

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Sanctuary Advisory Council Approved Meeting Minutes November 16, 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	Present
Clint Moore	Oil and Gas Industry	Present
Scott Hickman	Fishing - Recreational	Absent
John Blaha	Fishing - Recreational	Present
Shane Cantrell	Fishing - Commercial	Present
Buddy Guindon	Fishing - Commercial	Present
Adrienne Simoes Correa	Research	Absent
Larry McKinney	Research	Absent
Brian Shmaefsky	Education	Present
Jacqui Stanley	Education	Present
Ellis Pickett	Conservation	Absent
Jake Emmert	Conservation	Absent
Doug Peter (for James Sinclair)	BSEE (non-voting)	Present
Mark Belter	BOEM (non-voting)	via webinar
Leo Danaher	U.S. Coast Guard (non-voting)	Present
Rusty Swafford	NOAA Fisheries (non-voting)	Present
Charles Tyer	NOAA OLE (non-voting)	Absent
Barbara Keeler	EPA (non-voting)	via webinar

G.P. Schmahl	Sanctuary Superintendent (non- voting)	Present
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Total voting member attendance: 12 of 16

Others in Attendance:

Leslie Clift, Kelly Drinnen, Michelle Johnston, Shelley Du Puy, Marissa Nuttall, Raven Walker, Dustin Picard, Emma Hickerson, Bill Kiene, Frank Burek, K.C. Marks, Milo Marks, Colby Clift, Janese Maricelli, Bill Jones, Keith Love, and Fred Ruiz (Texas Parks & Wildlife Department).

9:15 Meeting called to order by Clint Moore.

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

9:19 Administrative Business – Clint Moore

Adoption of Agenda – motion from Shane Cantrell, second from Buddy Guindon, no discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Approval of April Minutes – motion from James Wiseman, second from John Blaha, no discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Council members set SAC meeting dates for 2017: Wednesday, February 22; Wednesday, May 17; Wednesday, September 20; Wednesday, November 15

BEWG (Boundary Expansion Working Group) potential dates are Feb 2 or 9, and then another April 27 or May 4.

9:30 Sanctuary Updates – G.P. Schmahl

Dr. Josh Voss (Florida Atlantic University) lab returned to FGBNMS (Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary) for CIOERT technical diving cruise at the end of September. G.P. will email the SAC (Sanctuary Advisory Council) the link to the website. The project focused on mesophotic coral ecosystems.

G.P. shared timeline of FGBNMS expansion process. In November 2016, BOEM will be providing additional information for DEIS (Draft Environmental Impact Statement) analysis. By December 2016, GMFMC will be providing input on fishing regulations. FGBNMS will continue to consult with EPA, NMFS, BOEM, and BSEE. During Summer/Fall 2017, NOAA will develop Proposed Rule and FEIS (Final Environmental Impact

Statement). Publication of FEIS and Proposed Rule is projected for September 2017. Publication of Final Rule is estimated in Spring 2018. Clint asked if additional regulatory language will be included in the FEIS. G.P. responded that regulatory language in the FEIS is likely.

John Armor was named Director for Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. Kris Sarri was named CEO for National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

NOAA's Deep Sea Coral Research & Technology Program recently released their 2016 Report to Congress. Both G.P. and Emma are on the Regional Science Team and they recently traveled to Charleston, SC, for a meeting in late September. FGBNMS should soon be receiving significant funding to continue exploration and characterization of the deep sea coral areas in the Gulf of Mexico, many included in the various alternatives in the DEIS. Clint asked which area and depth would be the focus for this study. G.P. responded said enough money for 2 cruises, 5 days each, has been allocated and the depth would be down to 300m (shelf edge reefs). Other funding would assist with a larger NOAA ship cruise, with the ability to survey deeper depths (down to 1,000m (continental slopes and deeper)).

Three recent publications were published in the Gulf of Mexico Science journal, all related to FGBNMS. Nuttall et al. (Validation of Image-Based Species Identifications of Black Corals), Opresko et al. (Black Corals of the FGBNMS), and Sammarco et al. (Patterns of Mesophotic Benthic Community Structure on Banks Off vs Inside the Continental Shelf Edge, Gulf of Mexico).

