

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Sanctuary Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, November 9, 2005

NOAA Fisheries Laboratory, Bldg. 216 – Ballroom
4700 Avenue U, Galveston, TXDistributed Materials:

Meeting Agenda

Advisory Council member roster with contact info.

PowerPoint Presentation – Vicki Weddell - NMSP Overview

PowerPoint Presentation – Shelley Du Puy – Education & Outreach

PowerPoint Presentation – Karen Brubeck – Sanctuary Advisory Councils

Letter and Packet from Dan Basta regarding the 2006 Council Chairs &
Coordinators meeting

PowerPoint Presentation – Vicki Weddell – Management Plan Review Overview

The National Marine Sanctuaries Act

National Marine Sanctuaries Strategic Plan 2005-2015

Advisory Council Members Present:

Dick Zingula, Recreational Diving

Frank Wasson, Diving Operations

Art Melvin, Diving Operations (Alternate)

Clint Moore, Oil & Gas Production

Tim Gibson, Oil & Gas Production (Alternate)

Irby Basco, Recreational Fishing

John Stout, Recreational Fishing (Alternate)

Ian MacDonald, Research

John Embesi, Research (Alternate)

Kristina Hardwick, Education (Alternate)

Page Williams, Conservation

Kris Benson (Alternate for Rusty Swafford, NOAA Fisheries)

Advisory Council Members Absent:

Haidee Williams, Education

James Sinclair, Minerals Management Service

Rusty Swafford, NOAA Fisheries

*Note: The following seats are vacant: Recreational Diving (Alternate),
Commercial Fishing (Primary), Commercial Fishing (Alternate), Conservation
(Alternate), U.S. Coast Guard

FGBNMS Staff Members Present:

G.P. Schmahl, Sanctuary Manager

Jennifer Morgan, Advisory Council Coordinator

Irene Arthur, Administrative Specialist

Shelley Du Puy, Education & Outreach Coordinator
Kelly Drinnen, Education Specialist
Lindsay Kurelja, Operations Coordinator
Capt. Ken Daniels, Vessel Captain

NMSP Headquarters Staff Present:

Karen Brubeck, National Advisory Council Coordinator
Vicki Wedell,

Public Attendees:

Tom Iliff-TAMU Galveston
Lara Henderson-TAMU Galveston Ph.D. student
Doug Peter-TPWD artificial reef program
Additional TAMU Galveston student

Welcome and Introductions

Flower Garden Banks NMS Manager, GP Schmahl, called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM and welcomed the meeting participants. He expressed his appreciation for everyone's willingness to attend and noted that this first Advisory Council meeting is an important step for the Sanctuary. He stated that this meeting will be different from those to follow in that this meeting will consist primarily of presentations by Sanctuary staff in order to outline expectations and provide necessary background information. G.P. explained how subsequent meetings will be run by the Council.

G.P. Schmahl provided general background information on the Sanctuary. He explained that we are part of a national program, part of NOAA, and that there is a system of National Marine Sanctuaries. He compared the Sanctuary system to the park service a hundred years earlier and noted the many parallels to the early days of development. He explained that each Sanctuary initially operated on their own with little uniformity and connectedness among sites. G.P. Schmahl further explained how a national program of marine protected areas (Sanctuaries) is now being developed. He described how a management plan is adopted when a new sanctuary is being designated. He stated the the FGBNMS has a management plan in place that was written by NMS Headquarters staff in Washington, DC and that it has now been over 10 years since the plan has been reviewed. He indicated that one of the primary functions of the Council is to assist in Management Plan Review process and that this would be explained more fully later in the meeting.

G.P. further explained the role of the Advisory Council. He stated that there are others things that we (the FGB Sanctuary) do on a routine basis that we'd like input on from the community. He stated that we need public input into processes and that we are one of last sanctuaries to establish an Advisory Council. The Council should serve as a conduit to constituents/stakeholders. Each sanctuary Council is a bit different as to the make-up of representatives and a process

exists by which other representatives can be added. G.P. added that he hoped that the members of the council will be a conduit to the part of the community that they represent and that the Sanctuary will assist in establishing ways to accomplish this.

G.P. commented on how he would like to see future meetings handled. He would like to have the meetings run informally. He again emphasized that future meetings will be different than this first meeting. He added that the Council chair and the Sanctuary manager will set the agenda for future meetings. He suggested that the Council might opt to not follow Robert's Rules of Order initially, but have that structure kick-in when necessary.

