



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary
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45th SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL
October 7, 2015 9:30 am-3:00 pm
Plymouth Yacht Club, Plymouth MA
MINUTES of MEETING

Present:

Bill Adler	Primary: Fixed Gear Commercial Fishing
Jeanine Boyle	Alternate: At Large
Priscilla Brooks	Primary: Conservation
Todd Callaghan	State: Coastal Zone Management
Alyssa Catalano	Alternate: Education
Deborah Cramer	Primary: At Large
LT Phil Desroches	Federal: Mass Environmental Police
CPT Brian Fiedler	Federal: First US Coast Guard District
John Galluzzo	Alternate: Maritime Heritage
Jonathan Grant	Alternate: At Large
Laura Howes	Alternate: Whale Watching
Martin Klein	Alternate: Maritime Heritage
Heather Knowles	Primary: Diving (Acting Chair)
Steve Milliken	Primary: Whale Watch
Chris McGuire	Alternate: Conservation
Kevin Nicolai	Alternate: Youth (Non-Voting)
Wayne Petersen	Alternate: Conservation
Michael Pierdinock	Primary: Recreational Fishing
Kevin Powers	Alternate: At Large
Charlie Rasak	Alternate: Business Industry
Bob Rocha	Alternate: Education
Howard Rosenbaum	Primary: Conservation
Allison Rosner	Federal: NOAA Fisheries GARFO
Mason Weinrich	Primary: Research

SBNMS Staff:

Craig MacDonald	Anne-Marie Runfola	Jenni Stanley	Mike Thompson
Ben Cowie-Haskell	Dave Slocum	Elizabeth Stokes	Nathalie Ward
Brad Cabe	Anne Smrcina	Alice Stratton	Dave Wiley
Matthew Lawrence			

I. Welcome, Review of Agenda and Approval of 44th SAC Minutes (H. Knowles)

The 44th SAC Minutes were approved. The 45th SAC agenda was approved with one change: the luncheon presentation was canceled and replaced with the Volunteer of the Year Award.

Howard Rosenbaum requested a correction to the 43rd SAC Minutes - Paragraph Iii. SAC Business; Announcing New SAC Members, page 2:

- Howard Rosenbaum, Conservation Primary Member. Dr. Rosenbaum is the Director for Ocean Giants Program, "Wildlife" Conservation Society corrected to read: "Whale" Conservation Society, Bronx NY.

II. SAC Business

i. New Recruitment (N. Ward)

There were 14 seats advertised in the Federal Register Notice for the September 30th Recruitment deadline:

- At Large (Primary)
- Business Industry (Primary)
- Diving (Primary)
- Diving (Alternate)
- Education (Primary) - 2 seats
- Fixed Gear Commercial Fishing (Primary)
- Fixed Gear Commercial Fishing (Alternate)
- Mobile Gear Commercial Fishing (Alternate)
- Recreational Fishing (Alternate)
- Research Alternate - 2 seats
- Whale Watch (Primary)
- Youth (Alternate) - non-voting - Kevin Nicolai has moved to the Youth Primary seat since Christine Guinee resigned.

ii. 2016 SAC Meeting

In general, there are three SAC meetings per year: In February/March; May/June, October time frame.

iii. ONMS Budget Update (C. MacDonald)

Craig MacDonald reported that the majority of the Federal Government is under a Continuing Resolution (CR) from 1 October until 12 December. Then on December 12th, Congress will need to agree to a budget or to extend the CR. Under the terms of a CR, it's essentially a freeze on all spending for the sanctuary program, with the exception of a small amount which is allocated for 'must pay' expenses. What has been budgeted at the sanctuary has been considerably curtailed for the first quarter FY16 (Oct-Dec 2015). In terms of sanctuary expectations, leadership has been told that if the CR continues through the end of December, it will be essentially a status-quo budget, the same as in FY15 (i.e., fixed costs) or even possibly a decrease in the present spending. It is hoped at this point the CR continues, with more concrete information by February 2016 as to how the budget sorts out.