9:45 Sanctuary Expansion Review Process Update – Leslie Clift/G.P. Schmahl

Leslie presented the update on the work completed since the last SAC meeting regarding the processing and analysis of DEIS public comments. An electronic version of a ~1,600-page pdf document, containing all public comments submitted through regulations.gov (name, date, and comment) is now available upon request. The document does not include duplicate entries. An electronic PDF of all the letters (37 total: (10 industry, 8 government, 13 NGO (non-governmental organization) and 6 individuals)) that were attached to the public comment submissions was also created and is available upon request.

Internally, a document was created that summarized the letters, and then a spreadsheet was created with public comments and submitted letters. Themes were then assigned. Identified and categorized: concerns, concerns themes, requests, request themes, recommendations, and recommendation themes.

We are beginning on the next steps, but we can present the different themes:

- Support (general, resource based, management based, ecosystem based or connectivity, culture, user); Impact concerns (climate change, fishing, vessel traffic, invasive species, industrial/sewage/agriculture/military wastes...);
- Areas of concern (Pinnacles, Ewing bank, Madison and Swanson, water between

banks, fish spawning aggregations, DWH (Deepwater Horizon) impacted sites, (mesophotic and deep water corals)...);

- Species of concern;
- Opposition (conditional support, need not demonstrated, purpose and need, general, use-based);
- Access requests (spearfishing, lionfish spearfishing, military use, anchoring, pelagic longline exemption);
- Concerns (existing protections adequate, designation process, restricts public use/access, separate banks by geography, budget, socioeconomic, selection of alt 3 vs alt 2, doesn't protect against oil spill, data analyses, socioeconomic evaluation, boundary type, national significance designation, management, agency conflict); and
- Requests (mooring buoys, no-fishing zones, additional regulation, specific boundary type, increasing buffer zone, resilient habitat plan, review methane hydrate extraction, hydraulic fracturing analysis, analyze socioeconomics, recreational fishing activities, data sharing, reissue DEIS, specific data, engage SAC, maintain O&G regulations, agency coordination, agency provided information, additional connectivity, engage stakeholders, existing regulatory regime, management artificial reefs, fishing endorsement program, additional public meeting, evaluate buffer zone, prohibit fracking, evaluate environmental concerns with direction drilling, additional banks to alt 3, create marine reserves).

Shane Cantrell recommended that SCUBA spearfishing and breath hold spearfishing and spearfishing for lionfish may need to be considered separately from each other.

Jesse asked about how concerns/recommendations would be assessed with regards to their "weight" (or how many people expressed that same concern). Rusty clarified the term "weighting" and provided additional explanation: Under the NEPA process, when a document receives public comments, the agency evaluates those comments based on the degree to which the issues raised will be impacted by the proposed action. The number of comments received on an issue is not the primary consideration in this evaluation. Changes can be made between the DEIS and FEIS based on the public comment and other factors. For example, if a topic wasn't adequately addressed in the DEIS, additional analyses are conducted and the information would be included in the final NEPA document (FEIS). Concerns are identified and if relevant, are responded to in a way that addresses the concern. The agency must respond to public comments, but in some cases, the response can simply be "noted."

Shane asked about artificial reefs and if they fall under the purpose and intent of need for the expansion. Leslie responded that public comments were submitted, suggesting the Sanctuary include the management of the decommissioning of Oil & Gas platforms to transition into an artificial reef, as well as comments submitted regarding their placement within or near sanctuaries. Shane added that there is plenty of evidence suggesting that bringing artificial reefs to coral reefs is a disaster, because most artificial reefs have invasive corals that we wouldn't want introduced to the natural reef.

