

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY
Sanctuary Advisory Council
Draft Meeting Minutes
November 18, 2015

Meeting Attendance Roster:

Jimi Mack	Recreational Diving	Absent
Jesse Cancelmo	Recreational Diving	Present
Natalie Hall	Diving Operations	Present
Randy Widaman	Diving Operations	Present
James Wiseman	Oil and Gas Industry	Absent
Clint Moore	Oil and Gas Industry	Present
Scott Hickman	Fishing - Recreational	Present
John Blaha	Fishing - Recreational	Present
Shane Cantrell	Fishing - Commercial	Present
Buddy Guindon	Fishing - Commercial	Absent
Adrienne Simoes Correa	Research	Present
Larry McKinney	Research	Absent
Karla Klay	Education	Present
Jacqui Stanley	Education	Present
Ellis Pickett	Conservation	Present
Jorge Brenner	Conservation	Absent
James Sinclair	BSEE (non-voting)	Absent
Matt Johnson	BOEM (non-voting)	On Phone
Stephanie Cardenas	U.S. Coast Guard (non-voting)	Present
Rusty Swafford	NOAA Fisheries (non-voting)	Absent
Charles Tyer	NOAA OLE (non-voting)	Absent
Ben Scaggs	EPA (non-voting)	Absent
G.P. Schmahl	Sanctuary Superintendent (non-voting)	Absent

Total voting member attendance: 11 of 16

Others in Attendance:

Kelly Drinnen, Michelle Johnston, Shelley DuPuy, John Embesi, Jennifer Idema, Frank Burek, Julia O'Hern, Bill Roberts

9:11 Meeting called to order by Clint Moore.

9:13 Welcome and Announcements – Leslie Clift

Introduction of John Blaha, new recreational fishing seat. John is the Assistant Director/Fund Raiser for Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) Texas, and leads CCA's Texas' habitat initiative – Habitat for Today for Fish Tomorrow.

9:20 Administrative Business & Announcements – Clint Moore

Adoption of Agenda – motion from Jacqui Stanley, second from Scott Hickman; All in favor.

Approval of September Minutes – motion from Randy Widaman, second from Natalie Hall, no discussion, approved by all.

SAC Meeting dates for 2016:

January 20

April 20

September 14

November 16

Discussion ensued about meeting end time since several people in past meetings have seemed to need to leave early. A shorter lunch break was suggested. Karla offered to buy lunch for April's meeting. Once DEIS is released, the SAC may need to work through lunches because of increased number of public comments.

9:30 RESTORE Act Science Program – Webinar

Dr. Julien Lartigue (Director of NOAA's RESTORE Act Science Program)

- RESTORE Act of 2012 Science Program was established to carry out research, observation, and monitoring to support the long-term sustainability of the ecosystem, fish stocks, fish habitat, and the recreational, commercial, and charter fishing industry in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Priority given to long-term projects that address management needs.
- Cannot support existing or planned research, implement or initiate regulations, or develop catch share programs.
- RESTORE Act established a trust fund to process 80% of civil penalties from spill
 - 35% distributed equally to gulf states \$1.82B
 - 30% to Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council \$1.56B
 - 30% Impact based distribution \$1.56B
 - 2.5% RESTORE Act Science Program \$130M
 - 2.5% Centers of Excellence \$130M
 - Interest earned by trust fund will be split evenly between Council and the 2 science programs.
 - Payments from BP spread over 15 years (once approved)
 - Under criminal penalties, 3 groups funded – North American Wetlands Conservation Fund, National Fish & Wildlife Federation, and National Academy of Sciences
 - Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative gets \$500 million from beginning and approaching end of their life cycle.

