

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

**Sanctuary Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
November 7, 2019**

Meeting Attendance Roster:

Sepp Haukebo	Recreational Diving	Present
Jesse Cancelmo	Recreational Diving	Present
Natalie Davis	Diving Operations	Present
Frank Burek	Diving Operations	Present
Ruth Perry	Oil and Gas Industry	Present
Vacant	Oil and Gas Industry	
Scott Hickman	Fishing - Recreational	Present
Robert Kirschner	Fishing - Recreational	Present (late)
Shane Cantrell	Fishing - Commercial	Present
Buddy Guindon	Fishing - Commercial	Present
Adrienne Simoes Correa	Research	Absent
Vacant	Research	
Brian Shmaefsky	Education	Present
Sharon Kamas	Education	Absent
Joanie Steinhaus	Conservation	Absent
Jake Emmert	Conservation	Present
James Sinclair	BSEE (non-voting)	Present
Mark Belter	BOEM (non-voting)	Absent
Mark Zanowicz	U.S. Coast Guard (non-voting)	Present
Rusty Swafford	NOAA Fisheries (non-voting)	Absent
Charles Tyer	NOAA OLE (non-voting)	Present
Vacant	EPA (non-voting)	
Brooke Shipley for Dave Shively	TPWD	Present
G.P. Schmahl	Sanctuary Superintendent (non-voting)	Present

Total voting member attendance: 11 of 16 of voting members; 9 votes needed for quorum

Others in Attendance:

Leslie Clift, James MacMillan, Kelly O'Connell, Kelly Drinnen, Shelley DuPuy, Emma Hickerson, Michelle Johnston, Tim Doolin, Nathan Putman (LGL), Brooke Shipley, Ian MacDonald, John Walker, Bill Jones, Shalia Roberts (Sail Relief Team/Burning Man), Jennifer Csicsery-Ronay (Sail Relief Team/Burning Man), Nicole Pope (Sail Relief Team/Burning Man), Lisa Gianukos (Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation (CELF), Amanda Brown (CELF) Greg Ball, Aaron Bawteamp, NOAA OLE Frank Giaretto, Theresa Morris (TIRN; webinar), Greg Boland (webinar), Katie Denman (HQ ONMS; webinar), Tom Bright (webinar), Mark Mueller (BOEM; webinar), Michelle Masi (webinar), Natasha Mendez-Ferrer (Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC); webinar), Joy Austin (BP; webinar), and Jeb Adame (Backline; audio)

9:16 Meeting called to order by Advisory Council Chair Scott Hickman.

9:16 Welcome and Announcements – G.P. Schmahl

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

G.P. explained the new security access at the front door of the FGBNMS office building.

9:21 Administrative Business – Scott Hickman

Several Advisory Council members spoke about Clint Moore's recent passing and his volunteer service with FGBNMS.

Adoption of Agenda – motion from Frank Burek, second from Jake Emmert. All in favor, motion approved.

Adoption of Minutes – Leslie will distribute an updated draft with two small corrections. Motion to approve with corrections from Brian Shmaefsky, second from Frank Burek. All in favor, motion approved.

2020 meeting schedule – Thursday, February 13, 2020; Tuesday, May 12, 2020; Thursday, September 10, 2020; Wednesday, November 18, 2020

9:40 Assessing Chronic Oil Discharge from Mississippi Canyon 20, a Platform in the Gulf of Mexico – Dr. Ian MacDonald