G.P. reviewed a number of housekeeping items. He asked that the Council members return necessary documents to Jennifer Morgan including the request for member biographies for the website and the CAMS payment form for travel reimbursement. He reminded the Council that as federal advisory committee members, they must travel a distance over 50 miles to receive any reimbursement. He emphasized the need to put all Council members into the payment system, as the Sanctuary may have meetings in other locations and therefore travel reimbursement may become necessary in the future.

Jennifer Morgan asked the Council members to make any necessary corrections on roster/contact info sheet and return it to her by the end of the meeting.

G.P. pointed out that no breaks were scheduled during the meeting, but that everyone should help themselves to beverages, food, and restrooms at any time throughout the day.

G.P. identified the 8 constituent group represented and 3 government agencies represented. He stated that his initial plans were to keep the Council small to start. He noted that there is currently no coast guard representative and that the representative from the Minerals Management Service was not present due to impacts from hurricane Katrina.

G.P. discussed the role of primary and alternate members. He stated that he feels strongly that both should participate fully in the process. He further stated that both members for each seat will be seated at the table participating fully. However, our charter allows only for primary members to vote. He noted that at most sanctuaries, things do not often come to a vote. The Councils usually try to reach a consensus on discussion items. He then described how the FKNMS did encounter some difficult issues that required voting.

G.P. explained that some individuals declined the Council membership after they were selected. He stated that we are now filling those seats by submitting names to the NMSP headquarters for vetting and therefore those seats currently remain empty.

Sanctuary staff introductions:

G.P. introduced Jennifer Morgan, Sanctuary Advisory Council Coordinator. He then took a moment to explain why the Sanctuary office is located in Bryan, TX. He explained that Tom Bright started the sanctuary designation process and offered the sanctuary free office space in the Sea Grant office at Texas A&M. G.P. stated that the Sanctuary will be moving to the NOAA Fisheries complex, Building 216, and therefore co-located with NOAA fisheries. He indicated that there will be more opportunities for the Sanctuary in the Galveston area.

G.P. introduced the FGBNMS staff and gave a brief summary of their role. He introduced Irene Olivares Arthur and explained her position as an administrative specialist. She then made a welcoming statement to the Council members. Capt. Ken Daniels was introduced as our vessel captain for the "Point Glass", which is stationed in Freeport next to the Gulf Diving boats. G.P. stated that he is retired from the coast guard. Capt. Daniels welcomed the Council members to visit the boat anytime. G.P. then introduced Shelley Du Puy as the Education Coordinator and noted that she has the greatest institutional memory, as she has been with the Sanctuary the longest. Shelley took a moment to further describe her role. Kelly Drinnen was introduced as the Education Specialist and it was noted that she is located in Galveston. Lindsay Kurelja was introduced as the NOAA Corps Officer assigned to our program. G.P. stated that the primary purpose of the NOAA Corps Officers is to run the fleet of NOAA vessels and that they also do a land based rotation. She is now here as the FGBNMS Operations Officer.

G.P. identified the FGBNMS staff that were not present. He explained that Emma Hickerson, Research Coordinator, was not able to attend as she is now in training for the underwater habitat Aqaurius located off the coast of Key Largo, FL. He noted that she will be involved there in a fish tagging and tracking exercise and research. G.P. also introduced Doug Weaver, Research and GIS Specialist, who was not able to attend. G.P. referenced Sanctuary benthic habitat maps on wall that are a product of Doug's work.

The two representatives from the NMSP Headquarters gave self-introductions. Vicki Wedell said that she has been with the sanctuary program for a couple of years and that she is part of the Conservation Policy and Planning Branch (CPPB). She explained her role at headquarters and gave her educational background. She stated that she is the liaison for the FGBNMS Management Plan Review process. Karen Brubeck introduced herself as the National Sanctuary Advisory Council Coordinator. She noted that she is a part of the same branch (CPPB) as Vicki Wedell and that she has been with the NMS program for 12 years.

G.P. then suggested that each Council member introduce themselves and take a moment to describe their background and interest in serving on the Advisory Council.

Clint Moore introduced himself as a petroleum exploration geologist. He stated that he is an avid diver, avid underwater photographer and underwater videographer. He added that the sanctuary has special place for him as a conservationist and industry person. He is interested in balancing the needs of the sanctuary. He stated that he was involved in the early designation process for the Sanctuary. He also stated that he has spent his corporate career exploring in Gulf of Mexico and that he has over 100 missions to drilling rigs to evaluate for oil and gas. He noted that he wants to see the Sanctuary grow and achieve its mission, but that he brings no particular agenda to the Council. He added that he would like to see Sonnier bank added to the sanctuary and that there are also 20 other banks needing research and conservation.

