

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Sanctuary Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

September 18, 2013

Meeting Attendance Roster:

Jimmie Mack	Recreational Diving	Present
Jesse Cancelmo	Recreational Diving	Present
Cher Walker	Diving Operators	Present
Vacant	Diving Operators	-----
James Wiseman	Oil and Gas Industry	Absent
Vacant	Oil and Gas Industry	-----
Scott Hickman	Fishing - Recreational	Present
Keith Love	Fishing - Recreational	Present
Vacant	Fishing - Commercial	-----
Mike Jennings	Fishing - Commercial	Present
Will Heyman	Research	Present
Larry McKinney	Research	Present
Karla Klay	Education	Present
Jacqui Stanley	Education	Present
Ellis Pickett	Conservation	Present
Jorge Brenner	Conservation	Present
James Sinclair	BSEE (non-voting)	Present
Michelle Nannen	BOEMRE (non-voting)	Present
Brandon Fisher	U.S. Coast Guard (non-voting)	Present
Rusty Swafford	NOAA Fisheries (non-voting)	Absent
Charles Tyer	NOAA OLE (non-voting)	Present
Ben Scaggs	EPA (non-voting)	Absent
G.P. Schmahl	Sanctuary Superintendent (non-voting)	Present

Administrative Business

A regular meeting of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS) Advisory Council was held on Wednesday, September 18, 2013 at 9:00 AM, at the NOAA Galveston Lab. Council Chair, Jesse Cancelmo was present. He called the meeting to order at 9:09 AM. G.P. welcomed the council and the public and gave a brief "safety moment". Jesse asked for an introduction of Michelle Nannen, the new BOEM representative to the council, and of Brandon Fisher, the USCG representative filling in for Jason Brand. Jesse called for a motion to adopt the agenda. Larry McKinney moved to adopt the agenda; Jacqui Stanley seconded the motion. The motion passed. Karla Klay moved to adopt the minutes of May 1st meeting; Will

seconded and the motion passed.

Following approval of the meeting agenda, G.P. addressed member attendance. He explained that there are currently 13 members officially on the council. A diving operators seat is now vacant. Additionally, Hoffman and Riley were given official notification of the termination of their seats. G.P. suggested that the charter subcommittee meet to address SAC seat representation. Larry McKinney agreed.

Sanctuary Update

G.P. requested that sanctuary staff provide updates on their program area:

Research

Emma Hickerson, research coordinator, began with an overview of the summer's research cruises including PSBF VI and VII, general research cruise, East and West Bank long-term monitoring, coral spawning, and the national coral reef monitoring (NCRM) program cruise. The NCRM program supports a new project funded by the coral reef conservation program. Emma discussed the newly delivered SubAtlantic/FET Mohawk ROV. The ROV is maintained and operated by the undersea vehicle program at UNC Wilmington. It is currently being configured for FGBNMS shakedown cruises in October. The ROV allows the sanctuary to have more research capabilities than ever before.

Michelle Johnston provided both long-term monitoring updates and lionfish updates. In addition to the history of the long-term monitoring project, Michelle presented the recent accomplishments and results. Data from 2006-2013 indicated that the reef is stable and healthy. Fish populations are also stable and show no drastic declines throughout the years of monitoring. Michelle also explained the process of RQ photography and coral colony sizing techniques.

Michelle explained that the lionfish problem is becoming more serious to FGBNMS. Many lionfish were observed with ROV surveys. Collected lionfish are dissected for stomach contents and DNA analysis. Lionfish numbers and range are expected to expand, though it may take several years for changes to be seen at FGBNMS. Michelle's presentation generated much SAC discussion. Michelle encouraged the public to use the lionfish observation forms to report sightings to us. Shelley and Michelle have applied for a grant for a lionfish removal event/round-up. Currently, lionfish are removed from around the mooring buoys and the *Fling* is permitted to remove in those areas also.

Marissa Nuttall presented the PSBF work that has been done. Habitat characterization of Potentially Sensitive Biological Features is a partnership with BOEM, LUMCON, NURC and FGBNMS. Habitats outside BOEM no activity zones but within Core Biological Zones is being explored. Fourteen sites have been surveyed and currently, photos from three banks have been analyzed. New species have been identified and will improve the existing field guide.

Education/Outreach

Shelley DuPuy provided an Education/Outreach Update. She discussed in detail the NABS Youth Education Summit in Galveston. She also noted recent web site updates, the Down Under Out Yonder workshop (Jorge Brenner was a participant), and the next Ocean Discovery Day on March 22, 2014.

National Update

G.P. Schmahl provided an update from the National Marine Sanctuaries Program. He discussed the recent Federal Register Notice that proposed the standards for future sanctuaries. The first step is to identify the criteria to use for evaluating potential sanctuary sites. Comments were requested on criteria that should be used and the comment period ended in August. G.P. also discussed the Business Advisory Council for sanctuaries that will include about 15 seats representing a variety of industries from tourism to shipping to energy. The positions have not been formally appointed yet.