In 2004, Hurricane Ivan pushed a storm surge into the Mississippi Delta and when it came out, the resulting mud slide toppled the Mississippi Canyon 20 platform (135 meter depth; approximately 10 miles southeast of the south pass of Mississippi River) and it slid 150-300 m to the SE, burying the pipeline. Within a week, a spill was noticed and a Unified Command was implemented. Fifteen years later (longest oil spill in US history), it remains a response issue because it's still leaking. A \$660M trust was set up to undertake mitigation measures, response, and then assessment. Currently, \$330M has been spent on dredging, drilling, plugging, and the abandonment process on 9 of its 25 wells. Taylor Oil said daily release rates were 0.13 bbl/day (5.5 gal/day). However, remote sensing data estimated higher release rates of an order of magnitude greater. In September 2001, BSEE funded NOAA to conduct 6 days of scientific data collection effort using acoustic surveys, direct collections, and optical "bubblometer". Their data revealed multiple sources of oil and methane releases. Estimated flow results: NOAA-FIU-FSU acoustic estimate was 9.04 – 46.94 bbl/day, and NOAA-FSU visual estimate was 18.54 to 107.88 bbl/day. Some oil near the bottom could be settling out or forming deepwater plumes. USCG contracted to have a containment structure installed to extend over the two craters on the seafloor to trap released oil.

Discussion followed. Scott Hickman asked about how this compared to release from natural seeps. Ian responded 0.5 MMbbl per year (million barrels) (1,370 bbl/day) may come from natural seeps, but this

includes dry gas seeps that may not be carrying oil. Jesse Cancelmo inquired about Taylor's reaction to this study. Ian responded Taylor does not agree with the results. Jake Emmert asked about marine wildlife interactions. Ian responded fish tissue samples collected in box core had high levels of contamination. Further analysis has not yet supported with funding. Captain John Walker asked if the oil leaking from the site is affecting the fishing industry. Ian said it's indisputable that oil impacts wildlife and that the rates being released offshore would warrant a major response onshore. The permanent solution would be to plug the wells. Sepp asked about the containment dome effective rates. Ian responded the containment dome is effective (~30 bbl/day) but when strong currents occur, oil slicks reappear. Funding is needed to obtain data on how much methane gas is being released. Nathan asked about fingerprinting of the oil. Ian said it could easily be done.

10:30 Federal Offshore Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery: Resolving Barriers to Sustainable Fishery Certification – Nathan Putman (LGL Ecological Research Associates)

LGL's analysis suggests that the penaeid shrimp and Rock Shrimp fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring. At present, the by-catch fish to shrimp ratio is 2.08. Without TEDs (turtle exclusion device) and BRDs (bycatch reduction device), the ratio is 16:1 (fish to shrimp). Approximately 70% of red snappers in bycatch are Year 0 (juveniles). A total of 1,440 valid permits currently constitute the fishery. Number of permits remaining in 2026 is estimated at 1,296. LGL's view is the Offshore Federal Shrimp Fishery in the Gulf of Mexico currently meets reasonable certification requirements for sustainability, especially given fishery improvement developments since the 1990's (BRD's, TED's, effort reductions, and permit moratoriums). Post-TED mortality estimates of sea turtles are about 94% lower (4,450 total deaths) than pre-regulation estimates (70,620). The barriers remaining to sustainability certification for the Gulf of Mexico's shrimp fishery are related to shrimp fishery bycatch. The federal observer program coverage rate is low (at most 2% for the fishery) and contains large categories of unidentified finfish and invertebrates that prevent full identification of non-target species to the specifications required by sustainability certifications. Electronic Logbook (ELB) coverage is high (over 40%) and can supplement the observer program. On average, using a TED results in a 6% shrimp loss. TEDs must maintain a minimum 88% effectiveness rate or the permit is closed/pulled.

11:50 Break for Lunch

12:23 Sanctuary Update – G.P. Schmahl

Current SAC recruitment – three incumbents (Brian Shmaefsky (Education), Scott Hickman (Recreational Fishing), and Jake Emmert (Conservation) were re-appointed. The Research seat is still in the vetting process.

