



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary
175 Edward Foster Road
Scituate, Massachusetts 02066
Tel: 781.546.6004 Fax: 781.545.8036

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (SBNMS)
68th Sanctuary Advisory Council Hybrid Meeting
Wednesday, May 17th, 2023
DoubleTree Hilton, Rockland, MA

SAC Members Present

Sam Adams	Primary:	Diving
Bill Adler	Primary:	Fixed Gear Commercial Fishing
Terri Birkeland	Primary:	At Large (2)
Kevin Blinkoff	Primary:	Recreational Fishing
Todd Callaghan	State:	MA Coastal Zone Management (Chair)
Jennifer Couture	Federal:	New England Fishery Management Council
Rich Delaney	Alternate:	Conservation (1)
LT A.J. Ford	State:	MA Environmental Police
CAPT Jamie Frederick	Federal:	US Coast Guard
Allison Gregoire	Alternate:	Diving
Marc Gustafson	Alternate:	Mobile Gear Commercial Fishing
Laura Howes	Primary:	Whale Watch (Vice Chair)
Moira Kelly	Federal:	NOAA Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
Mary Jo Larson	Education:	Primary (1)
Laura Lilly	Primary:	Education (2)
Randall Lyons	Alternate:	Business Industry
Hannah MacDonald	Alternate:	Research (2)
Chris McGuire	Primary:	Conservation (2)
Conor McManus	Primary:	Research (2)
Frank Mirarchi	Alternate:	Mobile Gear Commercial Fishing
Iben Munck	Primary:	Conservation (1)
Annie Murphy	At Large:	Alternate (3)
Tom Nies	Federal:	New England Fishery Management Council
Sarah Oktay	Primary:	Research (1)
Kimberley Pearson	Alternate:	Conservation (1)
Wayne Petersen	Alternate:	At Large (1)
Jeffrey Ray	Federal:	NOAA Office of Law Enforcement
Jeff Rosen	Primary:	Business Industry
Karen Steuer	Primary:	At Large (1)
Carol Voigt	Primary:	Marine Transportation

Members Absent:

James Bailey	Alternate:	At Large (2)
Andrea Bogomolni	Primary:	At Large (3)
Tim Brady	Alternate:	Recreational Fishing
Jonathan Brink	Alternate:	Whale Watch
Les Kaufman	Alternate:	Research (1)
Eric Meschino	Alternate:	Fixed Gear Commercial Fishing
Dawn Stancavish	Alternate:	Marine Transportation
Kelly Whitmore	State:	MA Division of Marine Fisheries



Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (SBNMS) Staff

Pete DeCola
Ben Haskell
Alice Stratton

Caitlin Fitzmaurice
Tammy Silva
Elizabeth Stokes

Mike Thompson
Dave Wiley

I. Welcome (T. Callaghan)

II. SAC Business (A. Stratton, T. Callaghan)

1. Review and motion to approve Draft 67th SAC Minutes (T. Callaghan)

Motion by Bill Adler to approve the 67th SAC Minutes; Conor McManus seconded the motion. The Minutes were approved by consensus. No abstains.

2. SAC Hours (A. Stratton)

Alice Stratton reminded SAC members to keep track of their hours (i.e., SAC meetings, working groups, subcommittees; working on SAC-related issues with constituents, etc.). Volunteer hours should be tracked separately.

3. SAC Meeting Locations (Hybrid vs In Person) (A. Stratton)

Alice described the suggestion that going forward it will likely work best to keep the February meeting virtual (given the likelihood of adverse weather) and then plan to have May and October meetings primarily in person with a hybrid option. We would like to be able to rotate meeting locations so that some are north of Boston, but for now staff logistics are much simpler to have in person meetings on the South Shore.

4. SAC Charter (A. Stratton)

Our request for a charter extension was granted, so we now have until July 2024 to update it. We will initiate this at the October meeting.

5. SAC Work Plan Update (T. Callaghan)

The Chair updated the SAC on the SAC workplan, mentioning that many items had been achieved. With several workplan leads recently rotating off the SAC, the workplan topics will be revisited in the fall.

