

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Sanctuary Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, February 8, 2006

NOAA Fisheries Laboratory, Bldg. 216 – Ballroom
4700 Avenue U, Galveston, TX

Distributed Materials:

Meeting Agenda

November 9 SAC Meeting Minutes

Advisory Council member roster with contact information

Excerpt from SAC Charter on officer elections

Excerpt from “Robert’s Rules of Order in Brief” on elections

Memo, Presentation, and Draft Flowchart regarding fishing regulations for NMS

PowerPoint Presentation – G.P. Schmahl – Review of 1991 MP

Excerpt from FGBNMS Final 1991 EIS/MP

Handout – NMS MP, Performance Eval., and Regulation Revision Process

Stellwagen Bank Condition Report

FGBNMS Goals & Objectives Draft 2/1/06

MPR Process Timeline

PowerPoint Presentation – Emma Hickerson – Research Summary & Update

Offshore Energy Center Educational Programs Guide

Advisory Council Members Present:

Dick Zingula, Recreational Diving

Frank Burek, Recreational Diving (Alternate)

Art Melvin, Diving Operations (Alternate)

Clint Moore, Oil & Gas Production

Tim Gibson, Oil & Gas Production (Alternate)

Irby Basco, Recreational Fishing

John Stout, Recreational Fishing (Alternate)

Ian MacDonald, Research

John Embesi, Research (Alternate)

Haidee Williams, Education

Kristina Hardwick, Education (Alternate)

Page Williams, Conservation

Dana Larson, Conservation (Alternate)

James Sinclair, Minerals Management Service

Rusty Swafford, NOAA Fisheries

Beth Keister, U.S. Coast Guard

Advisory Council Members Absent:

Frank Wasson, Diving Operations

*Note: The following seat is vacant: Commercial Fishing (Alternate)

FGBNMS Staff Members Present:

G.P. Schmahl, Sanctuary Manager
Irene Arthur, Administrative Specialist
Shelley Du Puy, Education & Outreach Coordinator
Kelly Drinnen, Education Specialist

NMSP Headquarters Staff Present:

Vicki Wedell, Policy Analyst

Public Attendees and others:

Todd Viola, Immersion Presents
Doug Peter, Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept., Artificial Reefs
Tyler Ahnemann, Houston Zoo, Mgr. of Academic Programs
Heidi Lovett, MRAG Americas
Jacqui Stanley, Education/Ocean Works

Welcome and Introductions

Flower Garden Banks NMS Manager, GP Schmahl, called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM and welcomed the meeting participants.

A lot of things have gone on since our last meeting. We will be starting with additional introductions for those SAC seats that have been filled and those who were absent. We also have introductions for FGBNMS staff, region and headquarters staff. Jennifer Morgan has had a baby and they are doing great. She will be returning very soon. Please excuse any lack of organization. G.P. introduced Emily Platzer, Leo Ambrosi – media, Kyle Byers – GIS database management, Billy Causey - Regional Superintendent and Dan Basta - Director

New SAC members introduced themselves.

Joe Hendricks (commercial fishing seat) resides in Houston and is currently the commercial representative on GMFMC. He has been involved with seafood trawlers and shrimp marking. He has done studies on the FGB over a 4-year period and therefore has an interest in the sanctuary.

Frank Burek (alternate, recreational diving) has been diving since 1980. He has 400 dives at FGB. He and his wife have 10 years professional nature photography experience. He has published a CD on marine life from his underwater photography. His wife was in microbiology. He has 28 years with Texaco. For the last 27 years he has been involved with diving clubs in Texas. His leadership positions include President of TX Gulf Coast Diving Council and board memberships. G.P. added that he and his wife were our volunteers of the year.

Heidi Williams (Education) has been in public education for 28 years – as a classroom teacher and in research and development. She has been diving for

over 32 years. She has been active with FGB as a naturalist, teacher at sea, and with the sustainable seas project. Education is what she knows.