- Objectives:
 - Promote complementary & joint activities
 - Address shared issues
 - Improve understanding of research topics & approaches
 - Avoid duplicating activities
 - Facilitate sharing & synthesis of research result & application to management
 - Share example of coordination
- Attempting to establish baselines, but not sure how that will be accomplished.
- Scope of program is entire Gulf of Mexico basin, and may focus on broad processes that are quantifiable (i.e., watershed and atmospheric processes).
- Science Plan
 - Highlight areas of need, offer competitive opportunities to meet those needs, work with partners
 - Gathered stakeholder input to review existing needs assessments
 - Looked for commonalities
 - Confirmed management needs supported by each priority
- Long-term Research Priorities
 - Social & ecological systems
 - Freshwater, sediment & nutrient impacts to coastal ecology
 - Food webs, habitats, protected areas, & carbon flow
 - Climate change and weather effects
 - Ecosystem models
 - Trends on status and health of ecosystem
 - Indicators of environmental & socioeconomic conditions
 - Integrated data from Gulf monitoring programs
 - Development of technology to improve monitoring
- Focused on using \$20M we already have, about 3-3.5 years. If settlement happens as written, program will continue for another 15-20 years. Depending on how other pieces of RESTORE act spend.
- Not initially envisioning behavioral changes as a focus of studying coupled social & ecological systems, but are looking at biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Sanctuary is eligible to compete for funding opportunities to meet science program needs. Will not fund salaries of full-time federal employees as part of grants. Looking for resource managers working closely with universities.
- NOAA is prohibited from using funds for planned or existing NOAA research, so it may not apply to long-term wish list plans.
- We don't know for sure why catch share programs were excluded from funding.
- Funding for new technology to support existing or planned monitoring would have to be evaluated on a case by case basis.

- Short-term priorities:
 - Comprehensive inventory & assessment of ecosystem modeling
 - Identification & evaluation of indicators for Gulf of Mexico ecosystem
 - Assessment of monitoring and observation needs & development of recommendations for a Gulf-wide network.
 - ~\$2.5M for up to 7 projects of 1-2 year duration
 - Received 104 letters of intent and 37 full proposals
 - Reviewed by panel and made decisions
 - Average award of \$380K
 - In 2015, 7 projects awarded: 31 investigators (28 gulf-based), 17 institutions, 2 year awards
- 7 Projects
 - Harte Research Institute, Texas A&M Corpus Christi, Larry McKinney – indicator project
 - NatureServe, Kathy Goodin – indicator project
 - Cooperative Institute for Marine & Atmospheric Studies at U of Miami, Matthieu Le Henaff – performance of observation networks
 - Texas A&M Corpus Christi, Jim Simons – ecosystem modeling efforts
 - University of Southern Mississippi, Bob Arnone – identify data gaps in fisheries
 - University of Texas Austin, Brad Erisman – spawning aggregations
 - LUMCON, Alex Kolker – impacts of Mississippi river
- Next federal funding opportunity being developed will be released March/April 2016
- Website: <http://restoreactscienceprogram.noaa.gov>
- Email: noaarestorescience@noaa.gov
- Have not thought about doing quarterly reports, but will consider it. Definitely something annual will be posted to website.

10:30 Ocean Discovery Day – Jennifer Idema

Jennifer (Jennifer.Idema@gmail.com) conducted her master's thesis research project on data collected on Ocean Discovery Day (ODD) in 2014. Ocean Discovery Day is a science-themed community event. ODD gives opportunities to the public for engagement, to build on prior knowledge, and to interact with scientists/educators.

Purpose of study:

1. Develop a visitor profile of who attends ODD and their motivation for doing so;
2. Discover which experience made lasting impressions on visitors;
3. Gain insight as to how experiences vary between parents and their children AND how do parent/child social interactions influence their experiences.

175 people completed exit questionnaire, with 5 families participating in a more detailed study.

Results:

- Most participants were white, non-Hispanic, females in mid-30s. 59% lived outside of Galveston. Her study suggests the potential for encouraging science learning in underrepresented groups and to reach the local population.
- Most people heard about ODD through online, word of mouth, and schools.
- Why did they come? They perceived ODD as an educational event, were interested in seeing specific animals (sea turtles), or wanted to visit the campus.
- What did they learn? They learned about the responsibilities of NOAA (research, testing, monitoring, conservation, education outreach, and careers), organism information, branches of NOAA, and historical information.
- What did they remember about ODD? Most participants remembered organism information (sea turtles, lionfish, dolphins), but also conservation and information on exhibits.
- Three months after ODD, participants remembered organism information, activities at ODD, and social interactions with staff. The 5 detailed study families were asked to draw what they remembered from ODD. Parents described themselves as facilitators. They drew organisms and exhibits. Children drew activities and organisms and described interactions with staff. Children are paying attention to conservation messages.

