

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY
Sanctuary Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
September 12, 2012

Meeting Attendance Roster:

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| Jimmie Mack | Recreational Diving | Present |
| Jesse Cancelmo | Recreational Diving | Present |
| Cher Walker | Diving Operators | Present |
| Frank Wasson | Diving Operators | Absent |
| James Wiseman | Oil and Gas Industry | Present |
| John Hoffman | Oil and Gas Industry | Absent |
| Irby Basco | Fishing - Recreational | Present |
| Keith Love | Fishing - Recreational | Present |
| Patrick Riley | Fishing - Commercial | Absent |
| Mike Jennings | Fishing - Commercial | Absent |
| Will Heyman | Research | Present |
| Larry McKinney | Research | Present |
| Dale Loughmiller | Education | Absent |
| Jacqui Stanley | Education | Present |
| Ellis Pickett | Conservation | Present |
| Page Williams | Conservation | Present |
| James Sinclair | BOEMRE (non-voting) | Present |
| Jason Brand | U.S. Coast Guard (non-voting) | Absent |
| Rusty Swafford | NOAA Fisheries (non-voting) | Present |
| Charles Tyer | NOAA OLE (non-voting) | Present |
| Vacant | EPA (non-voting) | ----- |
| G.P. Schmahl | Sanctuary Superintendent (non-voting) | Present |

Others in attendance:

Billy Causey
Doug Peter
Gregg Gitschlagg
Herb Leedy
TJ Broussard
Clint Moore
Johnny Williams
Scott Hickman
Trace Adkins
Michael Short
Derek ??

A regular meeting of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS) Advisory Council was held on Wednesday, September 12, 2012, at 9:00 AM, at the FGBNMS Headquarters offices in Galveston, Texas. Council Chair, Larry McKinney, was present. The meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM. Superintendent G.P. Schmahl welcomed the council and the public and gave a brief "safety moment." He then introduced the staff and guests. Billy Causey briefly introduced himself.

Larry asked for any changes to the agenda. Hearing none, James Wiseman moved for approval of the meeting agenda. Jacqui Stanley seconded. The motion passed. James Wiseman moved to adopt the minutes of the September 2012 meeting. Jacqui Stanley seconded and the motion passed.

The council conducted Vice-Chair elections. Jesse Cancelmo and Jacqui Stanley were nominated at the previous meeting. No new nominations were presented. Council members voted by ballot and Jesse Cancelmo was elected as the new Vice-Chair.

The following meeting schedule for the next year, 2013, was approved by the council: February 20th, May 1st, September 18th, November 13th.

Jesse Cancelmo provided a PowerPoint presentation on the USS Hatteras. He explained that, in doing so, he was filling in for James Delgado who was the coordinator of the USS Hatteras mission. The R/V Manta and FGBNMS staff served as diving support during two days of the mission. The key objectives of the mission were to learn more about the site, to better understand the significance of the ship to Texas maritime heritage, and to get more people to care about the shipwreck. The USS Hatteras was the only US warship sunk in combat in the Gulf of Mexico during the civil war. The iron-hulled side-wheeler steamship sank in battle with the CSS Alabama. The wreck site is protected by the US Navy. Jesse visited the site in 2003 and photographed the wreck during 40 ft. visibility. During the current mission, the wreck was mapped using blueview 3D in rather challenging conditions. On January 11th, 2013, the 150th anniversary of the battle of Galveston will be recognized. This mission included a memorial service for those that lost their lives on the Hatteras and media reporters and photographers. The council engaged in discussion following Jesse's presentation. Billy Causey noted that technology, like the blueview 3D used during this mission, is making many shipwreck sites more valuable.

G.P. Schmahl began the artificial reef discussion with an overview of the HIA389A decommissioning process to date. He also explained that the sanctuary put together an expert panel to address the issues or questions of the council. G.P. introduced each panelist and the type of work done by each. G.P. gave a slide presentation to summarize the key points of the HIA389A decommissioning. He noted that the council has been addressing this issue since November 2009. G.P.'s presentation addressed the following points:

- All platform removals have site specific EAs or EISs and NOAA has the opportunity to provide input as the EA is developed. NEPA allows for public comment, but a public comment period is not required and the public comments on the FONSI.

