

FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY
Sanctuary Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes
September 23, 2015

Meeting Attendance Roster:

Jimi Mack	Recreational Diving	
Jesse Cancelmo	Recreational Diving	Present
Natalie Hall	Diving Operations	Present
Randy Widaman	Diving Operations	Present
James Wiseman	Oil and Gas Industry	Absent
Clint Moore	Oil and Gas Industry	Present
Scott Hickman	Fishing - Recreational	Present
VACANT	Fishing - Recreational	
Shane Cantrell	Fishing - Commercial	Present
Buddy Guindon	Fishing - Commercial	Present
Adrienne Simoes Correa	Research	Present
Larry McKinney	Research	Present
Karla Klay	Education	Absent
Jacqui Stanley	Education	Present
Ellis Pickett	Conservation	Present
Jorge Brenner	Conservation	Absent
James Sinclair	BSEE (non-voting)	Present
Matt Johnson	BOEM (non-voting)	Present
Jason Brand (rep Stephanie Cardenas)	U.S. Coast Guard (non-voting)	Present
Rusty Swafford	NOAA Fisheries (non-voting)	Present
Charles Tyer	NOAA OLE (non-voting)	Absent
Ben Scaggs	EPA (non-voting)	Absent
G.P. Schmahl	Sanctuary Superintendent (non-voting)	Present

Total voting member attendance: 12 of 15 (1 vacant seat)

Others in Attendance:

Bill Jones (diver), Cheryl Powell (Fieldwood), Frank Burek, Kris Benson, and FGBNMS Staff (Kelly Drinnen, Shelley Du Puy, Travis Sterne, Marissa Nuttall, Ryan Eckert, Bill Kiene, Emma Hickerson, Michelle Johnston)

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

G.P. announced that, due to funds, lunch would not be provided, and instead, the meeting would break for 90 minutes for lunch. Funds for future meetings' lunches will be sought.

Recent recruitment resulted in filling the Research seat. G.P. introduced new SAC member, Adrienne Simoes Correa, who gave a brief introduction about herself and her research. Dr. Adrienne Simoes Correa is a coral reef ecologist at Rice University. She is developing research on microbial coral symbiosis and coral diseases, including at the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS) and will be using FGBNMS' long-term monitoring photographs.

Re-appointed seats include Jimi Mack (Recreational Diving), James Wiseman (Oil & Gas Production), and Jacqui Stanley (Education). No applications were received for the recreational fishing seat, resulting in a re-advertisement in June. SAC members Jorge Brenner, Scott Hickman, and James Wiseman provided input on applications and a recommendation has been made to ONMS HQ (Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Headquarters).

G.P. introduced Leslie Whaylen Clift as the new FGBNMS SAC Coordinator, who gave a brief introduction about herself and history with FGBNMS.

FGBNMS maintains a spreadsheet to track SAC member terms, and was distributed during the meeting for SAC members to review. Leslie will send the member term list to all SAC members for reference.

Volunteer hours were requested from SAC members (outside of SAC meetings).

9:30 Administrative Business & Announcements – Clint Moore

The SAC recognized the services of Jesse Cancelmo as Chair and James Wiseman as Vice-Chair.

Adoption of Agenda – motion from Randy Widaman, second from Jacqui Stanley, no discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

Approval of May Minutes – motion from Randy Widaman, second from Scott Hickman, no discussion, all in favor, motion approved.

James Wiseman's 2-year term as Vice-Chair has concluded. The SAC accepted nominations for new Vice-Chair: Jacqui Stanley nominated James Wiseman, Jesse nominated Scott Hickman. Nominee Scott Hickman gave a brief introduction of his service and work related to the FGNBMS. Nominee James Wiseman was not present, but had indicated through email to G.P. and Leslie of his interest in an additional term as Vice-Chair. Ballots were distributed to the 12 voting members present. Ballots were collected and tallied by Kelly Drinnen. James Wiseman was elected as Chair with **7** votes.

9:40 Sanctuary Updates – G.P. Schmahl

Update on sanctuary leadership

John Armor continues to serve as Acting Director of National Marine Sanctuaries in Dan Basta's absence at NOAA HQ.

Leadership training

GP attended the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) leadership team meeting at Channel Islands NMS in September, where an effort was made to update the strategic plan for NMS (National Marine Sanctuary).