Dana Larson (alternate, conservation) stated that he was honored to be here. He has been involved with the FGB since its beginning. When he was with an oil company, he was successful in delaying the designation of the FGB because he has an aversion to the "Chicken-Little" concept. The FGB are special and have unique resources. He stated that it's important to not irritate other members. The resources are more important than the users. Without habitat, you have nothing. We need to take care of the resources. Dana stated that his is not in favor of enhancement. Dana stated that when he first got involved with Exxon, there were five species of fish over fished. Now there are many more. We need to protect the fish too.

Beth Keister (USCG) is with the 8th District in New Orleans. She has been busy. Beth has been involved with fisheries enforcement throughout her career. She started with the 8th district in the 1980s. She has also taught at the Coast Guard Academy. The Coast Guard manages fisheries enforcement and is charged with protecting and enforcing. She is the Admiral's representative on the GMFMC.

James Sinclair (MMS) obtained a Marine Biology degree at TAMU and was associated with the marine biomedical institute. He is a MBS Biologist at MMS. He is involved in protecting the marine environment: hard bottom habitat, banks and pinnacles, live bottoms. He stated that it is a pleasure to be here to help revise the management plan.

Rusty Swafford (NOAA Fisheries) was on assignment to FEMA during the last SAC meeting. He is the Team Leader for habitat conservation for all of TX. He previously spent some time with EPA. His office is the primary reviewer for all MMS activities at the FGB.

A quick introduction of the rest of the SAC representatives was given.

G.P. gave a brief overview of the meeting agenda and reminded the group that there would be an Ocean Star tour at pier 19 after the meeting.

G.P. commented on the upcoming office relocation. He stated that the building is officially the office for the FGBNMS now. Kelly and Lindsay have already moved in. The rest of the staff will be moving over the next several months. By the end of May, everyone will be moved here.

G.P. also commented on recent trips to the FGB. A November cruise was taken to conduct some post-hurricane surveys and to monitor coral bleaching. The found that levels of bleaching had not changed. The next survey in January showed recovery from 40% to 5-10%. They did see some indication of white clay coral disease. Will be following up on that phenomenon.

NMSP Director, Dan Basta, began with his welcome and opening remarks.

Dan Basta indicated that he would like to address three things: the program, the SAC, and the site.

Dan Basta continued:

You are the 13th council to be created. 5 years ago only three councils were in existence. There are about 350 individuals on the SACs. This is an elite group of citizens that are trying to take back citizen input.

Councils are the tip of the spear of change; they allow the public to truly have input into process. You are not reviewing; you are creating the management plan. The MP processes are messy, because public processes are messy. The process needs those that are passionate. We are leading a new way of finding common ground on managing resources. The common ground is that we want to see healthy environments to be enjoyed by Americans; to provide a service.

We are committed—not about the plan you come up with, but the process you create. We really want to involve the public in working groups, etc. It is an education process as well. It is okay to build relationships and partnerships in the community.

FGB is Part of a bigger thing. A premiere research vessel, operated by the site, will be available to education, science, and others.

The time has come to connect the dots with the FGB and the connectivity to the Gulf of Mexico. The connection is the Gulf Stream loop. It is not just about the resources within the FGB alone – it about 300 million Americans who will make decisions that affect the larger environment. You have come to this because you want to affect change and do something positive. It is a bigger issue than us – it is about those 300 million Americans.

A lot is at stake here. It is not about another cute research project or great new regulations. We may be educating people to death. You have an opportunity to be a part of a unique process – finding common ground – moving this whole thing forward.

I remember in 1991 with Billy – no one in government could get over the way they did things themselves, but it was the advisory council that was the reason why the best management plan was constructed. Government--NOAA, DNR, etc.--had to pay attention. You are the most recent expression of this process. The Monitor will come on board in the next month – people ask why? That Advisory Council has a lot to offer.