Research – Global Foundation Ocean Exploration (GFOE) cruises with ROV *Yogi* in August 2019 represented the first time to broadcast live to shore from FGBNMS. Coral spawning off the edges of East Flower Garden Bank was documented. Also documented was a new reef type at 30-40 m depth, comprised of a new species of crustose coralline algae, *Crustophytum* sp. nov. Dr. Mercer Brugler with City University of New York documented a probable new species of black coral at Elvers Bank (*Distichopathes* sp. nov.). ROV surveys were also conducted at Stetson Bank and HIA389A. Dr. Santiago Herrera used an autonomous underwater vehicle (known as a "mesobot") to collect eDNA samples from the water column to assess animal presence.

Education/Outreach – elementary students at St. Thomas Episcopal School in Houston organized a craft sale at their school and donated over \$400 to National Marine Sanctuary Foundation for FGBNMS. Moody Gardens hosted Rhapsody on the Reef during the coral spawning event, including live offshore broadcasts.

Expansion – Proposed Rule is still in review at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Continued discussions with commercial fishing industries are needed still regarding an endorsement program for anchoring within the proposed expansion areas.

NRDA’s “Open Ocean” Draft Restoration Plan 2 (Deepwater Horizon) was released in May 2019, with \$273M designated for restoration of deepwater and mesophotic communities. Active management and protection will receive approximately \$21M over the next 7-8 years. The FGBNMS management plan was looked at during the development of their projected budget and includes mooring buoys, education/outreach, engagement of stakeholders, and endorsement program that will be routed through the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) and can include existing sanctuary, proposed expansion areas, and general Gulf of Mexico.

1:15 Public Comment and Q&A Period

Shalia Roberta and Jennifer Csicsery-Ronay with Sail Relief Team, an international disaster recovery non-profit, propose to build and coral seed an artificial reef and place it underwater off the coast of Texas. Location has not been identified yet. They presented an image of what the artificial reef would look like. TPWD and FGBNMS staff invited them back for more conversations, including the sourcing of the corals.

1:30 In memory of Clint Moore

GP shared a 4-minute video clip excerpt from the expansion interviews conducted by NOAA HQ in July 2019 with several Advisory Council members, including one with Clint Moore. Many Council members shared their memories of Clint.

2:02 FGBNMS Monitoring: Coral Point Counts – Dr. Michelle Johnston

Michelle explained how FGBNMS staff conduct benthic monitoring. FGBNMS has about 40 repetitive photographic stations per study site and about half are original, dating back to 1989. Also, FGBNMS has 24 deeper water repetitive stations at both East and West FGB.

Michelle then explained how the data are analyzed using the CPCe (“coral point count”) computer software program to analyze substrate cover (coral, sponge, macroalgae). The software program generates random points (30 points per image) on the photographs and then the substrate beneath the points are classified (e.g., coral, sponge). Discussion followed. Jesse asked about the value of selecting random study sites over repetitive stations. Random sites give overall benthic cover. Repetitive sites are helpful in analyzing corals growing over time and space, and often show a higher coral cover. Michelle reported the coral cover at FGBNMS is increasing.

2:45 Constituent & Working Group Updates

Shane Cantrell – reported on the first annual Balloon Rodeo which ended in October, with 50 balloons collected, ranging in location from nearshore to near FGBNMS. Also, the second annual fishing rodeo was successful.

Brian Shmaefsky – has been researching anthropogenic effects on water quality including in Roatan, Honduras. Lone Star College will be showcasing the *Chasing Coral* documentary on Nov 21.

Frank Burek – provided information on FGBNMS to Texas Gulf Coast Council of Diving Clubs. Houston Underwater Film Festival is scheduled for April 18, 2020.

James Sinclair – has been conferring with FGBNMS on HIA389A’s broken horizontal beam.

Jesse Cancelmo – presented a presentation to Giggin’ Marlin dive shop in October and covered coral spawning and coral reef conditions around the world. Jesse will be attending DEMA next week in Orlando, Florida, and will give another presentation in March 2020 to another dive club. Jake Emmert will present to Houston Underwater Photographic Society (HUPS) in 2020. Jesse reported the HUPS’ president plans to use social media to improve communications within the dive clubs. Jesse’s first scuba dive ever was in Bermuda in the summer of 1969, and 50 years later, he celebrated it by diving at FGBNMS this summer.