III. Council Round Robin (H. Knowles)

SAC members introduced themselves and provided updates on issues within their respective organizations.

IV. Programmatic Highlights 2015 (N. Ward)

Nathalie Ward explained what the programmatic updates entail. Programmatic updates are highlights from each sanctuary program on staff accomplishments during the past spring/summer

time frame. They contain a lot of interesting and important information and describe extensively the scope and breadth of what goes on at the sanctuary.

Craig MacDonald: Several SAC members are actively partnering with sanctuary staff on several programs. Craig introduced Dr. Jenni Stanley who is a post doctoral researcher, an expert in acoustic ecology, working jointly with Leila Hatch at the sanctuary and Sofie Van Parijs at the Northeast Fisheries Science Center in Woods Hole. At SBNMS, Jenni will be working on better characterizing the soundscape of the sanctuary, specifically sounds made by fishes and marine invertebrates, and studying the effects of noise on these species.

i. Sister Sanctuary Program - Protection beyond Borders (N. Ward)

Nathalie Ward presented, "A Strategy for Advancing Humpback Whale Conservation and Transboundary Management:"

The North Atlantic Humpback Whale Sister Sanctuary Program (NAHW-SSP) was initiated by SBNMS in 2006. The objective was to increase protection of a shared population of about 1,000 humpback whales that feed in the Gulf of Maine and breed in the Caribbean. Over the past eight years (2006-2015), SBNMS has signed formal agreements with four nations creating the first and largest distributed MPA network to protect a transboundary population of humpback whales at both ends of its migration. {MOUs were signed with the Dominican Republic (2006), French Antilles MMS (2011), Bermuda MMS (2012) and the Caribbean Netherlands Yarari" MMS (2015, pending)}. Under the auspices of UNEP's Caribbean Environment Programme and its legally binding Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol, prescribed protection for N.A. humpback whales has expanded from 2191 km² to 669,440 km².

In 2014, the SSP implemented CARIB Tail, an on-line citizen science project targeting boaters/yachters in the Caribbean, to increase the number of humpback whale fluke photographs available for research with particular attention to the under-surveyed breeding ground in the Eastern Caribbean (EC). In the first year of the program, fluke photograph analysis by Allied Whale (who curates the North Atlantic Humpback Whale Catalog, Bar Harbor, ME) resulted in doubling fluke photos for EC region; confirmed the first match between SBNMS and Agoa marine mammal sanctuary; and, provided data identifying a potential third breeding ground in the eastern Caribbean. The website is www.caribtails.org.

This new data suggest that West Indies humpback whales comprise more than one breeding population, contrary to our current understanding. Individuals occurring in the southeast Caribbean comprise a breeding group separate from those found in the northern Caribbean, especially the Dominican Republic. These new findings raise management challenges, especially given the current reconsideration of humpback whales' listing status under the USA-ESA.

Regarding regional development and planning re: SPAW's Marine Mammal Action Plan (MMAP, est. 2008), SSP partners have taken the lead in the region by providing funding, expertise, capacity and participation in 8 of 10 priority issues including: (i) protected areas and other management regimes; (ii) research; (iii) whale watching; (iv) acoustic disturbance; (v) vessel strikes; (vi) fisheries interaction (entanglement); (vii) acoustic disturbance; and, (viii) marine mammal strandings. To date, SSP is developing formal SSP Alliance with more than 40 NGOs to assist with country-specific programs in French-, Dutch- and Spanish-speaking nations. In summary, the Sister Sanctuary Program has established the world's first distributed network of Marine Mammal Protected Areas managing transboundary protection for humpback whales.

ii. Research (D. Wiley, M. Thompson, B. Cabe)