Management Plan Actions

G.P. reviewed the three year NCCOS study. FGBNMS worked with the NCCOS biogeo group to establish baseline information for fish and benthic communities. The SAC recommended such a study and monitoring program in order to learn more about impacts of fishing and diving on sanctuary management. The final NCCOS report will be released this year.

G.P. also addressed sanctuary expansion. He explained that the sanctuary has been “treading water” with the management plan since April 2012. The sanctuary staff have been working on things that do not require external activity or approval. Yet, actions like sanctuary expansion do require external and regulatory action. He hopes to get the council once again involved in addressing expansion and forming working groups. G.P. reviewed strategy SE.1 of the management plan and the SAC recommendation for expansion. He further explained the existing presidential memo that restricts oil and gas leasing of areas that are currently national marine sanctuaries. In July 2008 areas were withdrawn from leasing. This affects only new leases. Blocks completely within sanctuary boundaries are not available for lease at all. In the past, a company could lease a block and then directionally drill under a no activity zone. This issue needs to be addressed and resolved, as it may affect our expansion. FGBNMS attorneys will need to address this. The SAC engaged in further discussion of this topic.

G.P. reviewed each step of Activity 1.1 of the research and monitoring action plan which will ultimately establish a research program to determine impacts through use of appropriately placed research areas. He expects to go ahead with a notice of intent this year.

Presentation: Will Heyman

Will Heyman, SAC research seat holder, gave a presentation on his work involving transient spawning aggregations of reef fish. His hopes are that the more people that are aware of such aggregations, the more people will be willing to support protection.

The information should be returned to fishers.

Public Comment

Capt. Shane Cantrell:

Capt. Cantrell introduced himself and noted that he has a degree in marine fisheries. He is interested in learning about the sanctuary process. He supports Will's ideas—they are important to sanctuary expansion and would lead to much buy in from fishermen. He would like to see the East gardens closed. He wants to see fishing improvements there. He has a 35 foot charter boat. The West garden is easier to access for fishing; he not sure of the fishing effort on the East bank. We will see which one indicates the most promise.

Jake Emmert:

Jake explained that he just started his masters at TAMUG and was invited to attend today. He is looking at developing a project with FGB or GOM and policy and user groups. He is looking for a chance to see how science changes public policy. He is happy to talk with anyone in order to expand his ideas.

Buddy Guindon:

Buddy explained that he has the largest operation in the area. He was angry today with some things that were said; that fishers weren't being valued. But, he felt better after hearing Will Heyman's talk.

Subcommittee and Working Group Reports

Artificial Reef Working Group: Jesse Cancelmo

The working group recommendations were accepted on May 1st. The working group has not met since then and the study is complete.

Clint Moore and Jesse Cancelmo have contacted W&T in the last 30 days and spoke with them twice. They were told that W&T has not completed their study of how they will deal with HI-A-389-A. Currently, 389 is still available for diving. W&T no longer have a current permitting process in place.

Charter Subcommittee: Larry McKinney

This subcommittee has not met since May and additional members are needed. They prefer to wait to have a meeting until they have further guidance on any changes to SAC membership. G.P. indicated that he will put together suggestions based on other sanctuary council memberships. The council engaged in discussion about SAC seat representation and recruiting difficulties.

Youth Working Group: Jacqui Stanley

Jacqui has discussed renewing the working group with Sherrie Krause, Ball High teacher. She has new recruits and younger students. Jacqui just completed NOAA's climate steward course to help promote climate change awareness. This could be incorporated into the efforts of the youth working group. She hopes to have the names of recruits from Sherrie by the next meeting.

Presentation: The Monterrey Shipwreck Project, Fritz Hanselmann and Bill Kiene

Fritz Hanselmann began by explaining the role that archaeology plays in how we treat resources and the importance of the shipwreck findings. The three sites explored this summer are some of the best ever preserved sites. The EV *Nautilus* and ROV *Hercules* and *Argus* were used to explore the shipwrecks. Fritz described in detail each of the three shipwreck sites as well as some of the artifacts that were revealed. He noted that they are excited about further exploration and are seeking funding. Fritz explained that people are very interested in shipwrecks; they call the public's attention which then provides the opportunity to discuss the ocean in broader terms.

Bill Kiene described the great collaboration of people that this effort required—public, government, and scientists. He said that now telepresence technology needs to be embraced even further. Bill discussed the “biology” associated with the wreck sites. He wants to understand the ecological and physical processes functioning at the sites and how the wrecks influence these processes. Bill is conducting an experiment involving wood samples placed near the shipwreck to investigate damage, over time, by tubeworms.

National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Board Meeting

G.P. discussed the upcoming meeting of the NMSF Board of Directors meeting to be held in Houston/Galveston in October. He explained the role of the foundation as it relates to sanctuary activities. Jen Morgan described the meeting logistics.

New Business

Council members discussed the SAC meeting format, noting that there needs to be a balance between work accomplished and topics of interest and education for the SAC and the public. Phone and videoconferencing were also suggested.

SAC members suggested an event/public relations brainstorming session as an agenda item for the next meeting. Standing agency reports were also suggested.

The meeting adjourned at 3:31 PM.