Scott Hickman – attended the GMFMC meeting where Coral Amendment 9 passed. Marine debris was addressed earlier this week at the GCFI meeting in Dominican Republic that he attended. Next year’s GCFI meeting location will be Destin, FL. The Gladding Award winner this year is a pelagic fisherman from St. Vincent & Grenadines. Amendment 50 was passed that gave states the authority to manage individual red snapper quotas. Next week will be NOAA’s Electronic Monitoring workshop for charter fishers. After that, Scott will present in St. Pete at the Marine Recreation Education Program.

Jake Emmert – announced the all-day plastics symposium at Moody Gardens hosted by Turtle Island Restoration Network (TIRN) was successful with 150 participants. Moody Gardens continues to provide diver help to FGBNMS research – \$20,000 overall to coral reef initiatives. Jake explained the American Zoological Association’s (AZA) partnership with Moody Gardens, NMSF, FGBNMS, and Aquarium of the Americas. Jake will also be attending DEMA and will have a training day there regarding conservation research and how to get involved.

Ruth Perry – shared the news on the resurgence to get former TABS V buoy funded and reinstalled. Also, the first ocean acidification buoy at FGBNMS (second in Gulf of Mexico) was recently installed, as a result of a partnership between Shell and Texas A&M University. Ruth attended the OMB meeting with API, Offshore Operators, and Scott Hickman for support for FGBNMS expansion. Ruth announced the Embrace the Gulf 2020 campaign with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance.

Charles Tyer – NOAA’s Office of Law and Enforcement (OLE) has two, new offshore vessels that can make it to FGBNMS for very brief visits, but will not be able to patrol the sanctuary. Additional law enforcement patrols will be conducted using USCG aircraft. NOAA agent Matt Clark retired. Charles introduced his replacement, Frank Giaretto.

Sepp Haukebo – Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) sponsored the Fisheries Exchange at the GMFMC conference, which prompted dialogues with different states in Mexico and also between Mexico and the US. Sepp will draft a letter of support for SAC approval at next meeting regarding Jeep Weekend on Bolivar, potentially addressed to local authorities on Bolivar. Sepp asked about interest in Council members meeting the night before an Advisory Council meeting.

Robert Kirschner – attended Rhapsody on the Reef and toured Coral Rescue Lab at Moody Gardens. He caught a large lionfish by hook and line at an offshore oil and gas platform recently, and saw several other lionfish when snorkeling.

Brooke Shipley reporting for Dale Shively – Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) is working with Anadarko on SPAR platforms at a deepwater site.

Artificial Reef Working Group

Shane Cantrell motioned, seconded by Brian Shmaefsky, to add James Sinclair and Ruth Perry to this working group. Approved unanimously. The group will continue to evaluate a map. Ruth added she might be developing a workshop on artificial reefing as a benefit to fisheries. However, it is not economical for

smaller oil and gas companies to provide decommissioned platform as reefing material. Scott added Louisiana just allocated 150 new reefing sites with associated funding.

Charter Renewal Subcommittee

Awaiting amendment approval to add TPWD as official SAC member.

Underwater Webcam Working Group

The group recently met via webinar in October 2019, with the main goal of confirming all key parties are committed to the near-term project goal of replacing the navigation buoy at HIA389A with a prototype hybrid power buoy in June 2020 for a 6-month test of an underwater camera secured on the partially removed platform at a depth of approximately 100 feet. Another webinar is planned soon at the FGBNMS office.

3:40 New Business

GP presented the 2019 Volunteer of the Year award plaque to Jake Emmert.

3:43 Meeting Adjourned – Charles motioned to adjourn, seconded by Jake. All in favor. Approved.

Next SAC Meeting scheduled for Thursday, February 13, 2020.