Page Williams described herself as having been an environmental activist for the past 20 years. She added that she has been diving since 1978. She noted that she is currently on the board of Gulf Restoration Network and that she was previously on the state Sierra Club board. She added that she is looking forward to networking opportunities.

John Embesi introduced himself as a product of the TAMU system and has been living in the Galveston area for 16 years. He stated that he was a biologist with NOAA Fisheries 4-5 years and now has been with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) Artificial Reef program for 6 years.

Dr. Ian MacDonald introduced himself as a biological oceanographer with the program at TAMU-Corpus Christi. He added that Tom Bright was his major professor for his Ph.D. program. He stated that he has been in area for a long time. Most of his research is in deeper water. He is interested in the ecological aspects of oil and gas seeps. He added that he used GIS and in situ instrumentation as research tools. He noted that he understands that other banks in the Gulf need to be looked at further.

John Stout introduced himself as a recreational fisherman and diver and added that he has his own boat that he uses for these purposes. He expressed his opinion that the Flower Garden Banks NMS is unique place with special creatures. He noted his involvement with the Galveston Bay foundation and Advisory Panel for the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council. He stated that he is partially retired. He added that he fishes along other banks and is interested in expanding the Sanctuary.

Irby Basco stated that he has been on the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council for 9 years and also serves on the TPWD Artificial Reef committee. He added that he is a non-diver. He prefers to leave rigs and platforms in place,

noting that if they can stay they can make a great facility for study and fishing. The expansion of Sanctuary areas is on his agenda.

Kristina Hardwick introduced herself as a science education advocate. She explained that she is from Lake Charles, LA and is the outreach and education director for the Offshore Energy Center. She added that she has aquanaut certification and that she has been employed with various nature centers and museums and has previous college level teaching experience.

Art Melvin stated that he has been diving since 1963 and that he became involved in recreational dive industry in 1983. He stated that he has a long history with the FGBNMS and that he does much ecological work with groups on dive trips. He added that he has noticed that the Gulf is now in better shape than in his early days of diving. He noted that education of fishermen has helped and that this needs to continue so that this resource is not lost.

Frank Wasson introduced himself as the President of Gulf Diving, the largest commercial user of the Sanctuary. He stated that they take approximately 2000 divers per year out to the Sanctuary and although they show the Sanctuary to more people than anyone else, they also probably cause more abuse to the sanctuary. He explained that he began his career as a nuclear engineer, and then moved on to environmental engineering. He explained further that he came to Texas to run the dive vessel the "Spree", and then later bought the "Spree." He added that he has started to offer commercial dive trips to other banks now to show that other banks exist in the Gulf but also take some pressure off of the FGBNMS. He stated that he would love to see levels of protection added to other areas in the Gulf of Mexico.

Dick Zingula introduced himself as a retired Exxon geologist with college majors in chemistry and zoology. He stated that his first dive in the Gulf of Mexico was in 1968 on Stetson bank. He added that he has seen many changes in the Gulf including many good changes over the years like the Gulf Reef Environmental Action Team (GREAT) organization putting in many mooring buoys. He also added that he would like to see added protection for other banks and areas and more education for divers, schools, and for anyone who might visit the Sanctuary.

Kris Benson stated that he was sitting in as an alternate for Rusty Swafford. He added that he works for the NOAA Restoration Center located Galveston. He added that he is interested in opportunities for restoration work at the Sanctuary and in Essential Fish Habitat issues.

Tim Gibson introduced himself as an Environmental Manager for Diamond Offshore. He noted that his first recollection of the Flower Garden Banks was 15 years ago. He added that 5 years ago the Sanctuary began the industry/agency dive trip. He helped to organize the first of these trips even though he was a

non-diver at the time. He pursued diver certification upon return from the first industry/agency trip. He stated that he is interested in sharing the FGBNMS with the rest of the oil and gas industry and hopes to bridge any gaps between the sanctuary and the industry.

G.P. stated that Haidee Williams is the primary Education representative but that she was not able to attend today. He added that Haidee trains science teachers. Shelly Du Puy gave some additional background on Haidee Williams. G.P. also identified members of the public that were in attendance and allowed them the opportunity to state their affiliations. Tom Iliff, a TAMU faculty member, stated that he is interested in developing closer ties with the FGBNMS. Lara Henderson identified herself as a Ph.D. student of Prof. Iliff. Doug Peter stated that he works for TPWD on the Artificial Reef program and that he previously worked with Steve Gittings.