Conclusions: Children focused on organisms, activities, and social interactions. Parents focused on exhibits and how their children experienced the event. Parents see themselves as facilitators and observers, but their drawings suggest they see themselves as individual learners too. Role playing is an important contributor to the memories children developed at ODD.

Suggestions: Increase advertising for ODD (earlier, locally), provide something for everyone, more opportunities for role play, extend the experience for visitors after they leave (social media, for example). 2,500 attended in 2015.

Discussion and questions followed Jennifer's presentation. Jacqui Stanley suggested "Near Pod" which acts like an active powerpoint presentation, which is one way to extend the visitors' experience. Scott Hickman suggested reaching out to the school districts as a way to increase advertising. The SAC could be used as an outlet to distribute ODD information, and Kelly will email Council members with information and the flyer. Karla asked about the drawings and if Jennifer looked at developmental differences in drawing as people age (adults typically do not draw themselves or other people without being directed to do so). Karla suggested in future studies taking away the filter of how people naturally draw.

11:30 Adjourn for Lunch

1:00 Public Comment Period

Julia O'Hern

Julia spoke on sexual harassment on NOAA vessels, including R/V Manta. Julia worked on R/V Manta for 3.5 years and shared with the SAC an incident of alleged sexual harassment while on the R/V Manta. She reported the incident to FGBNMS and NOAA HQ but was told Department of Labor would handle the legal issues and that NOAA does not address cases when the person involved is a contractor. Julia contacted her senator from back home, Senator Grassley, who co-sponsored legislation to address sexual harassment on NOAA vessels and within NOAA laboratories. Legislation is being heard today (November 18; S2206 Senate bill) in committee and is expected to make its way through. Julia said the harassment did not stop and that her requests for help were ignored. She encouraged the SAC to help address sexual harassment and help develop procedures to protect others in the future.

SAC Chair Clint Moore suggested that since this was an open legal matter, the SAC not ask questions or conduct discussion until hearing from GP at the next meeting in January. However, Scott Hickman objected and expressed concern that the SAC was not notified about the complaint. Natalie Hall asked if a police report was filed and Julia responded yes. Karla asked Julia if she had specific requests of the SAC. Julia responded that NOAA doesn't handle cases involving contractors, but they should provide information on sexual harassment, sexual assault, and how to report it. Julia asked recruitment for employment opportunities be made more inclusive.

Bill Roberts

Bill introduced himself as a local fisherman/diver/marine biologist. Bill said he knows FGBNMS is postponing the no-take zone in the DEIS, but that there is strong support for this action for the West FGB. He has seen the benefits of no-take areas and again stressed the support for such this management action. Scott Hickman asked about any progress about a potential closure. Staff response was that the EIS will be finalized and then a management plan would address this topic.

1:25 Visitor Center – Jacqui Stanley

Jacqui shared information on Monterey Bay Exploration Center including its goals, site location, and time line (started in 2003 with a site evaluation, construction began in 2011, and grand opening in 2012). Jesse Cancelmo asked how much it cost and how it was funded. Clint and Jacqui answered cost was \$20 million, land was gifted from the city, but also money came from fundraising and donations from organizations (Hewlett Packard).

Jacqui proposed outlining the visitor center's purpose and definition, and reviewed possible sites that the SAC then gave input on positive attributes/limitations. The possible sites included:

East End Lagoon:

Positives - natural environment, location on the ship channel serves as a gateway to the Gulf of Mexico, public access, a master plan already exists, marketing engine (Parks Board) already exists

Limitations – flooding

Ashton Villa:

Positives – low cost

Limitations – limited demographic, staffing, short term, not available for tours

Moody Gardens:

Positives – marine life connection

Limitations – limited public exposure, expensive to access

Could have kiosk in the front area of the Aquarium so there is no associated cost for the public to access.

