

**FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY
Sanctuary Advisory Council Boundary Expansion Working Group
Meeting Minutes
October 12, 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	Not Present
Buddy Guindon	Fishing - Commercial	Not Present
Adrienne Simoes-Correa	Research	Not Present
Charles Tyer	NOAA OLE	Present
Randy Widaman	Diving Operations	Not Present
Jake Emmert	Conservation	Present

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

Others in attendance:

Leslie Clift, Bill Kiene, Emma Hickerson, Tony Du Pont (Earth Science; webinar), Dan Dorfman (National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS)), Randy Clark (NCCOS; webinar), Morgan Kilgour (Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council - GMFMC).

5:10 PM – Meeting called to order by Shane Cantrell.

Adoption of Agenda – the group discussed adding Tony Du Pont from Earth Sciences to the agenda to discuss oil & gas extraction infrastructure. Motion from Clint Moore, second from Charles Tyer, no discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Adoption of Minutes – all in favor, motion approved.

5:15 PM – Public comment

None

5:15 PM Earth Science (Tony Du Pont, Earth Science)

Tony Dupont of Earth Science Associates (ESA) demonstrated their GOM software and BOEM database that showed a typical salt dome flank field (Main Pass block 306 field) in the Gulf of Mexico, illustrating oil & gas fields on salt dome flanks in a donut-shaped pattern around shallow domes that come close to the seafloor. The oil and gas reservoirs were located at many different levels, with seven platforms in the donut area covering portions of seven lease blocks. Seismic data in the BOEM database, although 25 years old, showed the subterranean flank features with the sizes of the reservoirs, some of which have been produced. This model will be used to extrapolate for potential reserves deeper than 10,000 feet at each of the banks in Alternative 2 & 3. Clint added the projected resources that could be extracted in the future around the salt dome supported banks are from 10,000 feet to 30,000 feet. Clint said the oil & gas industry impact on the seafloor around each bank would likely be at most 7-10 platforms around a bank. In most cases, the outer boundary of the no activity zone (NAZ) would be the inside shape of the “donut hole” of future fields.

The group discussed BOEM’s NAZ (No Activity Zones), which prohibit oil & gas activity within their boundaries. Emma noted NAZ regulations on anchoring pertain only to the BOEM designated oil & gas company leaseholder (operator) of that block. For example, any non-oil & gas vessel can drop an anchor in that block. She added that the sanctuary would be able to provide a wider protection, including also from dynamite blasting from treasure salvagers.

Shunting of cuttings regulations for oil & gas activities were also briefly reviewed, as it relates to the 1-mile and 3 mile circles around the NAZ’s.

Levels of protection for biological habitats also exist through BOEM potentially sensitive biological feature (PSBF) stipulations, triggering industry to conduct bottom surveys to ground truth. Emma added PSBF’s add an additional layer of protection. Clint added PSBF protections are enforced by BOEM and though there are many PSBF’s in the Gulf of Mexico, their areas are not large.

The old 2D seismic images of HI389 and HI376 were shown next by ESA, depicting the reservoirs located on the southeast flank of the HI389 salt dome and the HI376 field to the north of the salt dome.

Emma asked Clint if his industry would be satisfied with using this oil & gas field data in the NCCOS analysis. Clint responded that the extrapolation of this model, to include the donut shaped reservoirs at multiple levels at all of the 15 banks in Alt 3, should be included in the NCCOS analysis.

Clint said 3-4 billion potential barrels of oil could exist around the 15 banks in Alternative 3. Emma said having a general idea of where the oil reserve fields are located in relation to each of the banks would be very helpful. Clint responded that the donut shape applied to each dome bank is a good estimate.

A discussion followed of NOAA's choice for Alternative 3 over Alternative 2. Emma noted she wished the Sanctuary had not had to select a Preferred Alternative (as it was required by NEPA) in the DEIS.

6:37 PM NCCOS (Dan Dorfman)

Dan shared the good news that NCCOS can represent the ecological elements, while minimizing areas and boundaries, and while avoiding some of the conflict. With this result, they will post-process the model with input from the BEWG. Dan stated he had reviewed the data (526 datasets) in detail and came up with several points of discussion for the BEWG. Dan then demonstrated his Boundary Expansion Geodatabase. The group briefly discussed the definition of "ecologically valuable."

Jake shared he hopes the BEWG will account for all stakeholders, because these areas are not well known. He questioned how representative the oil and gas "donut" is to all the areas and banks, as he understands that each field could be uniquely shaped. Jake added he would like to learn more about the donut. Clint responded he is trying to provide a model that has a high probability. Charles asked why the donut shape is being advanced as the template when several fields shown during Tony's presentation were not donut-shaped.

Dan showed Horseshoe Bank with the GIS (geographic information system) layers of NAZ, core biological zone, and core sensitivity zones. Clint asked about the criteria that drove FGBNMS Marissa Nuttall's analysis of the Core Biological Zones, specifically topographic relief and slope. PSBF height is 8 feet, although BOEM recognizes that some habitat under 8 feet should be included as PSBF. The group discussed the scope of the NCCOS process, and whether Alternatives 4 and 5 should be considered. Instead, the group agreed the NCCOS analysis should focus only on Alternatives 2 and 3. Shane mentioned that anything beyond Alternative 3, because it's beyond the current funding scenario, should not be included.

Dan proposed to look at a study area of all NAZs with a 10km buffer around the regional area, bounded by the most eastern and the most western banks within Alternative 3, and with hexagons measuring in area of 10 hectares. Data layers will include habitat maps, live bottom, PSBF, Core Biological Zones, Core Sensitivity Zones, existing and potential Oil & Gas Fields, and VMS (vessel monitoring system).

Next date for BEWG is scheduled for Wednesday, November 8.

8:00 PM Charles motioned to adjourn, Scott seconded. Meeting adjourned.