Michael Thompson, Sanctuary Geographer, reported on just two of the research team's ongoing projects led by Dave Wiley, the sanctuary's Research Coordinator: The release of *Whale Alert 2.0*, a mobile app helping to reduce lethal whale ship-strikes worldwide. *Whale Alert* is a growing network of non-profit institutions, government agencies, shipping and technology companies focused on reducing lethal ship strikes of whales. He also reported on the summer 2015 research cruise which resulted in tagging 11 humpback and six fin whales using a wide arrange of suction cup tags.

iii. Education Outreach (A. Smrcina)

Education/Outreach Overview

Sanctuary staff members participate in a number of education programs that reach students ranging in age from pre-school to graduate school as well as programs for adult user groups, such as recreational boaters and the whale watch community (Whale SENSE with NMFS and WDC). The waters of Stellwagen Bank sanctuary serve as a living laboratory with the R/V *Auk* transporting high school students from Cohasset and college students from Boston University to their study sites. The sanctuary maintains a connection to Massasoit Community College where an introductory marine science course revolving around the sanctuary is offered recurrently. The sanctuary's volunteer program offers a variety of marine mammal and maritime heritage programs for youth at libraries, museums, the South Shore YMCA and other venues. An annual marine art contest, co-sponsored with Massachusetts Marine Educators along with NE Aquarium, Center for Coastal Studies and Whale and Dolphin Conservation, attracted 800 entries in 2015. The contest, open to students in grades K-12, focuses on the diversity of marine life in Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary.

Exhibits

Winning art from the annual marine art contest has an extended life in a year-long traveling exhibit curated and administered by the sanctuary's education coordinator. The 2015 art will visit the JFK Federal Building in Boston, RI Audubon, Salem Nat. Historical Site, South Shore Natural Science Center, and Cape Cod National Seashore between November 2015 and May 2016. The large exhibit installation *Animals Without Passports*, residing at the Boston Museum of Science since Autumn 2014, will be moved in December to The Maritime Museum in Norwalk, CT. A life-sized, inflatable humpback whale was delivered to the sanctuary this fall, and will begin making appearances at sites around the region along with outreach programs on whale conservation and research. A number of projects involving new outdoor signage and/or touchscreen kiosks are underway, including units addressing issues of marine debris, living resources, and maritime heritage.

Outreach

Stellwagen Bank sanctuary offers a number of outreach tools to reach the public, including the 12-page tabloid-sized newspaper *Stellwagen Soundings*, which was distributed to all whale watch operations, regional tourism offices, education partners and other locations. The publication is intended to have a 2-year life. For timely news and events, the sanctuary offers *Stellwagen Bank E-Notes*, a periodic electronic newsletter posted to the website approximately every other month. An email notice *Stellwagen Sounding Lines* is issued when time sensitive information needs to be disseminated. In addition, the sanctuary has started to post regular notices via Facebook (www.facebook.com/SBNMS) and Twitter (@NOAASBNMS) and offers video clips on YouTube (www.youtube.com/user/SBNMS).

Media

Sanctuary staff members have met with representatives of several community television stations, and a number of interviews and notices about sanctuary projects have aired. The Sister Sanctuary Program and the CARIB Tails project have received attention from a number of print outlets, both in the states and in the Caribbean. A PSA with members of the rock bank Guster is now in development as is a training video for the CARIB Tails project.

iv. Safe Boating around Whales (D. Slocum)

Dave Slocum, Operations Coordinator, presented on the Boater Outreach for Whale Watching (BOW) program that ran a 2-day pilot program in 2015 and will run 5-6 days summer 2016. The program includes observing and engaging private whale watching vessels and educating them on safe practices around whales. The program is designed to reduce congestion of private vessels around whales and to increase on-the-water visibility and oversight of SBNMS.

v. Boathouse Renovation (B. Haskell)

Ben Cowie-Haskell, deputy superintendent, provided an update on the waterfront improvements to the Scituate campus. The Scituate campus is comprised of the administrative building, meeting annex, boathouse, parking lot, and 300' pier. Starting in 2003 the campus has been progressively renovated beginning with the administrative building and annex. The final phase of renovation involves improving the parking lot and converting the boathouse into a fully functioning, year-round Marine Operations Center.