National Marine Sanctuary Program Information

Vicki Wedell, NMSP headquarters representative in attendance, presented an overview of the National Marine Sanctuary Program. PowerPoint slides are attached as a handout for reference here.

Following Vicki's presentation, G.P. mentioned that Dan Basta is the NMSP Director. G.P. also reviewed how far the program has come since its beginnings, and gave examples of the program's growth stating that now many sanctuaries have their own vessels and buildings.

Flower Garden Banks NMS Overview

Research

G.P. Schmahl presented an overview of the Flower Garden Banks NMS with specific attention to the research that has been conducted within the Sanctuary. PowerPoint slides are attached as a handout for reference here.

Clint Moore commented on the 2005 hurricanes and the relationship to water temperature. Clint also asked about the status of marine mammal populations within the Sanctuary.

Kristina Hardwick asked about the status of the old Mobil drilling platform and had further questions regarding data sets possessed by the Sanctuary.

Dick Zingula asked about the availability of a coral spawning video from Tom Bright. G.P. stated that much of Tom Bright's materials were left at TAMU and that Dr. Mary Wicksten may know the whereabouts of those items. Shelley Du Puy mentioned that the Sanctuary does have some videos from Tom Bright, but that many are in an old format. Clint Moore suggested that the Sanctuary staff capture the Bright archives before relocating to Galveston.

Clint Moore commented on the status of the old Mobil (High Island 389) platform. He stated that the Minerals Management Service has regulations that govern use of old platforms. He stated that the Gulf of Mexico currently has a renaissance of drilling going on; the industry is now moving toward drilling 30000 ft. below salt (subsalt drilling). He suggested that the old Anadarko platforms could be deeper drilled platforms and that change coming to old platforms could be good.

Kristina Hardwick asked how many ROVs the Sanctuary owns versus those that we use but are owned by other entities. G.P. stated that the Sanctuary does not own any, but that we use time on ROVs owned by others like the one from the National Undersea Research Center at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. He added that the National Marine Sanctuary Program does own one or two.

Clint Moore discussed Basalt flows and commented on G.P.'s slide showing Alderdice Bank. He also noted that treasure-hunting groups have been known to look for Spanish galleon wrecks in the area. G.P. stated that the Sanctuary has put an ROV on Alderdice Bank.

John Stout asked what the recovery time is for corals that have suffered bleaching.

Kristina Hardwick asked whether or not NMS Foundation funds are specifically set aside for FGB research. Frank Wasson asked if other donations are solicited for such use.

Page Williams stated that individuals need to speak louder and that she was speaking for Dick Zingula and herself.

Education

Shelley Du Puy presented an overview of the Sanctuary's education and outreach activities. PowerPoint slides are attached as a handout for reference here.

Kristina Hardwick asked whether or not Advanced DUOY participants are able to get underwater naturalist certification through PADI. Shelley said that she has not pursued this, but those participants probably are eligible for such certification.

National Council Information

Karen Brubeck presented an overview of Sanctuary Advisory Councils nationwide with special emphasis on the purpose of councils and the role of council members. Karen also reviewed her role as National Council Coordinator. PowerPoint slides are attached as a handout for reference here.

Karen also discussed the Annual Advisory Council Chairs and Coordinators meeting to be held in Washington, D.C. during the last week of April 2006. She stated that for each Sanctuary Advisory Council, the Coordinator and the Council Chairperson would be invited to attend. She also stated that, this year, unlike previous years, an additional Council member would be invited to attend in order to increase Council member representation at the conference. The Council and manager will make the decision regarding who that additional member will be. She urged the Council members to elect the Council executive committee at the next meeting so that the chair could begin to make travel arrangements for the April meeting.

Karen Brubeck also presented an overview of the Sanctuary Advisory Council Implementation Handbook. She gave a brief overview and defined terms used throughout the handbook. She encouraged the Council members to read this document on their own, paying special attention to what Council members can and cannot do, especially in regards to member conduct and council to congress communications. PowerPoint slides are attached as a handout for reference.

Jennifer Morgan reviewed the FGBNMS Advisory Council Charter with emphasis on Council operations. The topic generated many procedural questions.

G.P. Schmahl conducted the swearing-in of the Council members. The council members read the oath in unison. The oath is attached for reference.

Administrative Updates

G.P. mentioned that most of the administrative items were already covered during his introduction. He briefly discussed the renovations of NOAA fisheries campus since 2000 and the current year. He stated that the Sanctuary offices will relocate sometime after January 2006 and will be completely moved in by May 2006.

