

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY
Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting

Meeting Minutes, Wednesday, August 9, 2006

FGBNMS Headquarters
4700 Ave. U., Bldg. 216, Galveston, TX

Distributed 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:

Frank Burek, Recreational Diving

Dick Zingula, Recreational Diving (Alternate)

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)

Joe Hendrix, Commercial Fishing

Ian MacDonald, Research

John Embesi, Research (Alternate)

Kristina Hardwick, Education (Alternate)

Page Williams, Conservation

Dana Larson, Conservation (Alternate)

James Sinclair, Minerals Management Service

Rusty Swafford, NOAA Fisheries

Advisory Council Members Absent:

Haidee Williams, Education

Frank Wasson, Diving Operations

Beth Keister, U.S. Coast Guard

*Note: The following seats are vacant: Commercial Fishing (Alternate)

FGBNMS Staff Members Present:

G.P. Schmahl, Sanctuary Manager

Jennifer Morgan, Advisory Council Coordinator

The regular meeting of the FGBNMS Advisory Council

9:02 AM Meeting called to order
Minutes approved

Approval of agenda

Add new business; have Kristina report on license plates; add future meeting dates

Irby pointed out new directory and handbook

GP

Sanctuary update

Busy time of year

PowerPoint-include hardcopy with minutes

Research season

Long-term monitoring project

2005 coral bleaching event...lasted into Jan of '06; most corals did recover; *Millepora*, fire coral, is most susceptible....was affected. Was 30% cover of fire coral at pinnacle areas of Stetson. Major mortality event of fire coral became obvious when photos were examined.

Millepora is fast growing; have seen some signs of recovery now.

Dick – What month were photos taken GP-June

This year, Gulf waters already warmer than usual (higher than normal); ID potential hot spots—one present in northern Gulf of Mexico.

Ian—Temp at sea surface. GP – Yes, I think so

Ian-Tropical heat index site...NOAA site

A few more cruises scheduled; will watch potential bleaching carefully

DUOY workshop; gave overview of teacher workshop; successful cruise; 18 participants from all over country

Mooring buoys – resource management technique to keep people from anchoring on banks;

3" core holes, 2-3 ft deep; cemented in; U bolts established originally in 1980s; had been down 6 or 7 buoys; July—sponsored mooring buoy installation cruise; Would cost much \$ if got a commercial dive co. to do this. Done with volunteers and our staff; expertise of FKNMS volunteers important; 5 U bolts were installed and a new one was put in at ???

Coral reef separated from other bank....untouched....will use this location for research

RV point Glass was auctioned off through GSA; net \$234,100; \$\$ will go to construction of new vessel; Capt. Ken Daniels was recognized; boat left us on July 7th

Showed schematic of new vessel that will be built; request for ship builders to submit bids closed on??; GP served on panel to review proposals; the technical aspects; expect contract to be awarded by Sept.; 18 month build out process.; 80-90 ft. catamaran type; faster cruising speed than

Kristina – Outreach opportunity to name vessel? NMSP has a naming policy—vessels of this size named after seabirds;
GP would prefer to have a more appropriate name; as seabirds not abundant at the banks

Kristina – Something to generate publicity; kids essay contest

GP – Big thing coming up for us is MPR

Going to officially kick off with public scoping in October

Oct. 17-league city; 19 –Corpus Christi-Harte Research;; 24 -New Orleans-

Page – Need to know venues quickly to get into newsletters

GP –Suggestion on times to hold meetings?; some have said 6 pm-ish time is difficult with rush hour driving; some have had dual session—afternoon and evening meeting

Joe – FMC always does 7 pm

John Embesi – Agrees with 7 pm

Frank Burek – Problem with anything before 7; if start early, people will feel that they've missed some of it and then not show

Irby – Make sure word gets out to ensure attendance; asked if New Orleans is conducive to such a meeting?

GP – Have heard that they've recovered enough and are encouraging such meetings

Irby – Get word out to dive community

Page – Asked about format for scoping

GP – SOS report will be available and conditions report available; education displays; talking about best way to run meetings – considering round table method; comment cards

Page/Joe – Do we have staff to do this?

Ian – Chat rooms website?