Timeline

Fall 2015 - Parking lot construction

Winter 2016 - Environmental Assessment for boathouse renovation

FY17 - Renovation of boathouse (contingent on funding)

FY18 - Complete waterfront improvements (contingent on funding)

Parking Lot

The grassy lot adjacent to the boathouse was purchased by NOAA in 2011. The grass will be replaced by pervious crushed gravel in order to make 15 parking spaces. The property line will be defined by a split rail fence. *Epilogue: the parking lot was finished on 12/17/2015.*



Boathouse

Before the boathouse can be renovated an environmental assessment has to be conducted due to the fact that the boathouse is in the floodplain and is subject to the effects of sea level rise. The assessment will ascertain whether NOAA can proceed with its plan to renovate in place or whether it has to consider other options such as raising the floor elevation. The purpose of converting the boathouse into a Marine Operations Center is to better support the sanctuary's mission by

increasing science capabilities (e.g., multi-day research missions with R/V *Auk*, dive locker, wet and dry labs) and by providing educational programming for area schools.

vi. Maritime Heritage (M. Lawrence)

SBNMS maritime heritage management is legislated by the NMSA and the National Historic Preservation Act. The laws require NOAA to inventory historic properties under its jurisdiction, assess historic properties for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and to nominate eligible properties to the register, develop protection techniques for heritage resources, and interpret these heritage resources for the American public. To date, archaeological research has located 47 shipwrecks in Stellwagen Bank sanctuary and 6 sites are listed on the National Register.

Much more information about these shipwrecks can be found in the newly published book, *Shipwrecks of Stellwagen Bank* by Matthew Lawrence, Deborah Marx, Maritime Archaeologists, and SAC member John Galluzzo. Published through an arrangement with the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, it can be purchased from their website at http://store.nmsfocean.org/product_p/stellwagenbook.htm. Proceeds support Stellwagen Bank sanctuary maritime heritage conservation.

Sanctuary staff has been collaborating with SAC member Heather Knowles and Northern Atlantic Dive Expeditions Inc., to explore shipwrecks beyond recreational diving depths to facilitate sanctuary resource characterization. Heather's team has visited 6 sites and has reported her findings and provided imagery of the sites to the sanctuary. Thirteen divers have participated in the project. More can be learned about her efforts in a recently published article in *Wreck Diving Magazine* titled "Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, an Explorer's Paradise."

The sanctuary's dive mooring project successfully installed its third mooring last summer on the *Heroic* shipwreck. The *Heroic* is the first historic shipwreck in the sanctuary to receive a mooring, which now protects the wreck from anchoring damage and facilitates safe diving. Funding for the mooring program has been provided by grants secured by Northern Atlantic Dive Expeditions. The coming year will require some modification of one mooring, which has been moved away from the Unidentified Trawler shipwreck.

vii. Ecology of Shipwrecks of SBNMS (A. Stratton)

Alice Stratton, Marine Ecologist, provided an overview of the project "Ecology of Shipwrecks of SBNMS." This project is being conducted in collaboration with Dr. Peter Auster, University of Connecticut and Mystic Aquarium. In recognition that shipwrecks are important biological as well as cultural resources, the goals of this project are threefold: to develop a species inventory and enable long-term monitoring of shipwreck habitats, analyze the species diversity to better understand what role shipwrecks play in community structure, and develop species lists for the recreational dive community. The project is using archived photos and video from earlier ROV and diver surveys of the wrecks. Fish and invertebrates are counted, and habitat characteristics (i.e., substrate, height, percent cover) are noted. The first two shipwrecks to be analyzed are the schooner *Paul Palmer* and the Steamship *Portland*; both have wood hulls and are of similar age, but *Paul Palmer* is in shallow waters on the Bank, while *Portland* lies in over 300 feet. Statistical analysis is currently underway, but observations indicate that differences do exist between the wreck communities. This fall, two new wrecks will be added to the project to expand the inventory. One exciting result was the identification of a specimen of glass sponge, *Vazella pourtalesii*, on the *Portland*; this was the first sighting in the Gulf of Maine, but it links known distributions in the Gulf of Mexico, the Azores, and Atlantic Canada.