G.P. discussed the recommendations from GMFMC (Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council), with the following main components:

1. Maintain current fishing regulations in existing HAPCs with regulations;
2. Continue to allow historical fishing practices in areas that are outside designated “no anchor/no bottom tending gear zones”. ;
3. Establish certificate program or endorsement program that would allow for education of fishermen within FGBNMS on environmental importance of the areas;
4. Provide adequate number of mooring buoys on expanded areas.

Essentially, GMFMC recommends existing regulations of FGBNMS (i.e. no anchoring and no fishing except by hook and line) should only be applied to the NAZ (no activity zone) areas of the proposed expansion. GMFMC recommends to use existing NAZ boundaries previously determined by BOEM for this purpose. Anchoring and other fishing gear should be allowed outside the NAZ. Historic fishing practices in the proposed expansion areas could continue as long as it was not in the NAZ / “no bottom tending gear zone” (bottom tending gear is primarily bottom long line gear). GMFMC also suggested requiring specific anchors with weak links that could be used outside the “no bottom tending gear zones”. It was noted that BOEM uses a depth contour (85m) to define the NAZ, which is easier to implement for Oil & Gas. However, depth contour lines are more difficult to enforce and to determine whether vessels or anchors are inside the boundary. GMFMC also provided VMS (vessel monitoring system) data showing a range of fishing effort in the proposed expansion areas.

Clint Moore commented the size of these zones is what determines the impacts to fishing and Oil & Gas. He suggested creating smaller zones than what are proposed in the DEIS that are limited to no bottom tending gear, based upon the NAZ, which would encompass depths down to 300 feet, which already includes many mesophotic corals. He added that areas below 300’ contain additional mesophotic corals, but the bathymetry flattens out away from the main bank topographic edges causing the potential inclusion of too much seafloor area for these common corals.

James Sinclair asked if GMFMC’s letter and their requests, such as anchoring, are considered a post-public comment letter. G.P. responded the GMFMC did submit a letter during the public comment period, but this recommendation was submitted as part of a separate consultation process. The National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA), Section 304(a)(5), requires that a Sanctuary consult with the appropriate regional fishery management council regarding fishing regulations in proposed expansion areas. The Sanctuary is required to consider their recommendations, but does not necessarily have to implement them.

Jesse Cancelmo asked if FGBNMS has reached a decision on what would be allowed (e.g., bottom gear) outside the NAZ, but still inside the Sanctuary. G.P. answered that this decision has not yet been made, but the Sanctuary is open to ideas and will fully explore mechanisms of how this could be implemented.

G.P. shared a letter of concern regarding the sanctuary expansion that was signed by 20 members of Congress, as well as a subsequent letter signed by both Louisiana senators. The letters expressed the followings concern about the proposed sanctuary expansion: 1) disregard of the SAC recommendation by selecting Alternative 3; 2) a provision within the National Marine Sanctuary (NMS) Act whereby new sanctuaries cannot be designated if it would have a negative impact on the NMS program as a whole; 3) the proposed expansion will likely result in economic impacts; and 4) proposed areas are not “unique” or nationally significant. FGBNMS has responded to this letter. G.P. shared some of the information in the response, such as the reasons for NOAA’s selection of the preferred alternative. The 2007 SAC recommendation was not disregarded, but it is included in the DEIS as a separate alternative (Alternative 2). The NEPA process involves evaluating a range of alternatives. The SAC recommendation in 2007 was part of a process to review and revise the FGBNMS management plan. The SAC considered a range of alternatives that were geo-spatially further than the proposed expansion now (e.g., Florida Middle Grounds). Currently, FGBNMS is going through the NEPA process for sanctuary expansion, with public comments and involvement. The SAC has not yet made a recommendation on this proposal. FGBNMS has not disregarded it because we haven’t received it yet. FGBNMS would like a formal SAC recommendation in Spring 2017, but will wait longer, if needed. The proposed sanctuary expansion is not a new sanctuary, so it is not subject to the provision of the NMSA regarding potential negative impact on the Sanctuary program. In addition, FGBNMS believes a level of management can be provided for the implementation of Alternative 3 with existing monetary resources. FGBNMS disagrees on the claim of no national significance because the Sanctuary has enough information/data to demonstrate that these areas are nationally significant. Additionally, GMFMC designated them as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC). Decades ago, these areas were also identified as NAZ related to Oil & Gas. These reasons all demonstrate these areas are highly significant. Regarding potential economic impact, BOEM has said that additional analysis is warranted, which FGBNMS will be receiving soon from BOEM. FGBNMS has not proposed any restrictions on pipeline corridors or seismic surveys. NOAA believes that the economic impact on the oil and gas industry would be less than significant. FGBNMS also does not believe the impact to the fishing industry is significant, as stated in the DEIS.

