

**FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY
Sanctuary Advisory Council Boundary Expansion Working Group
Meeting Minutes
November 8, 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
Scott Hickman	Fishing - Recreational	Present (webinar)
Buddy Guindon	Fishing - Commercial	Not Present
Adrienne Simoes-Correa	Research	Present (webinar)
Charles Tyer	NOAA OLE	Not Present
Randy Widaman	Diving Operations	Present
Jake Emmert	Conservation	Present

Total member attendance: 8 of 10 members (8 of 9 voting members)

Others in attendance:

Bill Kiene, Shelley Du Puy, Dan Dorfman (National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science - webinar), Randy Clark (NCCOS - webinar), Chris Jeffrey (NCCOS – webinar), and Leslie Clift (webinar)

5:15 PM – Meeting called to order by Clint Moore

Adoption of Agenda – Shane moved to adopt, Jake seconded motion. No discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Adoption of Minutes – Discussion ensued to add an explanation regarding the sanctuary position that an alternative had to be chosen for expansion due to a NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) requirement. Jesse noted the combined areas of proposed expanded sanctuary between Alternatives 2 and 3 didn't change much in actual size covered; and the main idea for rectangular boundaries developed in Alternative 3 was for enforcement ease. Clint said his industry is concerned with 7 banks with the rectangular boundaries and not being able to access the flanks of the banks for oil &

gas resources. Discussion ended. Motion by Shane to adopt as amended Shane, and seconded by Randy. All in favor, motion approved.

5:15 PM – Public comment

None

The group discussed salt domes and the formations explored, developed, the flanks that have yet to be developed, and the reservoirs above the salt versus those deeper (10,000-20,000 feet deep) that are speculated to be distributed in a donut-shaped pattern around the salt domes. Clint reiterated the oil and gas industry's focus now is to access the subsalt and salt flanks. The slide used for discussion can be found on Clint's website and is titled, "Subsalt Deep Drilling Grows in the Gulf of Mexico".

6:06 PM NCCOs Presentation (Dan Dorfman)

Dan explained a draft model on site selections and the type of process used to derive it. Dan proposed the group discuss the study area, how to define/establish areas of ecological importance, design criteria ("boxing off"), and how to map conflicting uses and their distributions.

Dan suggested eliminating three banks (Claypile, Coffee Lump, and Applebaum) from the study area that have no current biological information. Jake said his concern is that biological connectivity and the "bigger picture" could be jeopardized if the study area is reduced.

Dan used 10 hectare analysis units in his analysis. The model included no activity zones (NAZ) and Core Sensitivity Zones. Dan wants to go through the observations from ROV dives and add them as a data layer so that more than just geological data are used in the analysis.

Clint brought up the subject of the minimum height above the pleniplan that is used to trigger the classification of PSBF (potentially sensitive biological features) and Core Sensitivity Zones. The group discussed, and suggested asking BOEM how they set the 8 ft (2.4 meters) height for PSBFs. Dan will research the types of annotations available for ROV dives.

Into his analysis, Dan added the framework from the criteria the 2007 BEWG produced, so that some specific ranking criteria could be applied. The analysis model could be set to avoid conflicts with active shipping lanes (fairways) but still meet ecological protection criteria.

The group looked at a map of the study area with large-scale VMS data from 2006-2016. Dan added the analysis could be directed to concentrate on areas with less fishing pressure. Jesse said he had heard that off of Louisiana, 70% of recreational fishing trips go to platforms, and asked Scott if it was similar for Texas. Scott and Shane replied yes, especially out of south Texas before the platforms were pulled out.

Dan said he ran the model, using a site selection algorithm, with a scenario where a minimum 80% of NAZs and a minimum of 60% of Core Sensitivity Zones were represented. He then introduced spatial continuity clustering, while avoiding some of the conflicts. Shane remarked the boundaries in the model Dan produced are different (much smaller) than the Preferred Alternative boundaries. Dan and Chris Jeffrey discussed the model and the potential reasons why the boundaries are different in the model versus the Preferred Alternative, such as the model excluded conflicts (e.g., oil and gas infrastructure) and could further be set to exclude high fishing use areas.

Discussion ensued on how the Core Sensitivity Zones are not biological but are based on topography and geological characterization. Dan commented that there is a proven, strong correlation between rugosity and distribution of biological communities.

The group talked about shipping lanes and the difficulty in getting them changed due to sanctuary boundaries (e.g., moving the fairway 5-6 miles south, off of Geyer Bank), and how to avoid conflict yet protect the banks.

Discussion turned next to the shape of the boundaries, using a set of design rules (e.g. to what degree would the boundary shapes be concave, minimize patches, minimize vertices, minimize perimeter). Area, perimeter, and patchiness are the 3 design rules that Dan wants to focus on. Clint added the group discussed a minimum of 6-sided polygons to a maximum 12-sided polygons. Jesse noted he wants to stay with rectangular boundaries. Bill added embayments with concavities would most likely be unavoidable, and stair-step perimeters could be better. Dan asked for guidance on allowing embayments or not, and he would bring the boundary shapes to the BEWG for their feedback.

Dan said he had learned more about how the sites in Alternatives 4 and 5 were selected, and asked the BEWG if they would like to see some slides he could put together for the next meeting that would explain the selection process. The group decided to remain focused on the study area only, but could look at that information in the Spring 2018.

The group considered what would happen if the model does not select sites identified in the Preferred Alternative.

Lastly, Clint asked how ecological significant communities would be determined, and Dan responded that ROV data would be analyzed.

Next date for BEWG is scheduled for Thursday, Dec 14.

8:00 PM Shane motioned to adjourn, Randy seconded. Meeting adjourned.