- The sanctuary can review and authorize permits for work within the sanctuary; we can set conditions for authorization.
- The platform owner is the key driver in the decommissioning process.
- This issue is not new to sanctuaries. In 1993, Mobil Oil notified NOAA of possible decommissioning. The recommendations made at that time are essentially what we have now.
- HIA389A is not unique. HI376A and others have similar benthic communities.
- Platforms are about 0.4% of total natural bottom in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Although platforms are thought of as “coral reefs”, they have very little coral on them and they don’t serve as coral reefs. Although they have diverse habitat, the main species are barnacles and other benthic organisms. They used to be thought of as bio-fouling communities.
- The platform has a lot of tubastrea growing on it. Invasives can be a problem. We do think that platforms have had a lot to do with the spread of this species.
- The sanctuary has a number of unanswered questions that we’d like to see addressed in a research and monitoring program. The sanctuary has proposed to W&T that if the platform is left in place, that assessments would need to be done.

G.P. stated that he has not yet seen W&T’s permit application for removal. Larry McKinney added that he is also interested in an additional research question—do artificial reefs take pressure off of natural reefs? The council discussed at length the opportunity for partial removal of HIA389A.

Jesse Cancelmo gave a status report on the activities of the artificial reef working group. Jesse summarized the initial results of the working group’s survey (see ppt slides for detailed information). He explained that about 260 surveys have been completed, as one component of the artificial reef study. The second component will be the evaluation of data and information sets. The working group will provide a written report to the council.

Presentations were given by the panel experts. TJ Broussard described in detail the decommissioning process, Doug Peter gave an overview of the Louisiana reef development program, and Gregg Gitschlagg described the process of removing platforms. Each presentation precipitated much discussion and many questions from council members.

Public Comments were made by Johnny Williams, Scott Hickman, Trace Adkins, Michael Short, Derek ?, and Clint Moore.

Billy Causey presented information about the Site Evaluation List (SEL). The SEL, which has not been around since 1995, was a way for people to nominate a national marine sanctuary for our system to consider. In 1995, the list became repetitive, obsolete and cumbersome. However, we’d now like to reinstate the SEL. ONMS is trying to get allowance to move forward with publishing criteria for the SEL in the federal register. There is currently a limitation on designation of new sites. In 2000, there was congressional concern that the entire sanctuary budget was going to only a couple of large sites. Now the addition of new sanctuaries cannot impact the existing system; the program has sufficient funding to

implement management plans at other sites. Reactivating the SEL will allow us to make this finding. With each increase in the number of sanctuary sites, the budget has increased. Following a recommendation by Billy, and discussion Page Williams moved to have the council write a supporting letter to reactivate the SEL. The motion was seconded by Ellis Pickett. The motion passed with no opposition.

Bill Kiene gave a presentation on the SPAW protocol in the wider Caribbean. The protocol sets standards for sustainable management and protection for special places. The US signed the SPAW protocol in 2003 and we are starting to identify these places worthy of protection. Criteria set the standards for what sites should be included, as well as management practices. The Florida Keys set the bar as the pilot project. Bill worked up the protocol for FGBNMS, along with Dry Tortugas and Everglades. These were sent to the SPAW committee in Jamaica, and decisions will be made in October. The nomination is being brought before the SAC. The nomination does not affect how FGBNMS will be managed, but provides a broader context for how special places in the Caribbean will be managed as a part of a network. It may provide collaboration opportunities with our Caribbean neighbors. By raising the profile of FGBNMS and its council in an international context, the sanctuary system is a model for how special places should be managed internationally. Following discussion, the council came to consensus to write a short statement of support and vote on it through email to complete the letter before the next council meeting.

Jacqui Stanley reported on the youth working group. She explained that the effort at Moody Gardens did not result in any student applications. However, she now has a number of interested students and plans to talk with students and teachers in Galveston and Houston.

Jimmi Mack thanked the FGBNMS staff for their NABS YES participation. The students learned about Texas history and marine science, and NABS certified their youngest diver.

After further discussion on the artificial reef issue, Larry reviewed the actions that came from this meeting: SEL support letter, SPAW support letter, and a future agenda item regarding the role of the SAC.

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 pm.