Frank Burek (former SAC member) asked if the Congressional letter specified an alternative (e.g., Alternative 1 or 2). G.P. answered it did not specify an alternative, but since it questioned the process, FGBNMS will have to address it.

Rusty Swafford added the US Army Corps of Engineers shows areas of national importance, and the species that are in those areas. Some of those species will be listed/included in the sanctuary expansion process and this information can be added to support the national significance.

11:00 Research Activities Update – Emma Hickerson/Michelle Johnston
Michelle Johnston – Lionfish update

Michelle shared information regarding the lionfish invasion in four national marine sanctuaries (Monitor, Florida Keys, Flower Garden Banks, and Gray's Reef) and an infographic of the biology, distribution, and control of this invasive fish species. Lionfish can now only be suppressed in their population. Eradication is not possible at this time. ONMS response to lionfish includes monitoring, control, research, and education and outreach. The ONMS Lionfish Response Plan can be viewed or downloaded at: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/conservation/lionfish15.html>

Michelle showed the FGBNMS Lionfish removal and research areas and reviewed the results for 2015 and 2016 of the Lionfish Invitational at FGBNMS.

2015 results - 317 removed; 181 WFGB, 123 EFGB, 13 Stetson; largest captured was 43.1cm (Texas record); smallest was 7.6cm; 70% removal rate.

2016 results – removed more lionfish from EFG. 70% removal rate. Largest 42 cm, smallest 3 cm. 394 removed: 185 WFGB, 191 EFGB, 18 Stetson.

How many native reef fish were saved with the removal of 300-400 lionfish removed in this year's Lionfish Invitational? One-two million native reef fish would have been eaten in one year by 300-400 lionfish. The removal of lionfish is a management strategy for the control of this invasive species. In 2 years with 2 four-day lionfish removal cruises, the model estimates 2-4 million total reef fish were saved.

In 2015, removed lionfish averaged 25-30 cm in length. In 2016, the removed and measured lionfish shifted to larger average sizes. Results also found that the experience level of lionfish derby participants is proportionally related to the percentage of their personal removal rates. Novice lionfish derby removal rates ranged from 36-50%. Experienced lionfish derby divers had 81-93% removal rates.

Johnson, J. et al 2016 (including Michelle Johnston as 2nd author). Regional genetic structure and genetic founder effects in the invasive lionfish: comparing the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean and North Atlantic. *Marine Biology* 163:216. The GoM is different than other regions (tend to only have *P. volitans*.)

Milo Marks, a student at Oppe Elementary School, shared his school project with the Council members on lionfish. His two questions for his project were: 1) Why are lionfish a problem?; and 2) How do we stop the problem?

Emma Hickerson – Mortality and bleaching events update

November Research Cruise: Three new mooring buoys were replaced at Stetson Bank. Research work accomplished include collecting plankton samples, deploying/retrieving an autonomous data glider (TAMU), installing an acoustic receiver at Stetson Bank and installing a “sound trap” at EFGB (one also previously installed at Stetson).

Mortality event at EFGB update: FGBNMS is working with Drs. Steve DiMarco (TAMU) and Frank Muller-Karger (USF) on an oceanographic characterization of the incident.

Biological samples are being analyzed by Drs. Adrienne Simoes-Correa (Rice), Sarah Davies (UNC-Chapel Hill), Lory Santiago (UH), and Jason Sylvan (TAMU). FGBNMS is also working with Dr. Joe Kuehl (Baylor University) to deploy current meters to characterize local currents. A “hotspot” of mortality resulted in 70% of corals affected in an area of the East FGB approximately 6 acres in size.