About this NMSP – headquarters just happens to be in DC. This program has more real estate than all national parks and Wildlife Refuges combined, but it is

all underwater and difficult to get people to understand. It is also about mixed uses – not a park – although easier to talk about. There is a change a foot. The program is becoming a focal point for technology and innovation. Will see Telepresence later – about a kid from Iowa who can come home from school and see what is going on. It is about continued connection and putting the environment in their hands. Four vessels are being built this year. 60-90 foot vessels. Capable platforms with technology that allow us to do what we need. The first is a Florida Keys/Tortugas patrol vessel. Sanctuaries are underwater, but it is above the water where we research and conduct education. NMSP is at the center of marine conservation today. In the news soon will be the NWHI, which is about 1200 miles end to end. It will be the largest marine conservation area in the world – and is an intact ecosystem. FGB is almost as pristine and has a large role to play in this. The country will finally start down the path.

I will answer any questions and will be available today and tomorrow.

G.P. inquired about the budget.

Dan Basta stated that it is not a good time in the federal government– wars, natural disaster. In this situation everything else falls off the table. The NMSP is holding its own – we make a point of it. We took a 15 million dollar budget cut after the last two years of increase. FY07 does not look much better. But you all have something to say about it. But you are not allowed to lobby as an advisor to the program, but can do anything you want as an individual. We do have a Foundation with members – they are about affecting change – they can do things that we cannot do as part of the federal government. NMSF is important. They created CHOW and manages it to affect programs.

Billy Causy spoke to the Council to provide a regional perspective:

Billy stated that he is “back home.” He first visited the FGB in 1963 as an excited college freshman—it was beautiful.

We currently have 13 NMSs with the 14th in progress. Four Regions – Pacific Islands (American Samoa, HIHW, NWHI), West Coast (WA to CA with five sites OC, CB, GF, MB, CI), Great Lakes/Northeast Region (TB, SB, M); and the Southeast (Atlantic (NC) through FL and Gulf of Mexico.)

Billy stated that he'd like to discuss three items: priorities for 2006, using Science in the Region, and education and research

Priorities:

He indicated that it is important to get out into the region, not just the sites. All three sites are in some stage of MPR. Florida Keys is in the final plan stage. He is making Congressional contacts in the field and in DC. He is also meeting with regional agency counterparts – regional offices of NPS, etc. He would also like to engage coastal zone managers, CSO, NERRS, MPA center. He would like

the regional science program to be complimentary with sites--integrating the AOP across the region – e.g. mooring buoys. He hopes to look outside the box for funding.

Using Science:

Regional connectivity is very important in this region. Remote sensing Looe Key NMS 1981—started having challenges in the 1980s with an urchin die off and bleaching. This had scientists exploring—found that it was a Caribbean wide event. We see the connectivity through the loop current – drifters. Other bleachings. Multiple stressors – pollution, over fishing. In 1989 he went to St.Vincent and Grenadines islands to set up a management plan. He realized that the problem was greater than thought. The Oronoco plumes out over the region. The loop current is a formidable force. Current patterns have great impact over the gulf and east coast. In 2001, warm water events carried by loop current. 40% of N. America drains into the Gulf. We are connected and must manage in that way. Coast watch helps understand what is going on in the region. Remote sensing tools, hydrology and ecology tools help understand the connectivity – not only distribution of water, movement of larvae. (The Tortugas gyre). We have done this intensely in SE region of gulf. The region is set up on an ecological, hydrological basis – North Carolina is a natural breaking point. Using remote sensing capabilities allows us to take a step back and see the region as a whole. Also use in situ research – use in combination – to identify hot spots, HABs. This all sends a powerful message – it is important to see the connectivity. Benthic habitat characterization – FGB is ahead of the game. Exploration of Pully Ridge, and others. MOTE Marine Lab, MMS and many partners. Low diversity, but good health. Samples assessed.

Billy also commented on Education and Outreach, Windows to the Sea, and Ocean voices. He stated that it is important to get out to all the aquaria in the region and get the messages out. Tennessee, Moody Gardens, Georgia, Florida. Also looking at coral aquaculture. He gave Latitude 3130 at Grays Reef and Florida as an example of interagency connection.