GP – Government doesn't allow chat rooms; but we will accept comments through website

Ian – Harte center could sponsor internet resources

GP – Would be a good forum for idea exchange; but can it be considered official?

John Stout – Strongly agree with Ian; could get a lot of feedback

Rusty – Fisheries ID major user groups and go to their meetings; very successful; depends on how much real public input you want

GP – We can get names of organizations from Rusty; would be great help

Page – Official final date to receive comments?

GP – No, federal register notice will state this; requirement is only open for 30 days; but will be more than this...probably 60 days with scoping at the beginning of this period.

Page – So sometime in Dec. probably

GP – Yes, then real work begins; organize info; major issues will fall out

Art – Really want to do something on internet; even if not a government site

Ian – Need an actively involved moderator

Art – SAC could do this

Kristina – CEC Houston does this sort of thing

James – Chat room moderator could direct participants to the official site for submission of comments

GP – These discussions can lead to things becoming part of the record; carry political weight if not official weight

Art – Documents to go public with? When?

GP – SOS report will be available mid Sept.; so not until right before scoping; score card from conditions report and goals and objectives will go into SOS report

Art – Want a summary; need something to give out sooner

GP – Hope to have SOS report soon to distribute; will also have a 2-pager ready to go early September

Page – Also have documents available on website

GP – Will have ready at least a couple of weeks before scoping

Sanctuary update continued...

FGBNMS budget history

Plus-Up in 04, maintained in 05; sig. decrease in 06; 07 looks bad; house and senate budgets are wildly different for NMSP;

Dana-How does FGBNMS budget compare with other sanctuaries

GP – Ours is small but our site/operation is small; some reason to have larger budget, as our site is remote and difficult to access

John Stout – Would like SAC to see what our expected expenditures are

Irby – How to meet budget cuts; where to cut? Staff?

GP – Staff cuts would be a last resort; some program cuts

Art – According to lifecycle framework, we should have an increasing budget right now; while others should have smaller budget

GP – Explained lifecycle framework as it relates to budget

Dana – Cost of new vessel

GP - 3.2 million for purchase

Kristina – Previous space at A&M at no cost

GP – No, leased office space; now have no lease, but have maintenance/operation costs of NOAA facility

GP – Agency/Industry cruise; Tim Gibson headed this; asked Tim to give summary

Tim – Good representation by Council; other rep – NMSP, MMS, John Ogden, ; good information exchange; Art was a dive master; 14 slots on industry side; 2

cancellations only; weather cooperated; valuable tool for info sharing in casual informal basis; hope to continue this and rotate people in/out on industry side; GP – John Ogden had not been to FGBNMS before; also whale shark sighted from boat; not quick enough to get in water.

Review of 1991 Management Plan

What is existing management plan? See previous handouts and full document that SAC received earlier; MP part is only 15-20 pages

PowerPoint—Attach GP's slides

Dana – What is Bioprospecting?

Page – Does harvesting include collecting for teaching and research? And for aquariums?

GP - Yes

Emma – Conditions Report

Progress has been made

Background; concept developed by Steve Gittings, head of science at NMSP.

System wide monitoring network; see handout

List of 17 questions for reporting system; to be fed into report card that will become a piece of conditions report; Stellwagen bank report card as an example. An explanation for every question; and lists the rating scheme for that question (text with each rating level differs for each question). Questions themselves are identical for all sanctuaries.

Draft is not for distribution; for your personal consumption; with your input we will complete our report card

This morning will go through questions; will explain why Emma answered each question as she did.

GP – This is a first cut; will put together a small internal working group to prepare the document

John Stout – Will this be in the SOS report? The conditions report seems to answer a lot of the why questions

Emma – Conditions report will be available for scoping

Emma read intro paragraph to the report

Reviewed 14 questions (other 3 refer to submerged cultural resources)

Plan is to revisit these questions 5 years from now (parallels MPR process).

1) Semi permeable membrane devices put in water a few years ago. Did show small amounts of DDT

Global warming; this year water never cooled down to what it should; last year was worst bleaching event on record; typically driven by water temps

Temp and salinity probes used on a regular basis; fresh water lenses found at Flower Garden Banks; have not seen the lenses go all the way down to the banks; water is getting out there from rivers; after Rita, huge plume of contaminants and water reached out to FGB and beyond and was persistent

2) ITM studies show eutrophic conditions are good

3) Mercury and *ciguatera*; tissue samples showed levels harmful for human consumption; we need to let people know if we have harmful conditions; HI389 is pop fishing spot; drilling mud there has high levels of mercury; need to have information available

Art – *Ciguatera* is naturally occurring; should we be concerned about this really?

Emma – Accumulation in top predators is probably the concern; these questions are really for Tracy Villareal who is studying this

Kristina – Need further study and risk assessment of fish consumption; report card can be used to rank priorities

John Stout – Recreational fishermen not eating barracuda

Joe – Are mercury levels above FDA recommended levels?

4) Discharge from vessels and oil and gas platforms

Emma requested James Sinclair, MMS, to review numbers and update her with any corrections

Currently many questions about LNG plants

5) Presented 5 top tier biological zones

Will present descriptions of each zone

Dick – Not clear that Stetson doesn't have a coral cap; 50% coverage does not apply to Stetson

Emma and GP – Will need to distinguish between the two zones; will also be clear since each bank is dealt with separately

Dick – Does soft bottom community mean deep areas only?

Emma – No, soft bottom communities anywhere in the sanctuary; this scheme is not done by depth, but by habitat

6) Hard to answer; can only guess at this; would take much time; research to answer this concretely

7)

8) Pressures of divers and fishing

Ian – So is surface long-lining permitted?

Emma- A gray area

GP – Long lining is a single line that terminates in one or more hooks; has been interpreted differently; right now not enforcing that as an issue; regulations are ambiguous; needs to be cleared

Dick – Can you add “from rod and reel” to clarify?

Art

11:45 - Pause for public comment; no comments

9) The more time in the water, the more things we see and document

10) Hard to document

11)

12) James – Are top predators the same as key species?

GP- Not necessarily keystone species; Hmm...this should be cleared up

Sharks, rays, grouper, snapper are top predators but not keystone species;

Diadema would be a keystone species

13) Bleaching event described here; concern that when FL reefs began declining, fire coral there was the first to go; hope our fire coral regrows

14) Need to think ahead to future conditions

James – When Sea Searcher was running was there a greater impact on the reef?

GP – Could estimate that; Emma – Probably only 500 divers per year.

Page – Should be liquefied natural gas, not “liquid”

GP – If SAC has comments, please provide feedback, we’d be interested in knowing

John Stout – Old gear found....is it really old or recent?

Emma – Mostly old....especially oil and gas stuff

Irby – Do we suspect people are long-lining out there now?

Yes

Dick – Help with enforcement by staff on HI389?

Emma – We did have report when Mobil was there, but no longer; we do report illegal activities; mostly we don’t know about this until after the fact

Lunch

SS video

12: 50 PM

Priority issues discussion

GP noted that the list does not give actions to take to address the issues.

These are the issues identified by the staff. Some issues may be missing: e.g.

Page mentioned harvesting for research and aquarium uses.

Separate aquaculture and artificial reefs

Add: Coral Disease, Habitat Connectivity

Comments:

Art – Petition to stop fishing – really user conflict, not loss of fish

Ian - User fees, entry permit; not to limit use or make expensive, but to implement a tool to track users

Frank Burek –

Ian – Would create a work load for FGB staff that is unfunded

Joe – Physical sticker for enforcement purposes; to id user population and interact with them more effectively

Frank Burek- Registration

Kristina – Funds better spent on auto license plate effort instead of sticker for registration/fee; would be better publicity

Clint – Interest in Page’s comment about the sanctuary being a safe place for spawning aggregations and stock populations; comparisons to National Parks – users fee to maintain and sustain programs – not so with the sanctuary

Dana – National ocean study group in congress; show that oceans are overfished

James – “Stamp” would be a certificate that users received after completing an online education course

Kristina – MO State Parks best funded due to sales tax on soda; need to address a way for everyone in the Gulf coast region to feel a sense of connectedness to the sanctuary

John Stout – Already requirements for anglers – online registration; report all landings;

Art – If too elaborate of a user fee, then too “expensive” to implement

Ian – Currently researchers are the only ones reporting

Joe – Does NMS Act allow for managers to collect fees?

GP – Yes it does

Irby –

Review of scoring on priority issue exercise

Other ways to score this information

Rank or score each item with 1-10

Ian – Survey monkey online

Jen – Distinction between issues and pressures on resource

GP- Exercise has been very helpful; enforcement is presence

James - Education could also be included as an “issue”

Move to administrative issues:

Letterhead

Kristina – License plates, \$15,000 fee and application

Florida manatee plate; now \$45million revenue

Need to raise \$15,000 and funnel through a 5013c that will take a cut (so need to raise more than the 15K)

New business:

Art – Motion to remove concept of primary and alternate members

Any difficulty through HQ with making change

Other sanctuaries with no alternates

Art – Problem with tracking voting; and with consistency

Kristina – Problem solved with proxy votes

Irby – Need to slow down and recognize everyone to speak

James – Person holding proxy would wield two votes

Dick – Does not favor proxy vote

Frank – Things not on agenda, can not vote

Clint – Table this until next meeting

Irby – Move to table

Joe – Second

Follow or not?

Clint would like to see written material on how proxy would work

Vote to table motion; yea – Ian, Clint, Frank Dick, all voting members present voted yes, except chair who abstained

Proxy separate issue from alternates issue: research 2 issues

Kristina – Ed outreach advisory working group to support ed outreach at FGB; form to assist Shelley; wants to make a motion

GP – SAC has authority to do this

Kristina – Operate under authority of Shelley

GP – Would need to be chaired by a SAC member to be an authorized working group, an alternate could chair; a working group to the council not to the staff

Page and Ian – Focus on scoping instead of rewriting charter

Art seconded Kristina's motion and amended it so that Kristina would chair the working group.

GP – References charter: working groups (etc.....see charter)

Page seconded Art's amended motion

Ian – Is such a working group ancillary to our main purpose, won't working groups be formed later during MPR?

Kristina –

GP – Next meeting after scoping; come back to SAC with analyses of scoping comments; form working groups at that time; groups could form by function or issue area; most other sanctuaries end up with an ed working group even if organized by functional group

Dana – All for ed, but we need to be in agreement; educate ourselves first about priority issues

Art – Don't get so focused that we ignore other opportunities; working group is a good idea

Dana – Fear of educating with misinformation

Joe – Working group would not do anything without SAC approval; any objection by voting members here

Vote on amended motion (Kristina to be initial chair); Ian Clint, Frank, Page, Kristina, Art, Joe

None opposed

Vote on original motion: Clint, Frank, Page, Kristina, Art, Joe

None opposed

Chair did not vote on either

Clint – Roles of seats from website; read these; all have charge to chair working group

Clint – Motion to create oil and gas working group

Seconded to Kristina

Ian - Wondering about way we are conducting business. Deeper issue – priority issues now have come in front of goals and objectives. Feels a little like we are drifting.

GP – Goals and objectives should be guiding all activities. Hopefully the issues that are identified are in some ways going to fall into the Goals & Objectives as identified.

Ian – Education not showing up in priority list, but has shown up in goals and objectives.

GP – Jenn is right – priorities are really stressors – enforcement is a tool, education is a tool. All should fit together. All have to feed into goals and objectives.

Ian – Having being selected as representatives, we have defacto power to work in that role – don't need to be empowered.

Clint – Contacted number of people to work on working group. Thinks groups need to be approved.

Motion voted on for Clint to chair an oil and gas working group – Ian, Clint, Frank, Page, Kristina, Joe
Acting chair did not vote

Irby move: Set date for next meeting

GP – Scoping meetings – 2nd/3rd week of October. At least to end of November for public comments. Suggests early December.

Art – 2nd Wednesday of month – standardized. December 13th.

G.P. - Presentation by consultants for comments, and input.

Irby – Consensus for meeting on December 13th in Galveston.

Frank – Next topic – What do you want from Council for scoping?

G.P. – Hope that you can attend one or more of the meetings, willing to assist with any of the meetings, let us know, for logistics.

Page – Send out email tomorrow to all members to remind scoping dates and locations.

G.P. – Formal hearing officer for comments to DOC.

Ian – Suggests that there be some introduction to the Flower Gardens. Set stage for scoping meeting.

G.P. – Yes, we will. Yes, in our case a lot of people don't know much about us.

Irby – Anything else? Motion to adjourn. Adjourned 3:42pm.