

3.7 Operations and Administration Action Plan

Background

The Operations and Administration Action Plan (OAAP) provides recommendations to strengthen the sanctuary's base-level staffing, facilities, infrastructure and program support to effectively meet the basic needs of sanctuary management. Emphasis is placed on the physical infrastructure and financial resource requirements of the site.

Purpose

The purpose of the OAAP is to ensure the administrative, operational, and financial capacities of the sanctuary are adequate to effectively implement the goals and objectives of the sanctuary.

Strategies and Activities

The OAAP has two strategies and associated activities to build the additional capacity needed for the sanctuary to meet basic requirements for staffing, infrastructure support, and program implementation:

OA.1 – Strengthen sanctuary human resource and program support capabilities.

- Activity 1.1 Maintain, and increase when necessary, human resources required to support existing, new or expanded sanctuary programs.
- Activity 1.2 Enhance the use of volunteers, partnerships, internships, and cooperative programs to fulfill human resource needs, when possible.

OA.2 – Maintain and enhance sanctuary facilities, vessels and other infrastructure.

- Activity 2.1 Effectively operate and maintain the sanctuary vessel R/V *Manta*.
- Activity 2.2 Maintain existing facility infrastructure, and develop and implement a long-range facilities plan.
- Activity 2.3 Implement the “Climate-Smart Sanctuaries” Initiative.

OA.1 Strengthen sanctuary human resource and program support capabilities.

As sites update and revise management plans, they identify and evaluate needs for more effective management. Additional staffing and infrastructure resources are required to meet the expanded public demands and expectations raised by the process and to respond to legal mandates and policies. Strengthening the sanctuary's base-level staffing, facilities infrastructure and program support to effectively meet the basic needs of sanctuary management is one of the priorities of this management plan. Emphasis is placed on the human resources and physical infrastructure of the site.

Activity 1.1 Maintain, and increase when necessary, human resources required to support existing, new or expanded sanctuary programs.

FGBNMS will maintain basic staffing requirements to support existing programs in the areas of conservation science, education and outreach, resource management and administration.

Current (2011) staff positions and responsibilities include:

Management

- Sanctuary Superintendent
- Program Manager - Sanctuary Advisory Council

Administration

- Administrative Program Specialist
- IT Specialist

Education & Outreach

- Education & Outreach Coordinator
- Outreach Specialist

Operations

- Operations Coordinator (NOAA Corps)
- Captain and one crew member, R/V *Manta*

Research and Monitoring

- Research and Permit Coordinator
- Research Specialist
- Research Specialist (Monitoring Program)
- Research Assistant

Over the next five years, it is anticipated that additional staff positions will be necessary to carry out the activities and programs identified in this management plan. Subject to funding allocations, the following positions may be needed:

Management

- Deputy Superintendent
- Resource Protection Specialist

Administrative

- Secretary/Receptionist

Education and Outreach

- Volunteer Coordinator
- Outreach/Media Specialist
- Program Specialist

Operations

- Marine Engineer
- Deck Crew Member, R/V *Manta*

Research and Monitoring

- Monitoring Program Coordinator
- Technical Specialist (water quality)
- Geographic Information System (GIS) Specialist

Additional positions will be considered as warranted.

Activity 1.2 Enhance the use of volunteers, partnerships, internships, and cooperative programs to fulfill human resource needs, when possible.

Given the limited funding generally available to address personnel requirements, FGBNMS will utilize to the fullest extent alternative mechanisms to meet human resource needs. This will include support of an active volunteer base to capitalize on the interest of constituents to assist with sanctuary programs. FGBNMS will also promote the use of student internships and cooperative programs with universities and other institutions to address specific sanctuary issues. Existing programs, such as the Hollings Scholarship, the Nancy Foster Scholarship and Student Conservation Association (SCA), will be utilized, as appropriate, to fill future needs. Programs associated with the Texas Maritime Academy at Texas A&M University at Galveston (TAMUG) will be investigated to provide support for vessel operations and maintenance.



A NOAA Hollings Scholar summer intern presents a lesson to elementary school students. Photo: FGBNMS

OA.2 Maintain and enhance sanctuary facilities, vessels and other infrastructure.

The sanctuary office relocated to Galveston Island from Bryan, Texas in 2006. The sanctuary headquarters in Galveston, Texas, is co-located with the NOAA Fisheries Laboratory on the historic Fort Crockett property. Built in the early 1900s as an Army installation, Fort Crockett contains a number of buildings of historical and architectural significance. It has been utilized as a fisheries laboratory since 1950, when the U.S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries (predecessor to NOAA Fisheries) established a facility there. Recognizing the historical importance of this facility, NOAA

undertook a comprehensive renovation beginning in the mid 1990s. The FGBNMS office is housed in the old Post Exchange (Building #216) on the east end of the campus. This unique building once housed recreational facilities for the base, including a bowling alley and ballroom. Although the bowling alley is gone, the original ballroom has been renovated and provides for a spacious meeting and special event area.

FGBNMS acquired a custom-built 83-foot research vessel, the R/V *Manta*, in 2008. This vessel has the capability to support a wide variety of sanctuary operations, including research, education, enforcement and resource management. In addition, the sanctuary staff makes the vessel available to other agencies and universities to conduct projects to support research or resource management needs in the Gulf of Mexico. Vessel use may be subject to cost reimbursement by the partner entities.