SAC chairs summit

The SAC chairs summit is tentatively scheduled for December 2015 in the Washington DC area.

Potential lapse in government funding update

Fiscal year 2015 is ending, with it, is the possibility of an impasse and government shutdown, beginning in the next few weeks.

Sanctuary expansion around the nation

Thunder Bay NMS (Great Lakes) expansion occurred with wide, local support. Gulf of Farallones NMS expanded and is now called Greater Farallones NMS. Cordell Bank NMS expanded northward and has similarities to FGBNMS and includes shelf edge area.

Big Blue Live

This live show spanned over 3 nights on television and highlighted Monterey Bay NMS. NMS programs received good exposure.

Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW)

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF) supports all of the sanctuaries and sponsors an annual Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW) in June each year. This annual event, held in Washington DC, serves to engage stakeholders on all issues related to oceans. This year, G.P. and FGBNMS SAC member Buddy Guindon attended. Buddy was invited to sit on the Sustainable Seafood Panel.

Sanctuary exploration

Hohonu Moana Expedition conducted by NOAA's Office of Exploration on the Okeanos Explorer is currently exploring Papahānaumokuākea MNM and is mapping its seamounts.

Other education and outreach updates

A joint meeting between the SAC chairs and the Federal Advisory Committee resulted in the creation of a program titled, "Get Into Your Sanctuary". This program encourages the general public to look at sanctuaries as locations for recreation. During the June

program (June 27-28), Kelly Drinnen organized a virtual event at Moody Gardens. A sea turtle release was also organized from the R/V MANTA.

FGBNMS traveling exhibit that was located at Moody Gardens is now at Angleton Library, with the possibility of the Houston Zoo as the next location.

The Down Under, Out Yonder (DUOY) Teacher Workshop, sponsored by the Gulf of Mexico Foundation, occurred in July 2015. Workshops occurred at the FGBNMS office, followed with visits to Moody Gardens Aquarium to practice fish identification, and culminating in a dive trip aboard the M/V Fling to FGBNMS.

An annual Industry/Government Expedition, also sponsored by the Gulf of Mexico Foundation, occurred in July 2015. FGBNMS SAC members Clint Moore and James Wiseman participated. Focus discussions included decommissioned oil platforms. National Geographic published a blog for their website about FGBNMS that resulted from their participation on the IGE cruise.

In collaboration with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), FGBNMS hosted its first Volunteer Appreciation Event on July 16, 2015. Many of the volunteers who volunteer with FGBNMS also volunteer with the NMFS. George Hanks Jr., one of the volunteers, was recently appointed as a federal judge in Galveston.

The Gulf of Mexico - Sister Sanctuary Summit occurred on June 24-25, 2015 in Merida, Yucatan Mexico. G.P., Bill Kiene, Sean Morton (FKNMS) and Billy Causey attended the event where partnerships were developed between marine protected areas in the Mexican/Caribbean/Gulf of Mexico waters.

A Marine Protected Areas meeting during March 23-24, 2015, was held in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida and included National Parks Service (NPS) and Cuban counterparts. A follow-up meeting was held this summer in Cuba. Cuban participants expressed interest in FGBNMS, particularly related to oil & gas production, as the Flower Garden banks have similarities to Cuba's offshore bank on the west coast called Banco de San Antonio.

The Deepwater Horizon "Agreement in Principle" with BP was released in July 2015, and the value of settlement is approximately \$18.7 billion. Of the \$5.5 billion assessed through the Clean Water Act penalty, 80% will go to restoration in the 5 Gulf states under the RESTORE Act. \$8.1 billion in natural resources damages will fund Gulf restoration projects designated by federal and state natural resource damage trustees. \$5.9 billion was assessed to settle claims for economic damages by state and local governments. \$600 million was assessed for other claims, including reimbursement for damage assessment costs. Final agreement will be in the form of a "consent decree" in the upcoming months and will be submitted for public comment and court approval. FGBNMS did not receive direct impacts from Deepwater spill. The Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy could use funds for restoration, including the creation and management of protected areas.