Billy concluded--Change is coming; we must be prepared in our planning. Hurricanes are one of those.

G.P. continued the meeting with Council Executive Committee Elections. He said that Kelly would assist with the process. He drew attention to the one pager under tab 2 with the SAC roster, one page from charter about elections, position descriptions, and the excerpt from Roberts Rules of Order. Our charter instructs us to hold elections by secret ballot. We will make selections on paper and submit the ballots to Kelly. In discussions with National SAC coordinator, we found that it is not necessary to have a Secretary whose role is correspondence from Council. The FGB provides a lot of support. We can decide on this later.

Page Williams asked if the Secretary would sign letters.

G.P. stated that the Council chair always signs.

G.P.: Frank Wasson is not here so Art Melvin will act instead of diving operations for vote. Frank can still be nominated as an officer.

Dick Zingula: I would like to nominate Frank. His group is on the FGB most Page Williams seconded the motion.

Kristina Hardwick: The Chair needs to have strong leadership qualities. Suggest possibly tabling the elections until next meeting to gauge people's comfort level in a leadership role.

G.P.: Frank is totally committed to the council and has strong interest in the best for the sanctuary.

Dan Basta: What are we looking for in a chair: We need an individual who has leadership and can get people to follow direction, fairly and patiently negotiate those waters, make the phone calls, coalition builder, can honestly speak for all of you (even if not their position).

Page Williams: I Support Kristina.

Haidee Williams made the motion to table the election until next meeting.

Clint Moore: seconded the motion.

Frank Burek suggested two meetings--nomination at first, voting at second with opportunity for discussion.

Kristina Hardwick suggested a sign-up sheet for those who are interested; copies go out to SAC and allow time to review.

John Stout indicated that the Chair needs to attend the SAC Chairs meeting on April 25th-27th.

Ian MacDonald: Does voting have to happen at meeting?

G.P.: Charter allows for mail-in ballot.

Ian: We should do that in order to not stretch this out.

G.P.: We could conduct nominations via email before the next meeting. At the meeting in April, nominees can speak and then hold elections at that time.

Dana Larson: Is FGB just TX?

G.P.: We actively include LA and TX in solicitation. Will talk later with you.

Kristina: Let's look at people's bios and have time to react.

Dick Zingula: We need to get nominees today to get the process started.

MOTION: Delay voting for the officers until the next meeting (Haidee Williams)

SECOND: Art Melvin

VOTE: all in favor

MOTION PASSED

MOTION: Move to ask for nominees today in order to get the info out to all the members before the next meeting (Dick Zingula)

SECOND: ?

VOTE: all in favor

MOTION PASSED

G.P.: Do you want to limit? Ask for nominees?

Dan Basta: The issue is, how do we want to get to know each other? Are there other ways than just getting bios and resumes?

Ian Macdonald: How will alternates interact with the voting?

G.P.: only primary members can vote, according to our charter. Other sites separate alternates or they don't go to the meetings, etc. We didn't want to go that route. We wanted to have as much participation as possible. We can change the charter, but not today.

Irby Basco: The process could be to first select the names of people who are very interested. Then contact those people to gauge interest and time.

MOTION: Postpone nomination discussion to the end of the day to let everyone get to know each other (Haidee Williams).

SECOND: Art Melvin

VOTE: All in Favor

MOTION PASSED

G.P.: We will collect nominations today, but will not limit to just those identified at this meeting.

Kristina Hardwick suggested color-coding the name cards and placing names on both sides.

Emma Hickerson spoke to the Council to provide a Sanctuary research summary and update.