viii. Volunteer Activities (A-M. Runfola)

Anne-Marie Runfola, Volunteer Program Coordinator, gave a summary of volunteer program activities and statistics and thanked SAC members, the SBNMS staff and volunteers for making this program possible.

V. Luncheon: “Volunteer of the Year” Award (C. MacDonald and A-M. Runfola)

Craig MacDonald, Superintendent, and Anne-Marie presented the sanctuary's Volunteer of the Year Award to Caitlin Fitzmaurice. Every October, SBNMS celebrates the Volunteer of the Year with the Sanctuary Advisory Council. It is an opportunity to recognize the sanctuary's Volunteer of the Year and features the many ways volunteers contribute to the sanctuary program.

VI. Constituent Reports

i. Review of Vessel Strike Impacts on Endangered Humpback Whales in the Southern Gulf of Maine (R. Asmutis-Sylvia, Whale and Dolphin Conservation)

As part of a vessel strike wound analysis, Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC) analyzed 210,733 high-resolution digital images of 623 individual endangered humpback whales from the southern Gulf of Maine taken between 2004 and 2013. The results of the study determined that 14.7% of the whales had injuries consistent with vessel strikes and healing was dependent on the severity and location of the injury. Vessel strikes are largely under reported and involve vessels other than those engaged in commercial whale watching. As humpback whales are not necessarily benefiting from right whale protection measures, we believe that NOAA should consider developing a management strategy for all classes of vessels transiting in the vicinity of whales.

ii. Whale Conservation Society Seascape Program (H. Rosenbaum, WCS)

The Whale Conservation Society's (WCS) New York Seascape Program is the marine conservation program based at the New York Aquarium, working in collaboration with WCS's Global Marine Program. Established in 2010, the New York Seascape encompasses 16,000 square miles from Cape May, NJ, to Montauk, NY (aka New York Bight) and the Long Island Sound. More than 350 species of fishes (more than 40 sharks, skates and rays), 15 cetaceans, 4 sea turtles, many seabirds, and countless invertebrates, including deep-sea corals, live or migrate through these highly productive waters. The issues facing New York's marine wildlife and habitats remain significant and challenging. The WCS objectives for the New York Seascape Program are to:

- **Restore** healthy populations of target species;
- **Protect** key habitats in the Mid-Atlantic (offshore and nearshore); and
- **Inspire** a New York ocean ethic to help re-connect people in the tristate area to their surrounding sea and build a local, vocal constituency for marine conservation. There are many activities occurring at the SBNMS for which WCS could either benefit from or partner with SBNMS.

VII. Agency/Government Reports

i. MA Coastal Zone Management (T. Callaghan)

Todd presented examples of spatial data products served through the Northeast Ocean Data portal (<http://www.northeastoceandata.org/>) that the Northeast Regional Planning Body will soon be releasing in support of the regional ocean planning effort. The data products are maps of fish biomass caught in the spring/fall trawls by National Marine Fisheries Service and northeastern state agencies, the relative abundance of various sea birds in summer or annually, and the average model-predicted density of whales in the region by month or season. The team producing these data products, led by Duke University, will be making the methods, the data viewer, and data layers available for public review this fall.

ii. MA Environmental Police and NOAA Law Enforcement (T. Wilmarth and P. Desroches)