The R/V Manta, an important tool for research, monitoring, enforcement and emergency response, at the vessel's dedication in Galveston on June 27, 2008.

Photo: FGBNMS

Activity 2.1 Effectively operate and maintain the sanctuary vessel R/V *Manta*.

The R/V *Manta* will be operated and maintained in a safe and efficient manner, and will meet or exceed the standards established by the NOAA Small Boat Program and the NOAA Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO). A rigorous maintenance program will be established and implemented. FGBNMS staff will ensure that vessel operations are conducted in as environmentally sensitive a manner as possible, including the incorporation of the use of biofuels and biodegradable marine products, when possible.

FGBNMS will establish a review process for the use of the R/V *Manta* by sanctuary partners and research institutions. The process will include mechanisms for partners to request use of the vessel,

submit cruise instructions, and submit required documentation (e.g., permits, authorizations).

Activity 2.2 Maintain existing facility infrastructure, and develop and implement a long-range facilities plan.

FGBNMS staff will develop a long-range (10 to 20 years) facilities plan to consider the need for office space, vessel support facilities, visitor centers, signage and other infrastructure located throughout the sanctuary's operational area, as necessary to support implementation of the management plan. A national facilities plan is under development for all sites within the National Marine Sanctuary System. Facility planning for FGBNMS will be consistent with and incorporated into that plan.

The administrative headquarters for FGBNMS is located in the Post Exchange building at the NOAA Fort Crockett Galveston Laboratory. This building is large enough to meet the administrative needs of FGBNMS over the next 5 years. Additional renovation of the building's first floor will be necessary to accommodate existing needs and potential growth within the next 3 years. There may be additional space on the Fort Crockett campus that could be utilized by FGBNMS in the future, if necessary.

The sanctuary vessel, R/V *Manta*, is currently housed at the marina on the campus of Texas A&M University Galveston (TAMUG) on Pelican Island, about three miles from Fort Crockett. It is maintained at a dock facility built by TAMUG with funds provided by NOAA. The TAMUG campus waterfront is undergoing extensive renovation, including the addition of a new science center that is now open near the marina. FGBNMS will continue to coordinate with TAMUG for vessel and dive operation support as changes occur.

Significant public input was received during the scoping process promoting the development of a visitor center in Galveston, where people could go to learn more about the FGBNMS and the northwestern Gulf of Mexico. Over the next three years, FGBNMS staff will investigate options and develop a plan for the establishment of a visitor center or visitor contact point (EOAP Activity 1.1). A FGBNMS visitor center would likely be modest in size, but incorporate new technologies to allow visitors to experience the sanctuary without actually going there. The plan will encourage working with partners, such as other federal, state and local agencies, in visitor center development and operation. The plan will also include an analysis of possible locations, size, type of messages and information to be provided, and operational costs. Options suggested during discussions on this topic include a building on the NOAA Fort Crockett campus, a storefront in the Strand area of downtown Galveston, incorporation into redevelopment of the Galveston seawall, or as part of an interagency nature center on the East End of Galveston Island.

FGBNMS staff will develop (see EOAP Activity 1.4) and implement an educational exhibits plan to utilize existing outreach venues to assist in the dissemination of information about the sanctuary. FGBNMS staff have identified a number of outreach venue locations that could provide for the sanctuary's interpretive needs from both geographical and thematic points of view. These facilities cover a geographic area from Corpus Christi, TX to New Orleans, LA. The sanctuary will seek funding and work with the identified facility to develop appropriate exhibits, informational signage

and other outreach materials. Outreach and interpretive exhibit venues being established or considered include:

- Aquarium at Moody Gardens, Galveston, TX
- Audubon Aquarium of the Americas, New Orleans, LA
- Houston Museum of Natural Science, Houston, TX
- Houston Zoo, Houston, TX
- Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve, Port Aransas, TX
- Texas A&M University at Galveston, Galveston, TX
- Tennessee Aquarium, Chattanooga, TN
- Texas Seaport Museum, Galveston, TX
- Texas State Aquarium, Corpus Christi, TX

Activity 2.3 Implement the “Climate-Smart Sanctuaries” Initiative.

Undertake greening efforts to reach the minimal green operating standards outlined in ONMS’ “Climate-Smart Sanctuaries” Initiative by:

- Reducing emissions
- Reducing commuting impact
- Increasing energy efficiency
- Managing waste and supply use
- Managing landscaping impacts and water use

Table 13: Estimated Costs for the Operations and Administration Action Plan

Activity	Estimated Cost (\$000)					Total Estimate 5-Year Cost	Priority Level
	YR 1	YR 2	YR 3	YR 4	YR 5		
(1.1) Current staffing	621	652	684	718	754	3,429	High
(1.2) Staffing increase	0	175	350	525	700	1,750	Medium
(2.1) Manta operations	525	577	885	698	768	3,453	High
(2.2) Facility planning	0	10	10	0	0	20	Low
(2.3) Implement the “Climate-Smart Sanctuaries” Initiative.	5	10	12	15	20	62	High
Total Estimated Annual Cost	1,151	1,424	1,941	1,956	2,242	8,714	