

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY  
**Sanctuary Advisory Council**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**February 20, 2013**

**Meeting Attendance Roster:**

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

Others in attendance:

Sarah Davies  
 Clint Moore  
 Jen Morgan  
 Bill Kiene  
 Kelly Drinnen  
 John Embesi  
 Marissa Nuttall  
 Shelley DuPuy  
 Ryan Eckert

## **Administrative Business**

A regular meeting of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS) Advisory Council was held on Wednesday, February 20, 2013 at 9:00 AM, at the NOAA Galveston Lab. Council Chair, Larry McKinney, as well as Council Vice-Chair, Jesse Cancelmo, were absent. Paige Williams moved to elect G.P. Schmahl as chair pro tem. None were opposed. G.P. called the meeting to order at 9:25 AM. G.P. welcomed the council and the public, gave a brief "safety moment" noting that the meeting was being held in building 305 due to the roof work on building 216.

Following approval of the meeting agenda, G.P. reviewed the current council recruitment period and issues needing to be addressed by the charter subcommittee. He noted today's light meeting attendance due to some last minute cancellations. Approval of meeting minutes will be tabled until the next meeting. G.P. explained that he would like the charter subcommittee to work on an amendment necessary to have SAC representation by both BOEM and BSEE and that this issue should be dealt with sooner than other charter related issues.

Page Williams expressed concern over council seats that are not represented at meetings. G.P. agreed, noting that some positions have had poor attendance on a regular basis. The council members engaged in a discussion of meeting attendance issues. They stated the need to enforce attendance requirements. G.P. added that although it is beneficial to have members from a broad geographic range, it becomes difficult for those individuals to attend meetings. James Sinclair stated that he is interested in serving on the charter subcommittee.

## **Sanctuary Update**

G.P. Schmahl, Sanctuary Superintendent, presented an update on sanctuary activities since February 2013. G.P. noted that we are currently in a winter lull and have not been offshore recently. The next cruise will be the quarterly water quality cruise at the end of February. He welcomed Ltjg Jamie Park as the new vessel operations officer and recognized Marc Weekly for his service during the past three years. G.P. highlighted the 2012 Research Report and gave an overview of the year's research activities that included 13 cruises, 48 days at sea, 35 scientists, 20 plus partners, 738 research dives, 6 new species records, and 3 publications. G.P.'s update also included the recent federal register notice regarding the proposed listing determinations for 82 reef building coral species. A response was filed by the center for biological diversity. NOAA determined that 66 of those species are warranted to be listed and that two Acropora species should be reclassified from threatened to endangered. The comment period is open until March 7<sup>th</sup>. G.P. noted that Montastrea, which is abundant at FGBNMS and a primary reef builder, would be listed as endangered. Therefore, the FGBNMS would be endangered reefs. We do not yet know if these species will be listed. The next step would be to develop a recovery plan. A recovery plan for Acropora is being developed and would be the first coral recovery plan ever written. ONMS does not write recovery plans; this is dealt with by a fisheries office. Additionally, a recent publication has suggested that the Montastrea complex be renamed with the genus Orbicella. G.P.'s presentation also included the following topics: the Battle of Galveston Commemoration on Jan. 11-13, 2013; the

FGBNMS Seaside Chat Series; FGBNMS hosted events including the Texas Outdoor Writers Association and Sea Turtle Saturday; development of a FGBNMS traveling exhibit; a recent NOAA report about the benefits of the no entry and no consumptive use areas in the Dry Tortugas in Florida; expansion of the sanctuary in American Samoa; proposed expansions in California; and the proposed expansion in Thunder Bay.

### **Youth Working Group Update**

Jacqui Stanley reviewed the meetings held with the students from Ball High School that are participating in the Youth Working Group. She stated that now, following several presentations to the students on sanctuary basics and issues, we would like the students to work on what they can do to further sanctuary visibility. They will also work to recruit younger students so that the working group can continue into next year. The students plan to attend the May 1<sup>st</sup> SAC meeting.

### **Social Media Update**

G.P. announced that the sanctuary now has a twitter account. Kelly Drinnen explained that we have sent 57 messages and have 95 followers. Twitter allows the web site to get more hits. Using trending words draws users to new topics and messages.

### **Artificial Reef Working Group Update**

G.P. read aloud a recent email from March Armitage regarding current work on Hi-A-389-A. He explained that they are working plugging wells and getting estimates on other work needing to be done. More information about any possible revised proposal will be forthcoming.

Jesse Cancelmo and Will Heyman were not available to give the working group update. Frank Burek—working group member, however, was present and provided a brief report. He presented the final working group recommendation for the council's consideration. A further discussion on this topic is scheduled for the May 2013 Council meeting. G.P. mentioned that this issue is much bigger than just the sanctuary, and is gaining much interest across the Gulf of Mexico. John Embesi will be attending the BSEE and multi-agency meeting in New Orleans tomorrow that will address platforms and artificial reefs. The Council members engaged in further discussion on the artificial reef topic.

### **Update on the Proposed Amendments to National Marine Sanctuary Regulations**

Jen Morgan presented information on the recent federal register notice that detailed the proposed amendments to sanctuary regulations with special emphasis on those that would affect FGBNMS. Specific topics covered included: site evaluation list, review period by fishery councils for fishing regulations, elimination of redundant language, submerged lands regulatory language, consistency in new boundary descriptions, new definitions and elimination of out-of-date terms, elimination of "conventional hook and line gear" language for FGBNMS, use of "longline" in place of "bottom longline" for FGBNMS, consolidated permitting procedures, special use permits and fees, and authorizations.

## **Public Comment Period**

Page Williams explained and encouraged interest in two areas of concern to her: Houston's trap, neuter, spay program and the beverage container bill. In regard to plastics and marine debris, she showed the trailer for a documentary being filmed on Midway Island.

## **Guest Presentation by Sarah Davies**

Sarah Davies, graduate student at the University of Texas is working on coral spawning at FGBNMS. She discussed the life cycle differences between broadcast spawning corals, considered more ecologically important, and brooding corals (which settle 'close to home'). FGBNMS has a high percentage of broadcast spawning coral. One of Sarah's central questions is "where do all the FGB babies go?" In examining genetic connectivity and recruitment, she found that there is low genetic diversity at FGBNMS. Low genetic diversity, especially of *Montastrea* spp. is of concern—particularly with any significant mortality events.

## **Update on the RESTORE Act of 2011**

G.P. reviewed the purpose and goals of the RESTORE Act and presented a PowerPoint used previously by Billy Causey. The law was passed to direct money back to the Gulf of Mexico and individual states to be used for restoration and recovery. Use of the funds is not limited to things that were a direct result of the oil spill. The funds can be used to address other issue or human caused threats. Rusty Swafford said that money is now going into this effort as it was signed by the appointed judge yesterday.

## **NOAA Law Enforcement Update**

Charles Tyer provided a brief report on the recent vessel sinking. Last month a recreational fishing vessel sank within sanctuary boundaries. The people and a dog were rescued. The vessel did not go down, but is still floating 22 mile off Sabine Pass. Charles has been in touch with the vessel's owner. There was no damage to the sanctuary.

The meeting adjourned at 2:50 PM.