NOAA Enforcement Officer Wilmarth provided a summary of FY 2015 enforcement activities in the sanctuary. LT Desroches of the Massachusetts Environmental Police (Mass Environmental Police) and Capt. Fiedler with the US Coast Guard contributed comments for their specific agencies as well. Topics included total patrol hours for NOAA and MEP, investigations, and enforcement actions taken for violations. LT Desroches noted some personnel changes and the addition of more officers to the coastal division. EO Wilmarth advised that the Office of Law Enforcement has a new director, who recently met with SBNMS management. Also two Massachusetts based Enforcement Officers have reported for duty.

iii. GARFO Fisheries (A. Rosner)

NOAA Fisheries Climate Strategy

The NOAA Fisheries Climate Science Strategy identifies key steps to increase production, delivery, and use of climate-related information to support the management of fish stocks, fisheries, and protected species. The steps focus on how a changing climate affects living marine resources, ecosystems, and the communities that depend on them, and how to respond to those changes. The strategy identifies key risks in the U.S. from climate change, including millions of U.S. jobs, ocean fisheries worth billions, protected marine species, habitats that provide valuable services, and the health and enjoyment of our oceans and coasts from recreation and tourism. Next steps will be to develop and finalize regional action plans by late 2016 that address objectives in the strategy. These regional action plans will identify strengths, weaknesses, priorities, and actions to implement the Strategy in each region over the next five years.

<http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2015/20150825-noaa-climate-science-strategy-to-reduce-effects-climate-change.html>.

Take Reduction Team Webinars

These meetings will focus on general updates about the Plan implementation and recent SI/M numbers.

- Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team Webinar:
Thursday November 19th, from 10am-12pm
- Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Team Webinar:
Wednesday November 18th from 10am-12pm

Humpback Whale Proposed ESA Listing changes

Expect a final ruling to be out by late 2015, early 2016.

Sea Turtle Cold-Stun Preparation

The cold-stunned sea turtle season typically begins in early November. Following last year's record number (1242 strandings) and the high number of loggerhead sightings/strandings we have had this summer, we are bracing for another big year.

Recreational Fisheries Policy

We recently sent out a request for comments to a targeted group of recreational fisheries constituents (including the Sanctuary and the Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association) on the development of a regional recreational fisheries implementation plan, in support of the new National Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Policy.

<http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/recfishing/news/index.html>

iv. Whale SENSE Update (M. Pepe)

Whale SENSE now has 14 companies participating in the program in the Atlantic Region, and 7 companies that participated in the pilot year for the Alaska Region. It is anticipated the program will expand to Southern California within the next year. Program promotion continues to expand through presentations at a wildlife disturbance summit (Moss Landing CA), International Congress for Marine and Coastal Tourism (Hawaii), and Society for Marine Mammalogy Biennial Conference (San Francisco). With the program's expansion to Alaska, the program logo was redesigned, and a passenger survey was developed as a means of evaluating participating companies. Four Whale SENSE Atlantic companies reported a total of 7 entangled whales to the disentanglement network, 1 requested authorization to approach a NA right whale (following temporary authorization protocols), and 1 witnessed and reported a vessel strike on a humpback whale, for which the OLE has a charge pending. The website is whalesense.org.

VIII. New Business (C. MacDonald)

President Obama announced the beginning of the process to designate two new national marine sanctuaries. This is the first time in 15 years. The Federal Register Notice will be published this week. This is the first step in the public participatory process for designation. Both are maritime heritage based sanctuaries.

Website: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/news/oct15/proposed-designations.html/>

Craig MacDonald sent a letter to Tom Nies, Executive Director for the New England Fishery Management Council, with sanctuary comments on Amendment 8 to the Atlantic Herring Management Plan. Amendment 8 would specify a long-term acceptable biological catch control rule for the herring fishery and consider alternatives for this control rule that explicitly account for the herring's role in the ecosystem both across space and time. This is the first time that this has actually come up as a focus for discussion and is quite important. Sanctuary staff is very encouraged that this has come up in the context of that amendment, and will be monitoring how this proceeds and may have additional comments to offer through the process.

IX. Public Comment. None.

X. Adjourn. 2 pm.