Update on sanctuary expansion review process

G.P. gave a review of history of the boundary expansion review process, leading up to the current status, which is drafting the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). FGBNMS has an internal deadline of September 30, 2015, to submit the DEIS to NOAA HQ. The DEIS will be released to public as soon it is processed at NOAA HQ, as early as in December or as late as March/April. A public comment period of 60-90 days will follow the DEIS release. The final EIS will be released 6-9 months after the public comment period begins. The final EIS will be released after a public comment period and will include a regulatory package that identifies boundaries and the regulations that apply within those boundaries. Any regulations on fishing will be reviewed through the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council with issues related to fishing gear and anchoring regulations. FGBNMS has entered cooperative agreements with BOEM and BSEE to work directly with FGBNMS in the review of the DEIS.

Clint asked how a SAC subcommittee or working group could be part of the sanctuary expansion review process. G.P. responded the SAC recommendation was sufficient, but subcommittees might be needed after the DEIS is released to the public.

Jesse asked for clarification on what role Congress may play. G.P. stated a 45 day period is allowed for Congress to comment and any questions must be addressed.

Natalie asked to whom NOAA will respond to after the 60-90 day public comment period. G.P. answered that all comments will be taken into consideration and accepted/not accepted and will publish final rule based on input. It is possible that certain kinds of input might elicit an additional scoping period, but this is not expected.

Cheryl Powell (audience) asked based on an oil/gas perspective, if the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has concerns about discharge issues associated with new infrastructures. National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for discharge has been interpreted to not allow discharge in a NMS. As this goes forward, if new sanctuaries are identified, then that restriction would apply. There is an exemption for existing infrastructure, just not new infrastructure. G.P. responded that FGBNMS is discussing this with EPA about including discharge issues.

Frank Burek (audience) questioned the lack of presence of EPA on the SAC, as it would be her/his job to pass that information along for consideration. G.P. answered yes, but that person has not participated so far. However, FGBNMS will request an alternate representative.

HI389 Removal Update

The process for partial removal of HI389 platform is moving forward with a tentative date in July 2016. If not already complete, applications for permits are close to being finished. Pipeline issues have been resolved. Depth of cut-off will be right above 72 feet horizontal line, most likely at approximately 65 feet, but no shallower than 60 feet. Removed portion will be taken to land for scrap.

Scott Hickman inquired about potential for mooring buoy on submerged portion of platform after partial removal. GP responded FGBNMS is working with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) concerning the placement of a mooring buoy. Most likely, a navigation buoy will not be required. Permit with ACOE will have a 30 day public notice comment period.

Adrienne Simoes Correa asked if any stony corals are present on the structure that will be removed. G.P. responded yes but only 3 coral colonies (*Madracis decactis*) have been observed and have been mapped. G.P. added FGBNMS is working with BOEM and BSEE to conduct a shallow water survey. Adrienne expressed interest in receiving coral colonies removed prior to platform removal.

10:40 Research & Monitoring Update – Emma Hickerson

Emma recognized FGBNMS research team: Michelle Johnston, Marissa Nuttall, Travis Sterne, Ryan Eckert, and John Embisi, as well as other FGBNMS staff who often lend assistance Capt. Mike Shetler, Kelly Drinnen, Jamie Park, and G.P. Schmahl.

14 cruises:

7 monitoring cruises, 3 lionfish response, 4 ROV/boundary expansion/dive safety/management

Monitoring cruises:

National Coral Reef Monitoring Program (NCRMP) – conducted stratified random fish and benthic surveys, as well as implemented Ocean Acidification project. This is part of a national effort that takes place every two years at multiple US coral sites.

East and West FGB Long Term Monitoring

Funding support with BOEM, FGBNMS, and NMSF and led by FGBNMS Staff Michelle Johnston. More than 25 years of continuous monitoring. Monitoring included random transects, coral recruitment and coral colony size surveys, fish surveys, repetitive photographs, water quality sampling, and urchin/lobster surveys.

High Island A389A

BSEE, FGBNMS funded project - FGBNMS Staff John Embesi serves as lead on this project. ROV surveys assessed benthic and fish populations at deeper depths. Fish and benthic surveys will also be conducted at shallower depths on scuba, and will be coupled with bioacoustics surveys and an acoustic assessment (tagging fish). Monitoring will continue after proposed partial removal of the platform.

Stetson Bank Long-term Monitoring

2015 first year funded (by BSEE). Project lead is FGBNMS Staff Marissa Nuttall. Monitoring of Stetson Bank began in 1993, a 22 year dataset. Mesophotic ROV cruise occurred in summer 2015 to assess deeper depths and was the first time the ROV was integrated into the monitoring. Multiple lionfish were observed, as well as marine debris. Shallow habitat monitoring included algae cover, urchin counts, lionfish counts, random fish and benthic surveys, repetitive photo stations, and deeper water temperature. Gray snapper spawning was observed.