Emma provided information on her background and training. In 1993 she was recruited as a research diver at TAMU to ID fish at the FGB. There were misconceptions about what was out there. Hundreds of dives and 13 years later, she loves the place. She attended graduate school and studied sea turtle populations at the FGB—catching sea turtles and attaching radio and satellite tags. The FGB has a healthy population of loggerheads. The Research Coordinator position opened up as a volunteer position in 1997. It has grown since then into what it is today. She added that the Regional Science Coordinator is Brian Keller and that the NMSP Science Coordinator is Steve Gittings who was also the first manager at FGB until 1999.

Emma noted the individuals involved in the research and monitoring program: Emma, G.P., Doug Weaver (research and GIS specialist), Kyle Byers (research assistant), and Emily Platzer (contractor working on Stetson Bank). She also mentioned that John Embesi (TPWD) is a SAC member and also involved.

Presentation Notes:

MONITORING

E and W coral cap monitored yearly - only 1%

- Stetson Bank monitoring – carried on through program funding, not formal
- Emergency response and monitoring is an emerging need

- East and West Banks- Earliest data collected 1972,
- Results from long term monitoring- is the state of the reef is healthy.
- Study sites are 100m square blocks. Living coral cover – extremely high, consistently over 50% cover. On a regional basis, FG is high.

Stetson

- Non-funded program. We prioritized collecting the photographs, but have no money to analyze.
- 15 cruises. Mainly photographic stations. Initial analysis Bernhardt 2000.
- Emily currently under contract to assess and enter data into spreadsheet

Emerging Monitoring Needs: hurricane, bleaching, coral disease.

Feb. 2005 Cruise

- saw first coral disease. Was alarming.
- Amazing response from those with coral disease expertise.
- Good news is that the outbreak seemed to slow down in the summer months. Cruise in Jan showed that it was showing up in colder temp in deeper.
- Calling it white clay, but not sure. Will be doing more quantitative analyses.

Hurricane Katrina – Oct. 2005 Assessment

- Documented large disturbances of large corals thrown about.
- No numbers on the percent loss of corals yet
- Stetson was just scoured out. Huge movement of sand.
- In the days following Rita, a large water mass from coast of Louisiana; plume offshore; the color was disturbing.
- Took a long time for the water mass to dissipate.
- Took water and sediment samples – no result yet.
- Also watching temp and salinity – Slight drop with Katrina, another with Rita. Katrina pushed a warm water mass, Rita pushed a cold mass. This will stress the coral – coral response is to push out zooxanthelae and bleach. 48% WFGB, 35% EFGB; some signs of bleaching.

Invasive species – orange cup coral coming into the FGBs. Very aggressive species of coral; takes over on artificial reef/platforms. Need assistance from public when they see this; call FGB staff.

Kristina Hardwick asked if we provided any education to Oil and Gas industry on this species. She suggested a “Gulf of Mexico Most Wanted List” where she could be the contact.

Acropora sp. – range extension species. One colony at each bank.

RESEARCH

Emma explained that we support research by providing ship time to those who want to do research at FGB. The sanctuary provides some equipment, dive support, program-wide sanctuary science mini-grants. Amazing number of research collaborators. We want to be a comparative site for reef studies.

Examples of sanctuary supported research

Coral paleoclimatology

- Took about a year and half to get all the parts together (weather, divers, etc) to properly collect coral cores.
- Left the bank with seven cores – anywhere between 200-400 years of data.
- Research cruise schedule for 2006

Studies with management implications

- Quick overview – full list in packets and research summary from last year

Sanctuary-driven research

- USGS coral cap coring project – core the entire coral cap from the top to the bedrock – could be 40-60 feet long.
 - Will give an amazing wealth of information.
 - Hopefully during Nancy Foster cruise
- High resolution multibeam survey in the NW GoM and looking outside the sanctuary at connectivity throughout the region (1997-2005, Jim Garner).