G.P. also noted that the NMSP with the FGBNMS are considering construction of a new vessel. He is hopeful for new vessel within the next couple of years.

Management Plan Review

Vicki Wedell presented an overview of the Management Plan Review process, why such a review is conducted, and how the advisory council is involved in the process. PowerPoint slides are attached as a handout for reference.

John Stout asked whether or not the Internet can be used to collect public comment during scoping process, or if all comments need to come from public meetings. Shelley Du Puy noted that we probably couldn't do a bulletin board because that requires a database function, which can't be done on a NOAA

server due to security. Vicki Wedell stated that all of these ideas are worthwhile and that they will be considered when determining scoping methods.

State of the Sanctuary Report

Jennifer Morgan distributed copies of the text only document of the State of the Sanctuary Report. G.P. stated that the most important part of this report for the Council members to focus on is the emerging issues section. The purpose of this section is to start to get people thinking about things to consider and comment on during the Management Plan Review. G.P. stated that we are now asking the Council members to examine this document. It has had some internal review, however, we are interested in obtaining the Council's input before the document goes through official NOAA review.

Art Melvin asked whether or not this document is a "backgrounder?" He noted that the format seems odd. Frank Wasson noted that the Council and the public need an assessment of whether or not the FGBNMS current Management Plan has met it's goals to better know what issues are at hand for the upcoming Management Plan Review. Jennifer Morgan stated that the State of the Sanctuary report is useful to the general public and for use at informational and scoping meetings. She added that the Council can expect further documents for the MPR process.

Vicki Wedell explained the current change in philosophy regarding the Management Plan Review and how the State of the Sanctuary Report was used in the past. She added that this document is a draft and that changes can be made. Shelley Du Puy added that this is a State of the Sanctuary report and that what it sounds like Frank Wasson is looking for is a state of the Management Plan Review.

G.P. requested that the Council examine the emerging issues and added that the point of this document is to raise issues; not to draw conclusions or state our opinions. Shelley Du Puy noted that it might be helpful to add a section within the document that explains why no proposed actions are mentioned. She referenced the Council the "about this document" section on page 2.

A decision was made to return comments from the Council on the State of the Sanctuary report to Jennifer Morgan, in any format, by Dec. 16th

G.P. stated that the Sanctuary hopes to start scoping in March or April 2006. A specific timeline was set earlier this year, but may be adjusted to allow for additional pre-planning. G.P. also stated that a range of issues will be brought up during scoping, and that five or six of those issues will be pursued further in working groups.

Future meeting schedule and agenda topics

A number of Council members indicated that they are eager to get going on the Management Plan Review. They would prefer a January 2006 meeting and want to establish working groups as soon as possible. Vicki Wedell stated that we need to get the rest of the council in place first, do further background reading, and educate ourselves about the MPR process.

Jennifer Morgan mentioned that she could distribute the existing management plan in order to give Council members some background reading.

Art Melvin mentioned that he is interested in speeding up the process and needs more information and other management plans. He noted that he is concerned that the Sanctuary staff is keeping information from the Council. Irby Basco mentioned that in his role on other councils, he always depended on staff for support and to provide documents.

Page Williams suggested that the Council have a February meeting, as the Council members have plenty of work to do in the meantime. Ian MacDonald added that he feels it is important to have all Council seats filled before continuing.

Dick Zingula stated that he would like to see recommendations on what research has been done, and what has not been done, and what can feasibly be done in the future. Ian MacDonald asked if monitoring reports are available?

Clint Moore stated that he would like to see the current and future budget needs of the sanctuary in order to see what goals and objectives can be met. He added that he would also like to know G.P.'s wish list of projects. He would like to use this lag time to get up to speed.

Frank Wasson mentioned that he would like to see updates on research projects from Emma Hickerson. He added that he does not often see results of what the sanctuary is working on. G.P. stated that at the next Council meeting Emma Hickerson will be giving a research presentation and that she is currently analyzing data.

Jennifer Morgan will take requests on how each council member would like to receive the State of the Sanctuary report and current Management Plan. She will then distribute as needed-hard copy, PDF, cd, word document, etc.

G.P. suggested the next Council meeting be held during the 1st week of February 2006.

Page Williams asked that we poll the Council members in advance to determine what meeting dates work best for members, as well as which days of the week.

A suggestion was made to schedule the next meeting for February 8, 2006, from 10 AM to 4 PM.

G.P. invited the visiting public to comment or add to any previous discussion. The visiting public had no comments.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:28 pm.