Several monitoring reports were written and are available online on FGBNMS website.

The first Lionfish Invitational occurred in summer 2015, and was funded by Texas State Aquarium, Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF), National Marine Sanctuaries Foundation (NMSF), Fling Charters, Oregon State University, and FGBNMS. Thirty divers on the M/V Fling removed 317 lionfish. Ten divers on the R/V Manta conducted lionfish surveys in areas outside of the mooring buoy areas. The largest lionfish was 17 inches (a Texas record) and the smallest was 3 inches. Lionfish will be processed this week at the FGBNMS office, led by Michelle Johnston. Data on length, weight, sex age, parasites, and ciguatera will be collected. Volunteers are encouraged to participate in the lionfish processing.

4 ROV Cruises

- 1) Study with Florida Atlantic University's Harbor Branch's program, Cooperative Institute for Ocean Exploration, Research and Technology (CIOERT) to look star coral (*M. cavernosa*) genetics in order to assess genetic differences/similarities across banks.
- 2) 5 day cruise for banks and reefs exploration – black coral expert Dr. Dennis Opresko (NMAH), Dr. Mercer Brugler (CUNY/NMAH), Algal nodules - Will Schroeder (University of Louisiana-Lafayette), Dr. Tom Bright – original oceanographers who studied NW Banks. Bright Bank was named after Dr. Bright. The bank sustained injury from destructive treasure salvage activities through excavation and explosive injuries, including toppling of coral heads. This is an example whereby current Federal regulations were not sufficient to protect the resources. According to Tom Bright, the banks he saw in general were the same as what he remembers from when he saw them in the 1980s. However, Bright Bank is currently in poor shape biologically.
- 3) Mooring and buoy inspections/Oceangate (coral spawning)
- 4) Dive Safety Drills

Emma shared a YouTube video of the ROV (remotely operated vehicle) exploration of mesophotic banks in the Northwest Gulf of Mexico (2014 & 2015), which was a collaboration between FGBNMS and Cooperative Institute for Ocean Exploration, Research and Technology (CIOERT - Josh Voss/FAU lab). The video clip can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nC9VPGil-s>. Three banks were explored

during the cruise: Bright, McGrail, and Geyer Banks. These are all part of the boundary expansion sites proposed by the SAC. The focus of the cruise was to investigate and sample a star coral, *Montastraea cavernosa*, to study genetics and resilience.

Emma also shared video of at least a dozen lionfish observed in a small area outside mooring area (non-removal areas) during the Lionfish Invitational.

Randy asked about current sea urchin populations. Emma responded Stetson has abundant numbers of sea urchins and the Flower Garden Banks, particularly West Flower Garden Bank, may have a slight increase in abundance.

Scott Hickman inquired about yellowtail snappers at Stetson Bank. Marissa Nuttall responded that only one or two individuals of this species were seen during this year's monitoring season. Scott added that J-hooks might be allowed for reef fish in a new Gulf Council regulation.

Clint Moore asked for information on manta research project led by graduate student Josh Stewart (The Semmens Lab at Scripps Institution of Oceanography (University of California at San Diego)) who will be looking at manta ray genetics. Emma responded that in the coming year, Josh will obtain tissue samples of manta rays from FGBNMS. Currently, approximately 70 manta rays at the Flower Garden Banks have been individually catalogued based on the ventral spot patterns.

Break for lunch (11:30 am-1:00 pm)

1:00 Public Comment Period

Frank Burek gave public comment. Frank is current president of the Texas Gulf Coast Council of Dive Clubs (TGCC), former FGBNMS SAC member, and is a long-term and experienced diver at FGBNMS. Frank spoke on existing oil and gas platforms in areas where sanctuary expansion could potentially occur. He urged that the plans to decommission them as artificial reefs should be included in the sanctuary expansion review process. He gave a brief history on the HI-389A removal process and stated that regulations are not currently in place to allow for above-water cut for oil platforms. Frank requested FGBNMS to prepare for the future possibilities for a free-standing (out of the water) decommissioned rig and to include regulations based upon SAC Artificial Reef Subcommittee recommendations.