- Started looking at areas between the postage stamps – circular area of topography of patch reef between the banks.
 - Few ROV surveys to groundtruth. Also higher resolution – 2007 - .5m resolution of the coral caps at EW FGBs.
 - Also have 1meter resolution of Stetson. When Stetson added, our boundary did not match the topography of the area around Stetson.
- NWGOM Exploration and Characterization
 - submersible and dives
 - EFGB ROV tracks – 50 surveys. Deepwater habitat makes up 95% of area within the sanctuary boundaries.
 - 8300 images. 80% photos are georeferenced.
 - Kyle is identifying species and habitats within the pictures.
 - Not public database at the moment.
 - Will have an educational version of generalized information.
 - 250 directed samples after looking at hundreds of images
- Benthic classification schemes for the sanctuary. Looking at it on a regional basis. To be applicable across the region.
- Bright, Geyer, Mcgrail, Sonnier, Alderdice. Other banks that may not be receiving protection but are important in the context of connectivity.
 - McGrail – 30 miles east of banks. Upwards of 29% coral cover. 90% is blushing star coral. HAPC – working with Fisheries; working with high resolution.
 - Sonnier bank; Similar to Stetson bank – sponges and ?
 - Alderdice – basalt spires. Is a fragile community open to insults from anchoring

Other Onshore Activities

Research in the Gulf of Mexico Science Journal every 5 years; annual research report; state of the coral report every 2 years.

Art Melvin: How do you control the impacts of research?

Emma: with permit evaluation

The Public Comment period was announced and some public attendees introduced themselves.

- Doug Peter - TX Parks and Wildlife; aquaculture
- Jackie Stanley – Teacher and writer of children books and diver; OceanWorks

The Question and Answer period with Emma continued.

Irby Basco: Invasive species – what harm does the coral cause?

Emma: It takes over areas that are normally occupied by naturally-occurring species. The program wants to remove them – physically take them out. We rely on people reporting a good location.

Irby: Bleaching – is it stress-related? Is it hurricane caused?

Emma: We can't say that it caused it, but it seems to have exasperated the events. There are management activities that we can do to reduce some of the other stressors such as human activities and pollution. The resilience of the coral has been degraded so that the coral cannot respond. We can make management actions that can help improve coral resiliency.

Irby: Are the results of some research available?

Emma: Yes...

Question: The new vessel that is being built...will this take the place of the Spree?

Answer: No, the Spree and the Fling are chartered vessels. They will still be used for those activities that cannot be run off the existing vessel. All the research will be conducted off this new vessel

Irby: Will this reduce the cost of operations?

G.P.: We did a cost analysis. Part of the problem is that we do not have the ability to respond to an emergency or there are lost opportunities because of weather. It is slightly more expensive. But we want to offer this vessel up for cooperative projects for a fee, which may help with some costs.

Emma: Accessibility for enforcement has been a problem and that will be helped.

Ian: Did any of the debris from the hurricanes impact the banks?

Emma: None that was documented.

Ian: If there was, would we want to remove it?

Emma: We have such limited capability while we are diving to do that.

Dana Larson: Bleaching and climate change? [Is there a relationship?]

Billy: El nino is the culprit at a global scale. There is evidence of African dust from over 50 years of deposition. Coral bleaching is more of elevation of SST. In the late 70s and early 80s we started seeing coral bleaching events that looked like what happens with el nino. But more expansive across the globe.

Todd Viola, representing Immersion Presents, described the "Telepresence" project overview.

G.P. Schmahl spoke with the Council regarding Regional Fishery Management Council Coordination. (See part 4 of the distributed materials). G.P. explained that if the sanctuary decides within the MPR process to do something with fishing regulations, we are required to consult with the regional fishery management

council. Some issues such as marine reserves in CI and NWHI have stimulated some debate as to in what shape and form that consultation should occur. There has been a process developed by NOAA, the Wiring Diagram, which is in your packet. This is being finalized within the agency. Comments from the SAC are due by April 30. All RFMCs will be commenting as well. G.P. encouraged the Council members to approach him with any questions or comments at a later time.