Classroom on Pleasure Pier:

Positives – reach wide spectrum of population, close proximity to ocean

Limitations – unknown cost and tenure, expensive to access, parking, less likely to have stakeholders who would visit FGBNMS

Next steps: gather data, types of visitors, identify audience (families), identify messages (educational), identify best site (beach or near beach)

Karla Klay urged stakeholders (NOAA, Artist Boat, Parks Board) to work together to apply for RESTORE funds and not apply separately. The next Parks Board on the East End Lagoon Master Plan is December 2 at 9 am. Ellis Pickett suggested the building on East End Lagoon be attached to the seawall and not down the road where it frequently floods at high tide. Shane Cantrell and Shelley Du Puy expressed need to identify targeted audience first. Kelly Drinnen said a priority is to provide information at no cost. Adrienne Simoes-Correa pointed out Bolivar as a possible site for access. Karla Klay suggested asking for NOAA facilitator and inviting Parks Board (with accompanying data on visitors) and scheduling an all-day meeting. Scott Hickman suggested creating a SAC working group or subcommittee to flush out goals and identify audience. Frank Burek (audience) proposed the FGBNMS should look at it as an information center, not a visitors center because a visitors center implies the site is nearby to visit. Shane Cantrell made a motion to start a SAC subcommittee, transitioning to a SAC working group, to address a visitor's center. The charge to the working group is to define more clearly the market demographics, the purpose of the facility, its messages, and other parameters. Scott Hickman seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously. Volunteers for SAC subcommittee were Clint Moore, Shane Cantrell, Jacqui Stanley, Adrienne Simoes-Correa, and Ellis Pickett, with Jacqui and Shane serving as co-chairs.

2:30 Sanctuary Updates – Shelley Du Puy

Platform Removal HI389A is on public notice. Public notice closes on November 27. Jesse Cancelmo and G.P. sent an email to the SAC with a link. Natalie Hall said a typo is on the public comment notice with different numbers on the permit, but the correct number is 2015.

DEIS has been submitted to Headquarters (HQ). FGBNMS entered into a Cooperating Agency Agreement with BOEM and BSEE. Anticipation release date is now March-April, 2016 (delays due to holidays and reviews by BOEM, BSEE, and HQ).

New sanctuary candidates: Mallows Bay in the Potomac River in Maryland and Wisconsin – Lake Michigan with many shipwrecks.

Other news: Dan Basta officially retired and NOAA will advertise and recruit for a new Director of ONMS. Jason Patlis, President/CEO of National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, also announced his resignation, but will stay until his replacement can be found. Dates of interest in 2016: World Oceans Day (June 8) and Capitol Hills Oceans Week (June 9-11). SAC Chairs Summit will be January 11-15 in Annapolis, Maryland. G.P. will report at next SAC meeting on trip to Cuba. FGBNMS, along with Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, as of this afternoon (November 18) now has an official sister sanctuary partnership with one of the Cuban marine protected areas.

3:00 Research and Monitoring Update – Michelle Johnston

FGBNMS was involved in 17 research cruises in 2015, 3 of which occurred since last SAC meeting. Stetson Bank Long-Term Monitoring – monitoring began in 1993 (22 year dataset). A phase shift has occurred from a coral dominated substrate to algae. In 2015, FGBNMS integrated the monitoring with the deeper habitats (>100') using ROV surveys. Observations/data collected include: gray snapper spawning, urchin count doubled from 2015 (reduced algae cover), not many lionfish, fish and benthic surveys, 59 repetitive stations found and photographed. Because algal cover has decreased, areas where corals could recruit/grow have increased. The entire coral cap is the study size.

FGB (Flower Garden Banks) long-term monitoring (26 year dataset, beginning in 1989) – coral cover maintained above 50% (For comparison, reefs in the Florida Keys average 10% coral cover.) This summer's data collection included: 32 random transects, fish and benthic surveys. A hectare on each bank is the study size. Algal cover has increased, but has not affected coral cover. No phase shift has occurred.

Massive bleaching events occurred elsewhere in the world this year. Corals began bleaching last year in 2014, and have continued to be stressed and have not recovered. Corals, once bleached, are vulnerable and susceptible to disease. FGB have not been affected by bleaching in 2015, likely due to FGB being remote, deep, and abnormally low water temperatures, all factors contributing to its resilience to bleaching events.