Discussion among SAC members ensued. Scott Hickman suggested FGBNMS contact Louisiana Parks & Wildlife on the eventuality on the decommissioning of oil platforms that would fall under their jurisdiction and might be in FGBNMS newly expanded areas.

Clint Moore pointed out Louisiana typically doesn't leave rigs in place, but removes them and takes them to one of six, centrally located, consolidated sites of reefed rigs. James Sinclair pointed out that consolidation areas exist because of shrimp industry interests that do not want platforms scattered on the ocean floor.

Scott Hickman made a motion for FGBNMS to reach out to Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries on the possibility of reefing in place of decommissioned oil platforms in proposed boundary expansion areas. Motion seconded from Buddy Guindon. Discussion opened. Matt Johnson recommended waiting until an alternative in the DEIS is accepted. 10 ayes, none opposed. **Motion passed.**

Randy Widaman made a motion for the FGBNMS SAC to write NMS Director through GP, giving support to artificial reefs and trying to get the NMS to take a more proactive approach to artificial reefs during the FGBNMS expansion phase through their DEIS. Motion seconded from Buddy Guindon. Discussion opened. Randy Widaman would like to see more communication with NMS Director and the FGBNMS SAC. Adrienne Simoes-Correa asked about research on a study that would look at the process of analyzing environmental impact of decommissioning oil platform to be reefed in place. James Sinclair and Buddy Guindon noted the time, money, and resources needed to conduct such studies would not be feasible. G. P. explained that the DEIS will not have a management plan associated with the boundary expansion, but it will have regulations. A management plan would be next in the process after the DEIS. NMS does not have an overarching policy on what happens to decommissioned oil platforms. Shane called motion to question and was unanimously approved to end discussion. **Motion carried** with 6 ayes, 3 opposed.

Clint asked GP to distribute report (March 2013) from the FGBNMS SAC Artificial Reef Working Group to all SAC members.

2:25 Vessel Use Permit Program - G.P. Schmahl

A motion was made at the May 2015 SAC meeting for sanctuary management to develop and design a mandatory recreational vessel use permit program for the SAC to review by the September 2015 meeting.

G.P.'s presentation to the SAC included the FGBNMS voluntary vessel trip report form, found online on the FGBNMS website, which was implemented in February 2010. Only one report has ever been submitted to FGBNMS in 5+ years, lending evidence that the voluntary trip reporting system is not successful. G.P. also shared information on the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) no-cost permit program for the Tortugas North area, where permits are issued over the phone and are a low administrative burden. G.P. proposes adopting the FKNMS process for FGBNMS. The SAC was briefed on the potential for FGBNMS to use acoustic recorders to estimate boat visitation rates. G.P. ended his presentation by restating the recommendation in

the FGBNMS management plan regarding a mandatory registration and notification process.

Discussion followed G.P.'s presentation. Shane Cantrell was in favor of a mandatory vessel registration process and coupling it with acoustic recorders to confirm boat visitation. Scott Hickman was in favor of a permit program so that the sanctuary could obtain data on whom and when visitors use FGBNMS. G.P. stated an effective outreach program would be needed to communicate any new regulations to the fishing communities. Natalie Hall asked how FGBNMS would enforce new regulations. Jesse Cancelmo suggested putting the FGBNMS phone number on mooring buoys. Matt Johnson suggested including new vessel permit regulations in the Texas Parks and Wildlife fishing/hunting booklet issued for licenses. Emma Hickerson suggested a working group/subcommittee develop an educational plan to reach communities. Buddy Guindon expressed support for vessel permit program.

Scott Hickman made a motion to start a FGBNMS Vessel Use Permit Subcommittee. Shane Cantrell seconded the motion. No further discussion. All ayes, none opposed. Motion carried.

Volunteers for Subcommittee include Jesse Cancelmo, Scott Hickman, Natalie Hall, Buddy Guindon, and Shane Cantrell.

