

**FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY
Sanctuary Advisory Council Boundary Expansion Working Group
Meeting Minutes
September 13, 2017**

Meeting Attendance Roster:

| | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Clint Moore | Oil and Gas Industry | Present |
| Shane Cantrell | Fishing – Commercial | Present |
| Natalie Hall | Diving Operations | Present (webinar) |
| Jesse Cancelmo | Recreational Diving | Present (webinar) |
| Scott Hickman | Fishing - Recreational | Present |
| Buddy Guindon | Fishing - Commercial | Present |
| Adrienne Simoes-Correa | Research | Not Present |
| Charles Tyer | NOAA OLE | Not Present |
| Randy Widaman | Diving Operations | Not Present |
| Jake Emmert | Conservation | Not Present |

Total member attendance: 6 of 10 members (6 of 9 voting members)

Others in attendance:

Leslie Clift, Bill Kiene, G.P. Schmahl, Shelley Du Puy, Dan Dorfman (National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS)), Randy Clark (NCCOS; webinar), Sharon McBreen, (Pew; webinar), Buck Buchanan (Lone Star College), Ruth Perry (Shell; webinar)

5:23 PM – Meeting called to order by Clint Moore.

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

Adoption of Minutes – motion from Shane Cantrell, second from Buddy Guindon to approve June 29 minutes. All in favor, motion approved.

5:30 PM – Public comment

None

5:35 PM NCCOS Presentation (Dan Dorfman)

Dan presented the question, "Is there a charge from the SAC or management for NCCOS?" Clint responded the evaluation of the sanctuary's expansion by learning which datasets are available and what they contain so that the Boundary Expansion Working Group (BEWG) can provide guidance on how to drive the process. G.P. said his perspective of BEWG's purpose is to evaluate the range of alternatives in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and for the BEWG to come to a recommendation to bring forward to the full Council for their review.

Dan shared the process NCCOS went through with the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS). NCCOS' charge was to support both the working groups and FKNMS. The first step was deciding which datasets were relevant and then gathering those datasets. Fish data from mesophotic banks in the FGBNMS proposed expansion areas currently exists only as raw data (video footage from ROV dives). Natural resources datasets used in FKNMS include benthic habitats, coral, and fish. This information, coupled with benthic habitat maps, were used to create items to be managed as conservation features (e.g., stony coral density). The FKNMS Advisory Council created Shallow Water and Ecological Protection Working Groups to review sanctuary marine zones. Those working groups were led through a process to review, data, share information, and develop recommendations for modified or new marine zones. The working groups developed a suite of recommendations for the full Council's consideration. The FKNMS Advisory Council reviewed their recommendations and provided additional input for the sanctuary's analysis in a DEIS. The Shallow Water Working Group reviewed 27 existing Wildlife Management Areas for modifications to access restrictions. They also reviewed 25 new proposed zones for some type of increased protection for shallow water resources. They recommended to remove 2 existing zones, status quo for 7 existing zones, modify 19 existing zones, and proposed 24 new zones. They used the Marxan tool to identify ecologically important areas and design networks of natural resource management areas. Marxan is designed to find efficient solutions to complex problems and can incorporate spatial considerations. Marxan came up with a spatially efficient result, but then cultural and economic had to be considered. A summary analysis result followed that determined areas that consistently scored as areas that should be examined. Staff then developed a range of regulatory and zoning alternatives.

Dan shared GIS (Geographic Information Systems) data layers for the proposed expansion areas. For example, there are 4,971 records of deep sea corals from 466 ROV/submersible dives contained within Alternative 3. Dan also showed GIS data layers of PSBF (potentially sensitive biological features) and NAZ (no activity zones). Currently, NCCOS has 500 datasets to use for analyses in the FGBNMS sanctuary expansion process review, which includes track lines, bathymetric surveys, and more. Clint asked if NCCOS could group the datasets into categories such as economic survey datasets and ecological survey datasets. Dan asked about the different buffer zones for the NAZ such as 500 feet setback and 3 mile buffer zones. Clint responded with information on BOEM's regulations and buffer zones. The group discussed

BOEM's different buffer zone widths, as well as VMS (vessel monitoring system) data, which has to be tied to specific requests. Dan said NCCOS is weak in datasets for economic and social datasets. G.P. added recreational fishery datasets are also lacking. The group suggested pelagic longline and shrimp logbook datasets should be included. With regards to oil and gas, Known Reserves data is readily available from BOEM (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management), but other datasets not well known and will be more difficult to obtain.

BEWG requested from NCCOS a grouping of the datasets they currently have, and then a list of the datasets, especially socio-economic, that are missing. Once NCCOS has feedback on the grouping of the datasets, they can conduct an inventory.

Clint showed the group Earth Science Associates' (ESA) Gulf of Mexico GOMSmart software detailing oil & gas field outlines across the US Gulf of Mexico, including map data layers of platforms, well locations, well tracks, and Known Reserves. This dataset should be incorporated into the NCCOS analysis, since it contains key economic and social resource information. He added that protecting natural resources, in the interest of the general public, has to be balanced against accessing oil and gas, which is also in the interest of the public, and accommodations may have to be made from all sides.

Next date for BEWG is tentatively set for mid-October, and the BEWG will be sent a Doodle poll.

8:15 PM Buddy motioned to adjourn, Scott seconded. Meeting adjourned.