

**FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY
Sanctuary Advisory Council Boundary Expansion Working Group
Meeting Minutes
February 9, 2017**

Meeting Attendance Roster:

Clint Moore	Oil and Gas Industry	Present
Shane Cantrell	Fishing – Commercial	Present
Natalie Hall	Diving Operations	Present - Conference Call
Jesse Cancelmo	Recreational Diving	Present
Scott Hickman	Fishing - Recreational	Present
Buddy Guindon	Fishing - Commercial	Not Present
Adrienne Simoes-Correa	Research	Not Present
Jacqui Stanley	Education	Not Present
Charles Tyer	NOAA OLE	Present
Randy Widaman	Diving Operations	Present

Total member attendance: 5 of 9 voting members

Others in attendance:

Shelley DuPuy, Leslie Clift (conference call), Bill Kiene, G.P. Schmahl (conference call), Emma Hickerson (conference call), Kris Benson (conference call), Brent Greenfield.

5:30 PM – Meeting called to order by Clint Moore.

Adoption of Agenda – motion from Jesse Cancelmo, second from Scott Hickman, no discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Adoption of Agenda – Jesse Cancelmo moved to adopt minutes pending minor corrections discussed briefly, second from Scott Hickman, no discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

5:37 PM – FISHING REPRESENTATIVES REPORT ON GMFMC (Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council) MEETING – Shane Cantrell

Shane provided the BEWG (Boundary Expansion Working Group) with a report on the GMFMC (Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council) recent meeting. GMFMC

recommends the use of BOEM's "No Activity Zones" (NAZ) to establish no bottom tending gear / no anchor zones within the expanded sanctuary boundary.

The NAZ is based strictly on bathymetric contours of (for example, Alderdice Bank NAZ is the 85m contour). However, for some areas including Alderdice Bank, BOEM has published informational maps of NAZ that depict larger areas than those solely described by depth contours. This has resulted in some discrepancies between what FGBNMS depicts as the NAZ on maps (such as Alderdice Bank), compared to the BOEM maps.

The group discussed Alderdice Bank with regards to the boundary options developed by Clint Moore (Moore Series Plan A (NAZ), B and C). The Moore series does not include a buffer.

Charles Tyer mentioned GMFMC may develop new regulations for existing Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC), such as no anchoring. Many of the banks proposed in the expansion preferred alternative are HAPC's.

6:00PM REGULATORY ISSUES WITHIN NEW PROPOSED AREAS

Shane shared information from the free-diving spearfishing community which is that access for non scuba spearfishing is their highest priority on Geyer Bank, but is preferred on all banks. They request regulations be written or re-written to allow this activity. These fishers target highly migratory species such as wahoo, which are higher up in the water column. Clint noted that free diving spearfishers have been present throughout the expansion review process, with several giving public comment. Jesse said that he has been diving many times with scuba divers, both free diving and scuba, and they have no bycatch. Jesse also noted that the Gulf Coast Council of Dive Clubs also requested free-diving spearfishing. Scott mentioned that there are 3 or 4 other national marine sanctuaries that allow spearfishing. Shane recommended a regulation where visitors cannot possess spear gun and dive equipment on the boat at the same time.

The group discussed the GMFMC "Tier 2" recommendation regarding a mandatory commercial fishing endorsement program. NMFS could issue the certificates, or could go through NMS.

6:30PM – PUBLIC COMMENT

Brent Greenfield with Consumer Energy Alliance reaffirmed comments made last year to NOAA in 2016, urging FGBNMS to not adopt the preferred alternative. Instead, NOAA should adopt Alternative 1. But if the expansion moves forward, then it should go no further than Alternative 2, and should not incur costly expenses to the oil & gas industry. Jesse asked how CEA presented the letter to their constituents for their sign-on.

6:55PM – ALTERNATIVE BANK BOUNDARY MAP PROPOSALS – Clint Moore

Clint distributed a set of 3 maps to each group member, which were developed with his trade group associations. He outlined the different plans (Plan A (NAZ), Plan B (core biologic zone), and Plan C (merger of Alt 2 & 3)) on the maps, and explained how the boundary lines were drawn.

Alderdice NAZ data needs to be updated on the maps with the most current understanding of NAZ for that bank.

Parker Bank does not have high resolution bathymetry data, but FGBNMS should soon be visiting this area to conduct surveys to get updated data, after which Clint can update his preferred boundary maps too. Charles Tyer pointed out the “cove” at Parker Bank is 0.5 mile in length. To enforce a vessel being inside or outside the boundary when dealing with wind, waves, and current and offshore of 100 miles - is unenforceable when under 0.5 mile in length. Jesse asked about the capacity of O&G to drill directionally. Clint responded that if the potential petroleum field is above 10,000’ below the seafloor, then a mile directionally is reasonable. But if the potential petroleum field is below 15,000’ deep, it is both technically and economically much more of a challenge, if not impossible to drill. Plan A would not require additional directional drilling to drill down to the potential petroleum fields on the flanks of the salt domes that create the overlying seafloor banks.

Elvers Bank does not have full high resolution bathymetry data either, but should soon on the same acquisition trip to Parker. Until the high resolution data is acquired, only Plan A can be drawn on this bank, since core biological zones cannot be determined, and this bank was one of 6 that are in NOAA’s Pref Alt 3, but not in the SAC 2007 Alternative 2. . Elvers also has an east-west shipping channel that passes through the middle of it.

With the digital mapping skills of Marissa Nuttall, Clint developed Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C maps for the 9 banks in the 2007 SAC’s 9 bank recommendation. Charles Tyer mentioned that encapsulating the SW tail of MacNeil Bank, that Clint’s maps left out, would alleviate enforcement problems.

Clint commented that Sonnier, Geyer, and Bright Banks are three banks that are within recreational dive limits. Clint presented the three sets of maps for Sonnier (Plans A, B, and C). Shane added the fishing community would not want Plan B or C, because they are too large

Clint pointed out that Plan C for McGrail Bank incorporates large areas of mud flat bottom, but Plan B includes a narrow “hook” to include the hard bottom area. Charles Tyer reiterated his point regarding enforcement in that these small hooks or covers are totally unenforceable.

In addition, Clint pointed out that Geyer has a west to east shipping channel that passes through the middle of it.

Clint stated that Rankin, 28 Fathom, and Bright have Plans A, B, and C too. A platform is currently located in the biologic feature area near 28 Fathom Bank. Plan C incorporates large areas of mud flats.

Clint went on to discuss 4 of the 6 additional banks added in Alternative 3, specifically Bouma, Bryant, Rezak, and Sidner Bank Complex with Plans A, B, and C. Plan C incorporates areas of mud flats.

Next dates for BEWG are April 13, 20, or 27. Doodle poll to follow.

8:08 Charles motioned to adjourn, Jesse seconded. Meeting adjourned.