Speculation on likely combination of conditions that caused the mortality event include:

- Freshwater runoff, containing agricultural and industrial pollutants
- Persistent, elevated water temperature
- Low oxygen event – upwelling? Algal bloom?
- Localized decomposition of sponges causing possible sulfide conditions, leading to colonization by bacterial mats.
- Something completely different? For example, dissolution of the salt dome, creating a supersaline environment?

Coral Bleaching update: EFGB had 30 days over 30°C sea surface water temperature. WFGB had 18 days over 30°C (threshold for corals to bleach). Threshold for both banks is currently 50 days about 29.5°C before bleaching. With more bleaching events, the corals could become less resilient, and this threshold may change.

Percent coral bleached and paling from Repetitive Photostation colony counts:

- EFGB Shallow – 46%
- EFGB Deep – 20%
- WFGB Shallow – 24%
- WFGB Deep – 15%

Recovery does seem to be in process.

Emma shared the 360 degree photograph series work.

Clint inquired on the expected amount of recovery time for the bleached corals. Emma responded no new bleaching is expected, and recovery should take months (not years). Clint asked what the expectations are for the areas of dead coral from the mortality event. Emma responded that recruitment is expected, and these areas won't “recover” but rather may be colonized by newly recruited corals, algae, sponges, etc.

12:30 Lunch –

Jonathan Bird's Blue World video (Diving the Flower Garden Banks)

A 15-minute video was shown of Jonathan Bird's Blue World which was filmed during the summer at FGBNMS during the Women Divers Hall of Fame / Coral Spawning cruise.

Ice Land Exhibit at Moody Gardens - Kelly Drinnen

Moody Gardens Ice Land exhibit features FGBNMS, including the *R/V Manta*. Kelly shared pictures from the exhibit. Two million pounds of ice, 3 months of carving went into the exhibit. Open now until January 8, 2017.

1:00 Public Comment Period

Janese Maricelli (representing Surfrider Foundation, Galveston Chapter) and Joanie Steinhouse (Turtle Island Restoration Network):

In 2013, a small group began discussing single-use plastic bags. In 2014, the group began looking at the impacts of single-use plastic bags on the environment. A recent 30-day campaign was successful whereby people were challenged to not use single-use plastic bags for 30 days. A bag ban ordinance has been introduced to the City of Galveston Council and the Mayor of Galveston. The ordinance would be a phased process that would take a full year to implement. Monterey Bay NMS Advisory Council drafted a letter of support in their area on a plastic bag ban. Janese asked FGBNMS Advisory Council to consider drafting a similar letter of support to offer the City of Galveston Council and Mayor of Galveston tomorrow to the city workshop tomorrow (November 17, 2016). Natalie Hall will forward an email regarding this issue to all Council members so that Council members could take individual action (non-related to SAC), if desired. Clint said a vote to sign onto a letter could be considered at the next SAC meeting (early 2017), once public notice has been given regarding the SAC planning to take action on an agenda item.

1:15 Advisory Council Enforcement Discussion Panel – Leslie Clift

Leslie reviewed the request by the ONMS Advisory Council Enforcement Discussion Panel to all SACs to sign-on the letter regarding enforcement efforts in Sanctuaries, and reviewed some of the background information that led to the drafting of this letter. The Panel consisted of Council members from across the NMS program and was chaired by Dianne Black, Chair, Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council. The panel decided to write a system-wide letter, in lieu of one that was site or region-specific, in order to (1.) call attention to the state of enforcement themes shared by every site across the system; and, (2.) capitalize on the expediency of timing a letter with the change to a new administration in early 2017. Overall, the letter recognizes the importance of enforcement in sanctuaries and monuments and focuses on what each entity, from the incoming NOAA Administrator to advisory councils, can do to improve and augment enforcement across the National Marine Sanctuary System. The Panel requested each SAC to review, vote, and sign the letter as an agenda item before by March 2017. At that time, the Panel will also prepare a succinct cover memorandum, to accompany the SACs' letter, that will summarize the main "asks."