G.P. further explained that if the sanctuary establishes the need for fishing regulations in the sanctuary, we would take that to the GMFMC. The regulation could be promulgated under the NMSA, the MSA, or both. We give them (GMFMC) the first opportunity to promulgate it under NMSA. They can agree or can decide that in their opinion it is better to do it under MSA, or that it is not needed. The NOAA administrator then undergoes an analysis to decide the best course of action.

Dan Basta: I was not in favor of this going to the SACs because it is such a bureaucracy. The NMSA is not about regulating fishing, it is about maintaining ecosystems. The MSA is about managing fishing for economic harvest and sustaining fishing. The West Coast is an example of this in action. It is one process in MPR over those sites was the forum where these came together about prohibitions. It is about using the best tool to obtain the objectives. The MPR process is where you find the common ground. It is about finding a forum to establish checks and balances. This is a roadmap about how that dance works...took the lawyers two months to figure out how to display what they are already doing.

Kristina Hardwick: How's it working for you? That is my only question.

Dan Basta: It is working, in my opinion. This came out of a congressional request.

Kristina: How hard is it to change?

Joe Hendricks: It is an attempt to get all the agencies involved in the process to get to work on ecosystems. It is an evolving process.

G.P.: It comes down to communication, early and often.

Dan Basta: Sanctuaries should get some special consideration when the FMPs are developed. It is a work in progress.

Irby Basco: If we decided to prohibit fishing in certain areas within the FGB, we will have to go through the GMFMC.

Dan Basta: Identify how to maximize the use of our authorities without unnecessary impacts to users. Gear is a good example

Kristina Hardwick: I would like a formal presentation at least annually from RFMC to the SAC of what the current initiatives are...maybe 20 minutes on the agenda.

Dan Basta: This does go both ways. We are trying to attend RFMC meetings and to sit on subcommittees.

John (?): Do any commercial or recreational fishermen know FGBNMS regulations or where to get them?

(?): We have no description of that information. There are publications for each and they do not mention FGB. Need better communication about the rules for fishing at the FGB.

Dan Basta: We need to fix that.

Heidi Lovett: All the information is in the CFR. Now the GMFMC has an information person –the new website will have more information on all the marine managed areas.

A discussion of the Management Plan Review process and timeline was postponed.

G.P. led a discussion on the Executive Committee Elections. He reminded the council that nominations would be taken today and that brief bios and additional information would be distributed during the interim before the next meeting. He polled the eight eligible council members for their interest and availability:

Joe Hendricks – not available

Page Williams – not interested

Ian MacDonald – interested, but would have to ask his institution. Fierce research cruise schedule in the next few months. Willing to consider.

Haidee Williams – yes, willing. Would need to know the dates ASAP.

Irby Basco – would consider Vice-chair

Dick Zingula– not interested

Clint Moore– would consider Vice-chair

Frank Wasson – yes, willing. Caveat—difficult during summer season

G.P. Asked that any changes be brought to his attention. He also asked that if council members couldn't make the next meeting, that they please submit their vote via email or mail. He asked that nominees submit bios, other additional information related to management or leadership, and a personal statement. G.P. indicated that the Council would go ahead with the election before the next meeting using mail/email by April 1st.

Kristina Hardwick offered to host the next Council meeting at the Shell facility West of Houston off I-10. She will look at the conference room schedule. The

Council passed a motion to continue to hold meetings on the second Wednesday of the month (alternate months).

Heidi Lovett provided a review of the process for drafting Goals & Objectives Statements. Heidi first provided some background information. She stated that a professor in the U.K owns the Marine Resources Assessment Group. She has been with the company for 8 years and does a lot of work for fisheries in the U.S. She explained that the FGBNMS put out a call for assistance with the MPR. She stated that MRAG would be the workhorse...for scoping and developing the management plan. They will partner with Crouch out of Houston.

Heidi explained that she was asked to help facilitate a draft goals and objectives statement. The existing management plan had some goals and objectives.

Art Melvin: This probably requires significant time – 2 hours at next meeting.

Dan Basta: A template – yes, no, add change-would be useful.

Heidi explained that the process would be talked through at next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM.