

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting Minutes September 12, 2018

Meeting Attendance Roster:

Jimi Mack	Recreational Diving	Present
Jesse Cancelmo	Recreational Diving	Present
Natalie [Hall] Davis	Diving Operations	Present
Frank Burek	Diving Operations	Present
James Wiseman	Oil and Gas Industry	Present
Clint Moore	Oil and Gas Industry	Present
Scott Hickman	Fishing - Recreational	Present
John Blaha	Fishing - Recreational	Absent
Shane Cantrell	Fishing - Commercial	Present
Buddy Guindon	Fishing - Commercial	Present
Adrienne Simoes Correa	Research	Present
Larry McKinney	Research	Absent
Brian Shmaefsky	Education	Present
Jacqui Stanley	Education	Present
Joanie Steinhaus	Conservation	Present
Jake Emmert	Conservation	Present
James Sinclair	BSEE (non-voting)	Present
Mark Belter	BOEM (non-voting)	Present
Mark Zanowicz	U.S. Coast Guard (non-voting)	Present
Rusty Swafford	NOAA Fisheries (non-voting)	Absent
Charles Tyer	NOAA OLE (non-voting)	Present
Barbara Keeler	EPA (non-voting)	Present (webinar)
G.P. Schmahl	Sanctuary Superintendent (non-voting)	Present

Total voting member attendance: 14 of 16 of voting members; 8 votes needed

Others in Attendance:

Leslie Clift, Emma Hickerson, John Embesi, Kelly Drinnen (webinar), Shelley Du Puy, Raven Walker, Marissa Nuttal, Jimmie MacMillan, Tom Bright, Bill Jones, Sharon McBreen (webinar), Andrea Stroymeyer, Matthew Roache (NOAA OLE), Marsh Armitage (W&T Offshore), Dale Shively (TPWD), Fernando Calderon Gutierrez, Josh Bostic, Doug Peter (BSEE; webinar), Sharon McBreen (Pew; webinar); Alex Stuckey (Houston Chronicle; webinar), Cheryl Powell (EnVen; webinar), Joy Austin-Ramsaran (BP; webinar); Sharon Angove (EPA; webinar)

9:14 Meeting called to order by Clint Moore.

9:15 Welcome and Announcements – G.P. Schmahl

Today's meeting is being run through a webinar, and with a sound system.

9:16 Administrative Business – Clint Moore

Adoption of Agenda – motion from James Wiseman, second from Scott Hickman, no discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Approval of May Minutes –no discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

9:24 Constituent Updates

All members provided information about their recent activities and efforts to engage their respective constituent groups. Highlights included:

Jesse Cancelmo – in June 2018 Jesse and Adrienne were invited and hosted by The Ocean Conservancy to spend a day on Capitol Hill and successfully communicated with 5 different congressional staffers about FGBNMS (Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary) and Gulf of Mexico.

Mark Zanowicz – USCG continues to patrol FGBNMS.

Buddy Guindon – reported the fishers are “holding our own” with federal challenges.

Jacqui Stanley – her SEEDS (Students Engaging in the Environment through Discovery and Science) students are slated to visit Rice and Lone Star College. Yorkshire Academy applied for Ocean Guardian School program. The school has also started a gardening program that will tie into watersheds and climate change.

James Sinclair – BSEE (Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement) released a training video in February for offshore workers to help prevent marine debris. BSEE is also planning a trip to a platform within 3 miles of Ewing Bank, and will confirm drillings were shunted to the seafloor.

James Wiseman – reported drilling activity is low in the Gulf. He has been working on “underwater augmented reality” so that more can be “seen” than just the scope of ROVs (remotely operated vehicles).

Shane Cantrell – reported a busy summer offshore, and mentioned the upcoming fishing tournaments in Galveston.

Mark Belter – 3 BOEM (Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management) studies were conducted recently in conjunction with FGBNMS (OA (ocean acidification), long-term monitoring, and multi-beam surveys of selected banks).

Scott Hickman – reported many boats were out on the ocean for the extended snapper season, and he saw lots of boats at FGBNMS. Buddy/Shane/Scott participated in a 2-yr sampling project at offshore platforms and would like to see one of the project leaders give a presentation at an upcoming SAC (Sanctuary Advisory Council) meeting on a topic such as spawning aggregations, including information on the installation of acoustic devices on platforms.

Clint Moore – reported his industry continues to strongly oppose Elvers Bank being included in the proposed sanctuary expansion.

Frank Burek – introduced himself as the newest Council member and shared some of his activities in the diving community.

Adrienne Correa –Rice University will be hosting a Texas coral reef workshop in partnership with University of Texas in October.

Charles Tyer – reported hiring uniformed officers to conduct patrols and the purchase of a 36’ patrol boat; Louisiana state patrol (game warden) recently boarded both recreational and commercial vessels both near and at FGBNMS.

Natalie Davis – reported continuing work on the FGBNMS visitor permit program.

Joanie Steinhaus – reported on sea turtle nests, sea turtle statute art project in Galveston, the TIRN (Turtle Island Restoration Network) fundraiser event on September 30, and single-use plastic bag education/outreach.

Jimi Mack – reported her work with youth through NABS (National Association of Black Scuba Divers) with a summer project in Honduras with 18 youth who were all dive certified. Jimi wants to form a youth organization in north Texas (YMCA kids) focused on FGBNMS.

Brian Shmaefsky – reported on his recent and upcoming talks and conferences. He has become active in Houston’s space port working on regulatory and environmental compliance (nontoxic and biodegradable propellants; recycling rockets) as the rockets cross the Gulf of Mexico.

Jake Emmert – Moody Gardens provided diving support to NOAA and Rice University for 9 missions at FGBNMS.

10:10 Sanctuary Update – G.P. Schmahl

G.P. commemorated Dr. John Wesley Tunnell, Jr. 1945-2018, and his work in the Gulf of Mexico.

G.P. updated the SAC on the following topics:

- Recent administration changes at National Ocean Service and Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
- Current SAC recruitment period
- R/V Manta shipyard maintenance
- Cruise schedule for 2018
 - Mooring buoy maintenance and installations
 - 2018 coral spawning
 - Long-term monitoring programs
 - Localized mortality event site
 - Lionfish invitational cruises
 - ROV cruises (new fish species documented, Maori Basslet)
- Manta ray nursery
- New invasive fish species (Regal demoiselle, *Neopomacentrus cyanomus*) at FGBNMS
- Education/outreach events
 - Get Into your Sanctuary Day, May 2018 at Lasker Park's community pool in Galveston
 - World Ocean Day in June 2018
 - Moody Gardens lionfish dissection and new FGBNMS exhibit
 - Chasing Coral documentary screening
 - FGBNMS traveling exhibit recently moved to Alvin Historical Museum
 - Climate Change & Ocean Acidification 4-day workshop in June 2018
- Coral disease outbreak in Florida
- Harmful ingredients in sunscreens to corals

G.P. reported the SAC's recommendation for sanctuary expansion (see May 2018 SAC meeting minutes) is likely to become NOAA's revised "proposed action" for FGBNMS expansion, with minor modifications (e.g., Stetson Bank). NOAA is required to forward the revised proposal to DOI (Department of Interior) for analysis under the President's "Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy" Executive Order (EO 13795). In order to expedite the expansion process required under NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) regulatory revisions will be minimal so that a Supplemental DEIS will not be required. Therefore SAC regulatory recommendations (i.e. spearfishing) will likely be deferred for future consideration (e.g., management plan review). Because the SAC boundary recommendations mostly follow the NAZ (no activity zone), NOAA will also re-evaluate GMFMC recommendations regarding fishing regulations. G.P. attended the August GMFMC meeting and presented the idea to have

the current FGBNMS regulations applied to the entire boundary within the SAC's proposed boundaries for expanded areas.

12:00 Break for Lunch

Partial removal of HIA389A – Dale Shively/Marsh Armitage

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's (TPWD) Texas Artificial Reef Program – Rigs to Reefs – Dale Shively provided an update and status of the artificial reef program in Texas with specific emphasis on the High Island A-389A platform. Three platforms are near East Flower Garden Banks (EFGB), one of which, HIA376C, would fall within NOAA's preferred alternative for expansion (Alternative 3). West Flower Garden Bank (WFGB) has 2 platforms just north of current boundary, 1 of which (HIA384A) would be included within NOAA's preferred alternative for expansion. Both would likely be towed to reef sites after decommissioning, and no announcements of decommissioning have been made yet. No platform, except HIA389A, would be encompassed with the 2018 SAC recommendation for expansion.

W&T Offshore - Marsh Armitage

Marsh Armitage with W&T Offshore shared a presentation of HIA389A's decommissioning process, structure partial removal, and post removal activities. Sonar reports showed two potential areas requiring additional investigation for site clearance. W&T Offshore has conducted other projects with TPWD, has approximately 80 platforms remaining in the Gulf of Mexico, and plan to continue to participate in the TPWD program.

1:15 Public Comment and Q&A Period

None

1:25 HIA389A Decommissioning Update – G.P. Schmahl/Jesse Cancelmo

Artificial Reef Work Group Study & Recommendations to SAC – Jesse Cancelmo

Jesse gave a presentation on the SAC's history and involvement with the HIA389A, issue, including the report and recommendations issued by the SAC in March 2013. Discussion ensued regarding the function of oil and gas platforms as artificial reefs.. Mark Belter clarified that from BOEM's perspective, removal of the platform is not considered destruction of habitat or marine life, because the structure was intended for temporary purposes.

G.P. Schmahl showed photos taken during the partial removal of the HIA389A platform on July 25, 2018 and from post-removal inspection dives on August 3, 2018.

2:42 East Flower Garden Bank Localized Coral Mortality Event & Symposium – Emma Hickerson

Emma shared a presentation on the 2016 coral mortality event at EFGB, and a summary of information presented at a mini-symposium that was held February 27-28, 2018 in Galveston. The symposium had specific goals, objectives, and outcomes. After presentations from many of the workshop's 40 participants, the group discussed

hypotheses on potential contributing factors (high river outflow, low salinity, high chlorophyll, high organic matter, low oxygen, sustained high water temperature). The following consensus statement was created by the participants: “Low dissolved oxygen the most likely contributing factor of the 2016 highly localized mortality event at the EFGB. Instrumentation on and around the reef documented low surface salinity and higher than average water temperature. High organic matter was detected by remote sensing, and unusually high levels of freshwater outflow from Gulf coast rivers were also measured. The linkages between the conditions measured on the reef at the time of the event, and dissolved oxygen factor, are undetermined. The mechanism resulting in the highly localized nature of the mortality event cannot be determined from available data.”

Discussion ensued regarding other potential factors including Tom Bright’s comment that the nearby brine seep with high hydrogen sulfide content and low oxygen should not yet be ruled out.

3:39 Advisory Council Charter Renewal – G.P. Schmahl

The FGBNMS Advisory Council charter expires in April 2019. If no revisions are necessary, then FGBNMS submits it to ONMS director for renewal. However, if revisions are desired, such as including additional constituent group representatives, this is the time to have those discussions. James Wiseman (pending re-appointment), Brian Shmaefsky, Jake Emmert, and Frank Burek volunteered to be on a SAC subcommittee to review the charter renewal, with Frank and Brian co-chairing and meetings to be held in the Houston area.

3:55 Working Group Updates & Reformations

The SAC discussed the reformation of the Artificial Reef Working Group. Clint shared Paul Sammarco’s suggestion of inventorying the platforms around the proposed expansion banks. Mark Belter suggested narrowing the scope to build the connection between Texas and Louisiana state artificial reef programs and FGBNMS. Buddy, Clint, and Sammarco volunteered to be on the Artificial Reef Working Group. **MOTION CARRIED** – none opposed. Natalie suggested this working group conduct business via email so as to not overtax the Council members working on the various working groups.

The SAC then discussed the formation of a Marine Debris Working Group. Shane suggested Joanie giving the group an update rather than creating a WG. Joanie suggested having her co-worker Theresa, who is working on the microplastics study with Turtle Island Restoration Network, to come present at the next SAC meeting.

Mooring Buoy Working Group

G.P. stated some funding could come from the DWH (Deepwater Horizon) NRDA (Natural Resource Damage Assessment) funds for mooring buoys at the deeper sites in the proposed expansion to allow access for fishing. As soon as expansion goes through, the management plan then needs to be revised including the mooring buoy plan.

Recreation/Tourism/Marketing Working Group

Shane and Emma both suggested rolling several of the working groups (e.g., Visibility, Underwater Webcam, Marine Debris) into one.

Underwater Webcam Working Group

Jesse reported Rod Stanley continues to gather information from industry. One of the options is to install a webcam on the HIA389A structure. Jesse has renewed his connection with Into the Blue, and they are looking into connecting into an existing fiber optic cable under the seafloor.

Visibility Working Group

Jacqui has contacted several national marine sanctuaries regarding their signage, and Scott asked if G.P. submitted an official request to HQ for signage. G.P. responded he has been advised that FGBNMS could send in an official request for the next budget cycle, but current funding for signage is very low.

Visitor Permit Program Working Group

G.P. relayed HQ's concerns on implementing a mandatory visitor permit program right now, including the complication of the regulatory process that FGBNMS is about to engage in regarding sanctuary expansion. Natalie said she will research more information needed for the "purpose and need" for this proposed action and will report back.

4:43 New Business

No new business.

5:04 Meeting Adjourned - All in favor. Approved.

Next SAC Meeting scheduled for November 1, 2018.