Lionfish Response Plan – monitoring, control, research, education and outreach. Gut contents included red night shrimp, blennies, wrasse, and crabs. Lionfish Invitational (30 participants) occurred this late summer on the *M/V Fling*, with trip subsidized from 2 grants. Science team surveyed first, removal team conducted 2 dives and removed as many lionfish as possible, and science team conducted a final survey. Lionfish were dissected and data were collected on sex, length, weight, gut contents, age, parasites, and ciguatera. Lots of media covered the event. 70% removal rate, 317 lionfish removed (181 WFGB, 123 EFGB, 13 SB), including the largest lionfish (a Texas record), measuring over 17 inches long. Lionfish removal cannot rely solely on FGBNMS staff, but will need the help of the public, once permitted and trained in proper handling techniques. How many fish could 317 lionfish eat? About 1 million prey. Removal is a good tool in the FGBNMS tool box. Scott Hickman asked if any fillets came back positive with ciguatera. Michelle responded the results will be coming in Spring 2016. A few restaurants in Texas want to incorporate lionfish on their menus. Randy Widaman asked about public access to the reports. Michelle said the Sanctuary website has a page with all monitoring reports. A Texas Lionfish Coalition will be formed in February 2016.

3:30 SAC Subcommittee Report (Vessel Permit Program)

Committee members include Natalie Hall, Buddy Guindon, Jesse Cancelmo, Scott Hickman, Shane Cantrell, and FGBNMS Staff Kelly Drinnen and Leslie Clift. Subcommittee discussed pros and cons of a vessel permit program. Pros include visitation data and opportunities for education. Cons include a reduction in visitors by requiring a permit. Objective is to establish a mandatory vessel use permit program for visitation to FGBNMS. The process for approval of a regulation is a NEPA process, and the subcommittee wants to include a mandatory reporting requirement for annual permit holders. How to request a permit? Call the FGBNMS office number or access website that would generate a permit number. Mooring buoys could be painted with phone number and permit information. Public education options for distributing information about the vessel permit program include boating gas stations, diving, boating, fishing & bait shops, outreach at Houston fishing and boating shows, updating the FGBNMS website, painting mooring buoys, having the FGBNMS boundaries installed automatically on marine electronic equipment, and a broadcasting station on a loop that would state information on FGBNMS regulations. Permits for occasional users would be for 2 weeks (voluntary survey), but frequent users could apply for an annual permit (with mandatory survey).

How would the vessel permit program be enforced? Stephanie Cardenas said the USCG does quarterly patrols on the water, working in conjunction with manned planes. What are the consequences? A warning is given for the first time, then fees and revoked permit for subsequent violations. If an annual report is not submitted, a subsequent permit will not be issued. Potential options include establishing a video monitoring system, which has a current pilot program in the Gulf of Mexico. If the language in the RESTORE ACT isn't specific as to what type of monitoring can be funded, then perhaps funds could be pursued to help with this project. Jesse Cancelmo urged the SAC subcommittee to contact the *M/V Fling* and ask them if they would like to

participate. If so, then the subcommittee could transition to a working group. Scott Hickman shared the pressing need for FGBNMS to know what is happening in the Sanctuary, especially with the advent of more technology, increased larger Houston population, and decreased number of offshore oil & gas platforms.

Scott Hickman made a motion to direct staff to pursue funding, including RESTORE Act monies, to create an app for visitor permitting at FGBNMS. John Blaha seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Natalie Hall made a motion to recommend the FGBNMS adopt the mandatory vessel permit program as drafted by the SAC subcommittee and further develop it. Randy Widaman seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

3:45 Agency Reports

Stephanie Cardenas (USCG) – USCG *Cypress* patrolled the FGBNMS but observed no boats, but it was during inclement weather. USCG *Dauntless* will be visiting FGBNMS at the end of November.

Rusty Swafford (NMFS) – absent

Matthew Johnson (BOEM) – absent

James Sinclair (BSEE) – absent

Doug Peters (BSEE) – absent

4:00 New Business

4:15 Meeting Adjourned - Motion by Scott Hickman, second by Randy Widaman. All in favor. Approved.

Next SAC Meeting scheduled for January 20, 2016.