A brief SAC discussion followed, during which the Council chose to table a vote until the next SAC meeting on February 22, 2017.

1:30 SAC Team Building Trip, September 2016 - Jesse Cancelmo

Purpose:

- Teambuilding experience for SAC to dive the sanctuary reefs and exchange impressions and ideas for bolstering our mission for sustainment planning and resource protection.
- Improve effectiveness of SAC.
- Leverage “Friends of Sanctuary” participants to benefit FGBNMS mission.

The group went on the *M/V Fling* out of Freeport, TX, and conducted dives at WFGB, EFGB, Stetson, and HI-A389A. Thirty participants, including 7 FGBNMS Advisory Council members participated in this year’s trip. Five of the 8 voting member stakeholder groups on the SAC were represented on the trip. The team met beforehand for a pre-boarding dinner at a local restaurant for a meet-and-greet event. The group was able to see the condition of EFGB at the buoy where the mass mortality event had occurred the previous month in late July. The *M/V Fling* currently has no weekends available in September 2017. Jesse recommended waiting for another trip until September 2018. Those Council members interested in a September 2018 trip include Jacqui Stanley, James Wiseman, Clint Moore, Natalie Hall, and Jimmie Mack. Jesse noted that reservations for a September 2018 trip could be booked in September 2017.

1:50 Boundary Expansion Working Group (BEWG) – Clint Moore/Shane Cantrell

Clint Moore presented a summary powerpoint of the 2016-17 BEWG meetings and work to date. He also discussed the 2007 BEWG work performed, as well. From that previous SAC recommendation of boundary expansion, he identified 4 platforms that were in place at that time in history, specifically HI-A-389, HI-A-384, HI-A-371, and WC 656, that would be included. Since that time, he stated HI-A-371 had been removed, but if DEIS Alts 3, 4, or 5 were adopted, there would be quite a few additional platforms included. He added that upon seeing the DEIS reports, several oil & gas representatives had requested to him those additional platforms/facilities should be removed from any expansion.

BEWG was formed by the SAC at the April 2016 meeting and consists of Shane Cantrell (co-Chair), Clint Moore (co-Chair), Natalie Hall, Jesse Cancelmo, Scott Hickman, Buddy Guindon, Adrienne Simoes-Correa, Jacqui Stanley, Charles Tyer, and Randy Widaman. Its goal is to review and recommend FGBNMS boundary expansion outlines and regulations to the SAC.

During the first meeting in July 2016, the BEWG reviewed 2007 SAC & BEWG recommendation. They also reviewed 2012 Management Plan and the 2016 DEIS. During the second meeting in August 2016, the BEWG began discussing bank boundary outlining, VMS data availability/utility, commercial fishing endorsement program, DEIS economic analyses, and NOAA’s assessment matrix. During the third meeting in November, the BEWG reviewed and discussed the GMFMC letter and recommendations, reviewed several ROV transect videos, discussed boundary

adjustments, and discussed regulations for fisheries and Oil & Gas. For the upcoming meeting in early 2017, the BEWG plans to review the final boundary adjustment suggestions for fisheries and Oil & Gas, have more detailed discussions of regulations (e.g., fisheries, spearfishing, diving), and discuss and prepare for the assessment matrix process. Goals for the following (fifth meeting) include performing assessment matrix, finalizing regulatory discussions/recommendations, finalizing boundary outline recommendation, and preparing a working group report for the SAC.

Leo Danaher asked about accountability for recreational fishing vessels with regards to the proposed fishing endorsement program. Shane responded that recreational fishing vessels do not have VMS.

Scott advised the existence of two phone apps, GFCRegs and LDWF, both of which provide fishing regulations.

