokken. Through personal communication, Jesse learned that Quenton believes that HI-A-389-A should be considered a reef. The status of HI-A-389-A was discussed at the Oct. 11th AR working group meeting. The W&T permit was submitted for removal in July 2012. W&T was in the process of plugging wells at that time. W&T made a request to BSEE for removal in July 2013. W&T continues to be in the data gathering phase for considering options other than full removal. Nothing will commence before summer 2013.

The formal recommendation for HI-A-389-A put forth by the working group is endorsed by 11 of

14 working group members. Three members abstained on the vote. The need to make a special recommendation for this platform now is due to the owner's time constraints and desire to be released of all liability by summer 2013. The recommendation aims to allow maximum retention of marine life, yet achieve something that is "doable" now.

The following recommendation was presented by the working group:

Therefore, the FGBNMS Advisory Council Artificial Reef working group recommends that the HI-A-389-A platform structure remain in FGBNMS but be mechanically cut below the surface at a nominal depth of 60 ft which is the same depth as the natural reefs nearby. This is called a partial removal. Additionally, we recommend that a) the 10 vertical well conductors be retained to maximize the marine environment, and b) FGBNMS management and TPWD AR program agree on a monitoring program that makes sense for benefitting the sanctuary without requiring the donating operator to pay more than called for by the typical rigs to reef program rules. These recommendations apply only to HI-A-389-A and in no way indicate the final recommendations of the AR study. Because of W&T's timing to complete decommissioning, it's critical the FGBNMS management communicate the preferred disposition to W&T before the end of the year.

Irby Basco moved to accept the presentation and to move on to discussion. Council members discussed various aspects of this recommendation, including liability, costs, buoy maintenance, structural integrity, and monitoring. Larry called for a vote on the recommendation. The motion to accept the recommendation passed with 7 in favor and 2 opposed.

SAC Summit Agenda Review

Larry McKinney reviewed the SAC Summit agenda and requested issues and discussion topics for the meeting in Santa Cruz. Topics suggested included: using MPAs as fisheries management tools, the role of sanctuaries in fisheries management, public education and reaching young audiences, and iphone/android apps.

Public Comment

Page Williams made brief remarks during the public comment period. Page distributed the science of marine reserves publication/magazine. She noted that the U.S. is behind in this area, yet research has been done. Nobody really knows what's in the Gulf and the fisheries council is making decision based on little information. She is in favor of a certain percent of no take. Again, Page is supporting a beverage container bill. She hopes that individuals will take a position on this. The Sierra Club clean up results in tons of bottles to recycle. She asked that SAC members support this privately. Page suggested that redemption centers would make the bottle return process easier.

Council Charter Subcommittee Update

G.P. introduced the idea of council seat reorganization and noted that some seats are coming

up for renewal. GP reviewed the history of the SAC and the transition from having alternates to having all primary members, along with the constraint on the size of the SAC. He added that diving operations and commercial fishing have a small universe of people from which to draw applicants. He suggested that possibly these type of seats do not need multiple representatives. The council members engaged in discussion about seat representation, terms, the MMS/BOEM/BSEE seat, additions of stakeholder groups (marine operations instead of diver operations), and the need to address these issues. Larry stated that the charter subcommittee would reconvene to begin work on council reorganization and charter review.

Discussion: Role of the Sanctuary Advisory Council

Will Heyman and Jen Morgan lead a discussion on the role of the sanctuary advisory council. They reviewed the working history of the council, stating that with its beginnings much work was on the table for the SAC as they were heavily involved in the management plan review process. They noted that some feel as if the council is now just “floundering around” with fewer issues to address. The council discussed travel for meetings, the process of establishing agenda items, meeting presentations, agency reports at meetings, regulatory issue updates, annual work plans. Suggestions for future presentation topics included marine debris and sargassum. The council’s consensus was that more work should be put into meeting structure to facilitate accomplishing council goals.