2:46 Visitor Center – Shelley Du Puy

Shelley's presentation included examples of different visitor centers at other NMS around the nation. Tennessee Aquarium showcase aquarium centers on FGBNMS. Moody Gardens Aquarium will be enhancing FGBNMS during their expansion process of the new aquarium area. FGBNMS also has presence at Dallas Aquarium, Waco Zoo Aquarium, Downtown Aquarium (Houston), Elyssa Museum, and others. Issues for visitor center include funding building, funding exhibits, and staffing. Visitor center possibilities include the empty slab at the NOAA campus which would require federal funding to build since it is located on federal property. Another possibility for a visitor center is the East End Lagoon recreation area, as a long-term, multi-agency plan. NOAA Fisheries already owns a piece of property on the west end of East End Lagoon and has a history in that area. A short-term plan for a visitor center could be located within the Ashton Villa located on Broadway at the City of Galveston Visitors Center. The potential exists for FGBNMS to have an exhibit there with a time frame ranging from a month-long, rotating space shared with other agencies/organizations to a permanent FGBNMS exhibit.

Clint asked Shelley to look into other locations in the downtown area that the Galveston Historical Society mentioned. Clint also asked Shelley to contact Pleasure Pier/Fertitta about a space along the seawall. Shane Cantrell recommended FGBNMS to move

forward with no-cost space at Ashton Villa. Scott Hickman recommended FGBNMS to move forward with inclusion at Moody Gardens Aquarium. Kelly Drinnen informed the SAC that renovations at Moody Gardens are expected to be completed in 2017 and the new aquarium will showcase local fish assemblages on a Gulf of Mexico oil/gas platform, as well as a dedicated FGBNMS exhibit. Bill Kiene mentioned the new Bryan Museum in Galveston has a painted underwater mural on the wall of their basement that looks similar to FGBNMS. Emma Hickerson explained past collaboration of FGBNMS with the artist who created the mural at Bryan Museum during their planning phases. Jesse Cancelmo endorsed Moody Gardens as an outreach venue for FGBNMS, including a live-streaming web cam exhibit. Adrienne Simoes Correa recommended the Houston Museum of Natural Sciences as a potential place for FGBNMS traveling exhibit or permanent exhibit in the future. Jacqui Stanley recommended the Downtown Aquarium and Houston Zoo. Leslie Clift mentioned space (classroom) on Pleasure Pier that could be good space for the FGBNMS traveling exhibit.

3:21 Jesse Cancelmo – SAC Dive Trip Report

The SAC dive trip to FGBNMS was a teambuilding experience to dive the reefs and exchange impressions and ideas for bolstering its mission for planning and resource protection. The cruise (September 11-13, 2015) visited West and East FGB, HI389A, and Stetson Bank. Twenty-nine divers participated, including 6 SAC members (Jesse Cancelmo, Larry McKinney, Natalie Hall, Jimmie Mack, Ellis Pickett, and Karla Klay) and SAC Coordinator Leslie Clift, George Clyde (SAC Chair for Cordell Bank NMS), Harte Research Institute researchers, Veracruz Mexico National Marine Park representatives, and 16 Friends of the Sanctuary (Alaska, Mexico, Houston). A pre-boarding dinner allowed participants to hear sanctuary updates from G.P. During the teambuilding sessions, Jesse reviewed the SAC's mission statement, described FGBNMS, and encouraged participants to give feedback and comments. Participants were impressed with the high coral cover, long term monitoring program, and absence of trash on the reefs. The concept of "Sister Sanctuaries" and connecting FGBNMS to Veracruz, Mexico was discussed during the trip. George Clyde from Cordell NMS shared with the group how shipping lanes were changed in Cordell NMS in order to protect whales.

Jesse asked for interest in repeat trip and received enough interest to pursue booking a trip in 2016.

3:30 Agency Reports

Rusty Swafford (NMFS) – present for morning session only

Matthew Johnson (BOEM) – BOEM has been approached by operators of buoys and operators may cease funding the buoys. One buoy is close to EFGB and is nice to have real-time information, but other instruments in the vicinity may be sufficient.

James Sinclair (BSEE) – no new news

Stephanie Cardenas (USCG) – USCG Manta is currently on patrol. USCG Dauntless will be going on patrol soon.

3:48 New Business

Clint Moore - Suggested a PADI specialty certification for FGBNMS similar to the program he recently did in Yap and Maldives for Manta Rays. He displayed a basic course outline and his own Manta Ray video from Maldives. Natalie Hall and Bill Kiene commented PADI has a big marketing campaign with all of their courses and charge money to offer them.

4:00 Meeting Adjourned - Motion by Natalie Hall, second by Scott Hickman. All in favor. Approved.

Next SAC Meeting scheduled for November 18, 2015.