

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting

Meeting Minutes

January 14, 2009

The regular meeting of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS) Advisory Council was held on Wednesday, January 14, 2009, at 9:00 AM, at the FGBNMS Headquarters offices in Galveston, Texas. A council chair and vice-chair were not in place at this time. The council did not elect to appoint a chair pro-tem and requested that G.P. Schmahl, Sanctuary Superintendent, lead the meeting. Clint Moore moved that the agenda be adopted. The motion passed.

G.P. Schmahl reviewed past practices of preparing and distributing meeting notes and meeting minutes. The council requested that in addition to distributing and posting draft meeting minutes, Jennifer Morgan should always distribute the detailed meeting notes to council members only. Clint Moore moved to accept the minutes from the November 2008 meeting as written. The motion passed.

G.P. Schmahl welcomed the new Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) members. He reviewed the member selection process and discussed the role of alternate members. He requested the council to think about amending the SAC charter to allow for 16 primary seats—two members per constituent group. Following discussion of this idea, Larry McKinney moved to have two primary members per constituency with staggered terms on the council. The motion passed. Clint Moore suggested that the charter be amended to eliminate the language that discusses alternates and that the charter revision subcommittee will review the language in the revised charter. Rebecca Nadel and Rafael Calderon volunteered to serve on the subcommittee.

In turn, each new member introduced him or herself and gave information regarding their background and interests. New members in attendance included (in order of introduction) Darrell Walker, Larry McKinney, Will Heyman, Dale Loughmiller (new as a primary member), Jacqui Stanley, Rafael Calderon, and Matt Bunn. Continuing members also gave introductions. G.P. read the council oath and officially installed the new members and welcomed them aboard.

G.P. Schmahl reported on the state of the sanctuary in the 'Sanctuary Update' report. Topics covered included: Hurricane Ike impacts to FGBNMS, Manta catalog, and the 2008 Research Report.

G.P. Schmahl gave a presentation titled "MPR Update and Recommendations." It provided an overview of the management plan review process to date, detailing the plans to complete the draft management plan and then move forward with boundary expansion and the research area process.

Jennifer Debose gave a presentation on the research area process. She explained how a SAC subcommittee and sanctuary staff began looking at an experimental closure to examine fishing and diving impacts. She provided an outline of the research area consideration activities that have happened to date, including two workshops. Jennifer stated that the next step is to develop a true working group to further develop the experimental design.

G.P. Schmahl introduced Becky Shortland of GRNMS and explained that she was invited here to help us benefit from the Gray's Reef experience of establishing a research area. Becky Shortland gave a presentation detailing the efforts involved in the deliberative and transparent process of designing and implementing a research area within the sanctuary. The SAC engaged in discussion of the details of the tools used to find a preferred alternative used at Gray's Reef.

Darrell Walker moved to have the SAC form a research area working group. Without further discussion, the motion was passed unanimously. Rafael Calderon volunteered to chair the working group.

A public comment period was offered at 1:24 PM. Brandt Mannchen offered comments regarding his hope that the "islands in the stream" initiative will once again be considered a priority. Bea Stong of W&T Offshore and Cheryl Powell of Apache Corporation introduced themselves.

Bob Leeworthy, ONMS Economist, gave a presentation providing an overview of the general philosophy of socioeconomics in sanctuaries. He also discussed his involvement with the Dry Tortugas marine protected area process. Bob explained the procedures that would be necessary to analyze socioeconomic impacts within a study area in the Gulf of Mexico for a possible boundary expansion and a research area. He provided and discussed the information that is already available and identified the type of information and data that is still needed.

Dan Basta, ONMS Director, spoke to the SAC. He began by noting the importance of advisory councils to sanctuaries. He discussed the upcoming National Chairs and Coordinators meeting as well as the need to move forward with a sensible boundary expansion and research area through a balanced public process. He highlighted the Gulf of Mexico as a unique place with special places and habitats that can coexist with energy development and commercial and recreational activities.

NOAA OLE Special Agent Charles Tyer addressed that council. He described the role of OLE in the conservation and protection of marine resources through the enforcement of various acts. He also described their partnerships with other agencies. Charles briefed the SAC on two currently ongoing investigations that deal with the sanctuary.

G.P. Schmahl began a discussion of the need to elect new officers. Matt Bunn moved to table the discussion until after the SAC Charter has been revised. A list of names of those interested in serving as an officer was recorded: Clint Moore, Frank Burek, Darrell Walker (Vice-Chair only), Rafael Calderon, Larry McKinney, Dale Loughmiller (Vice-Chair only). Larry McKinney moved that the SAC must elect a chair by April 1st. The motion was amended by Rafael Calderon to move the deadline to an earlier date to allow for travel plans for the Chair to be made in time for the May National SAC meeting. Following discussion, Larry McKinney moved to make a decision on officers by April 1st, with the revised charter being approved as soon as possible. The motion passed unanimously.

A reminder of the 2009 meeting dates was given, as well as an invitation to stay for the evening bar-b-que with the ONMS Executive Team.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:08 PM.