2:20 Visitation Permit Program – Natalie Hall

Only minor changes have been made since the last SAC meeting to the mandatory visitation permit application and the mandatory reporting form. G.P. reminded the SAC that the visitation permit program at FKNMS was initially met with resistance, but has been somewhat relieved due to the program's longevity and also that the program has run smoothly. G.P. shared that the next step would be to advertise the proposed mandatory visitation permit program, and specifically solicit feedback and input from the public. NOAA is convening a fishing summit in December 2016, with representatives from SACs across the NMS program. Scott Hickman will be attending and will be talking about the visitation permit program being worked on by the FGBNMS Advisory Council working group. Shane Cantrell asked for G.P.'s guidance on the best way to approach the next steps in this process, after he confers with NOAA HQ and gauge the level of potential controversy and/or conflict with the DEIS process. Rusty Swafford suggested elevating education/outreach efforts to raise the awareness, including the voluntary forms that are currently on the FGBNMS website, before a NOI is issued on a mandatory visitation permit program. Frank Burek suggested removing the word "mandatory" from the forms and replacing with "voluntary." Jacqui Stanley suggested an education/outreach effort towards publicizing the voluntary report form on the website. All Council members agreed with this education/outreach effort, and will report to SAC at next meeting on any feedback received on the proposed program. Shane suggested including bait shops to disseminate information.

3:00 Agency Reports

Leo Danaher (USCG) – Coast Guard Cutter *Resolute* out of Tampa is in the Gulf of Mexico, and is scheduled to be in FGBNMS for 4 days in December. USCG has been discussing the DEIS with regards to USCG. USCG will have new vessels with longer ranges soon. VMS tracking monitoring has been increased. One case off of Freeport in October involved a recreational vessel that tried to outrun a patrol boat, but most evidence of what looked like illegal fishing activity was thrown overboard.

Barbara Keeler (EPA) – no report

Rusty Swafford (NMFS) – no report

Mark Belter (BOEM) – reported BOEM's Geological & Geophysical EIS meeting is scheduled for tomorrow (November 17, 2016) in Houston from 4-7pm and is open to the public.

Doug Peter (for James Sinclair; BSEE) – no report

Charles Tyer (OLE) – absent

3:00 New Business

Shane Cantrell reported the TPWD vessel is outdated, and requests allocations of resources or assistance in getting resources so that TPWD can acquire a new vessel that would include patrols out to FGBNMS.

An anchor buoy installation cruise is scheduled for Spring 2017, to replace worn or broken anchor bolts. The mooring buoy system at FGBNMS includes 17 total (5 at Stetson, 7 at EFGB, and 5 at WFGB), with a total of 3 that have failed anchor points.

The update on HI-A389A is that the BSEE permit application is complete and is under review, with all issues of concern addressed. Before partial removal can occur, BSEE wants to be certain the ACOE permit has been finalized, in consultation with TPWD. The next step would be for FGBNMS to issue a Letter of No Objection to ACOE, which is being reviewed by NOAA attorneys. This would allow the issuance of ACOE permit, which in turn would allow the BSEE permit issuance. A Letter of Authorization would then be needed. Removal is not expected until at least Spring 2017.

Clint expressed concern over lionfish populations in the Gulf of Mexico, not just on the coral banks but also on the deeper areas. Emma mentioned a study to tag lionfish on the FGB and using telemetry, look at their spatial movements. Michelle added that since lionfish have invaded, fish populations have not changed (note: 2016 data have not been completely analyzed). However, Emma added that several people, including herself, anecdotally report that it seems fish populations have declined. Michelle shared the lionfish robotics project whereby an underwater ROV would use photo recognition to search and destroy lionfish that are too deep to be removed by scuba divers. G.P. added some positive outlooks including Stetson Bank that has only low numbers of lionfish.

Jacqui Stanley requested the climate change presentation be added to the next SAC meeting agenda. She also mentioned the new ONMS "Virtual Dives" website (sanctuaries.noaa.gov/vr/), which gives an immersive 360 view of national marine sanctuaries.

3:40 Meeting Adjourned - Motion by James Wiseman, second by Jacqui Stanley. All in favor. Approved.

Next SAC Meeting scheduled for February 22, 2017.