

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting

Meeting Minutes

September 22, 2010

The regular meeting of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS) Advisory Council was held on Wednesday, November 17, 2010, at 9:00 AM, at the FGBNMS Headquarters offices in Galveston, Texas. The council vice-chair, Frank Burek, was present to lead the meeting.

G.P. Schmahl, sanctuary superintendent, welcomed the council, former council members, guests and the public. Additionally, he gave a brief "safety moment" and made a few administrative announcements.

Frank Burek asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Clint Moore moved to adopt the minutes of the September 2010 meeting. Irby Basco seconded the motion and the motion passed. Frank Burek asked for a motion to adopt the agenda. Rebecca Nadel moved to adopt the agenda. Mike Jennings seconded the motion and the motion passed.

The meeting was again turned over to G.P. Schmahl. G.P. led introductions of sanctuary staff and other NOS staff that were present and officially welcomed David Kennedy, Acting Assistant Administrator for NOS, as a guest of the council meeting.

G.P. Schmahl reported on the state of the sanctuary in the 'Sanctuary Update' report. He recapped the activities of the sanctuary since that have occurred since May 2010. Topics covered included: impact of Deepwater Horizon Incident on sanctuary operations; agreement between NOAA and BP to deploy and maintain SPMDs (semi-permeable membrane devices) at the sanctuary; Gulf of Mexico loop current; ROV cruise to survey fish communities; CHOW; Jacqui Stanley's participation in CHOW as FGBNMS volunteer of the year; coral spawning cruise; Lionfish invasion; FGBNMS/NCCOS baseline characterization cruise; and Face Book updates.

David Kennedy, Acting AA NOS, presented information and answered questions on NOAA's response to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. He described NOAA as the key lead on science support for the Coast Guard. He reviewed various pieces of response and restoration and outlined NOAA recovery and restoration components. Mr. Kennedy further discussed difficult issues including use of dispersants and addressed the question "where is the oil now?" Other issues discussed included fisheries closures and reopening, safe seafood, and the three phases of Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA). Kennedy wrapped up the presentation portion of his talk by describing the complex nature of this particular oil spill. He described it as much a political event as a spill response. NOAA was a portal to provide information to many levels. There was much interest from the public in how business was conducted and in

how decisions were made. Kennedy engaged in a lengthy answer and question session with the council and guests. He addressed questions on dispersant use, NOAA credibility, marine spatial planning in response to this spill, effects on wildlife, and potential long-term effects on habitat.

Brandt Mannchen of the Sierra Club offered comments on David Kennedy's presentation during the public comment period. He stated that the presentation was not what he expected and that he was hoping for more information on the damage that was done, research that is being conducted, and a response to controversies and disagreements among scientists. He suggested having predetermined sampling protocols already in place and an established baseline; a research protocol that could be integrated into oil spills.

G.P. continued by stating that he would like to readdress the dispersant preapproval issue for FGBNMS to change some of the language and add caveats. Carmen DeGeorge offered to follow up on this topic. Clint Moore moved that G.P. pursue the question on the use of dispersants. Rebecca Nadel seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

G.P. talked about the Blue Ocean Film Festival and introduced "In The Wake of Giants", an award winning film. Following the viewing of the film, G.P. stated that the film's producers are trying to use the film to raise money for whale disentanglement projects. They are looking for ideas for future films; G.P. offered up manta tagging and Whale Shark tracking.

Jen Morgan presented information on various council related items, including review of the council implementation handbook, council member recruitment, research on councils by Lauren Garske, and the DMP and proposed regulations clearance process. Jen and G.P. addressed questions on the DEIS sanctuary expansion timeline as it relates to completing the management plan review process. Jen continued her presentation with a review of the 2010 SAC Summit in Port Angeles, WA and the topics of SAC Attack and the new term limit policy. Lori Traweek contributed to the discussion by explaining councils' involvement in efforts to support NMSA reauthorization. The council discussed the sanctuaries act, the current bill to reauthorize the act, and the need for reauthorization in order to designate new sites.

G.P. proposed to table the Lionfish discussion until the November council meeting. He would like SAC input on this issue and will put together some alternatives for discussion. He stated that it is naïve to think that we can eliminate the species from the Caribbean, but we might be able to control populations at the FGBNMS as the areas are relatively isolated and small.

Rebecca Nadel gave a brief report for the platform decommissioning subcommittee. The subcommittee will continue exploring options and put together more information on options. She is pursuing a possible internship for one of Will Heyman's students.

Rebecca will bring people from Shell to the next meeting to discuss platform decommissioning.

Page Williams briefly addressed efforts to stop the development of the White Stallion Coal Plant on the Colorado River. She talked about why you should care about coal plants if you care about the Gulf of Mexico.

Meeting wrap-up comments and announcements were made on the upcoming FOCUS event, the possibility of working with Carmen DeGeorge to obtain information on tanker traffic, the upcoming Artwalk event, and SAC terms that will expire in January.

Rebecca Nadel moved to adjourn the meeting. With council approval, the meeting was adjourned.