6. Recruitment Update (A. Stratton)

SBNMS staff just received notice of ONMS approval for the May 2023 recruitment. New members to be seated will be announced once they are all officially notified of their appointment to the SAC.

All recruitments are 2-and 3-year terms with everyone seated by the October meeting. We are planning to use the October meeting as an orientation and overall SAC review for all members to assist newly seated SAC members to understand who we are and what we do; this will also be a good review for everyone.

7. Elections (A. Stratton)

Todd's term as Chair has expired but he has agreed to remain in place until October so that we can have a full SAC in place. Due to the departure of our Vice Chair Susan Farady, Laura Howes (secretary) has assumed Vice Chair duties and has also agreed to stay in place until October. Laura Lilly volunteered to nominate herself for SAC Secretary.

Laura Lilly was unanimously elected as SAC Secretary with a total of 18 votes.

8. Wind Energy Subcommittee Report/Update (C. McGuire)

Sub-committee chair Chris McGuire provided an update on the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) leasing process in the Gulf of Maine (GoM), and then walked through the Offshore Wind (OSW) workplan recommendations and solicited comments, questions and feedback on the topics presented. The workplan includes five main topics:

- Support SBNMS staff engaging in the BOEM leasing process and interagency coordination.
- Assist staff in drafting comments describing SBNMS interests in the BOEM Call Area including a willingness to consider permitting a cable corridor.
- Assist staff in identifying if/which sanctuary resources require a buffer zone from turbine development during the leasing process.
- Help identify approximately 30% of SBNMS to map (see Stellwagen Mapping Initiative information below) where cable corridors are most likely.
- Develop guidance for cable laying and monitoring inside SBNMS.

A healthy discussion followed with comments and suggestions on informing public outreach, fishing operational concerns, and the importance of establishing research questions and monitoring plans, among others. There was no opposition voiced for the overall direction of the workplan, and considerable interest among the SAC members in ongoing discussions with the SAC.

III. Sanctuary Business

1. Management Plan Update (A. Stratton. P. DeCola)

The final documents are at ONMS Headquarters for copy editing and final layout; we expect they will be released later this summer.

2. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Consultations over MA Water Resources Agency (MWRA) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit Renewal (A. Stratton)

The EPA is preparing to reissue the NPDES Permit for MWRA and we have had preliminary discussions with EPA staff about the process for consultation under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA). We requested consideration of potential impacts to several species (great shearwater, sand lance, calanus, lobster) that may not be included in Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) or Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultations, and we have shared several questions about the presence and roles of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAs), Contaminants of Emerging Concerns (CECs) and legacy contaminants.

3. SBNMS Research Updates (B. Haskell, D. Wiley, T. Silva)

Dave Wiley introduced Dr. Cameron Thompson, new NERACOOS Postdoc, who will be working with us over the next 3 years as part of our Climate Program Office (CPO) grant to increase climate understanding for sanctuary management. Cameron will be modeling connections between the larger Gulf of Maine SBNMS in terms of *Calanus finmarchicus* supply and transport and influences on sand lance abundance.

During the May 2023 SAC meeting, GMGI scientists Jennifer Polinski and Matthew Harke, PhD presented preliminary results from an eDNA-based biodiversity study conducted within SBNMS. Environmental DNA (eDNA) is genetic material collected from the environment (i.e., water or sediment) which can be used to understand the presence and absence of organisms within an environment. During the SBNMS July 2021 sand lance survey, GMGI collected 175 samples for eDNA analysis, including 111 sediment samples, 40 surface water samples, and 24 bottom water samples across 40 stations. Samples were analyzed to target three different genetic markers – the prokaryote-specific 16S rRNA gene, eukaryote-specific 18S rRNA gene, and vertebrate-specific 12S rRNA gene. Both the prokaryotic and general eukaryotic datasets revealed high levels of diversity across both single-celled microbial organisms (i.e., bacteria, phytoplankton, etc.) to multicellular organisms (i.e., copepods, echinoderms, etc.), with little difference occurring across the sampled region but large differences seen between sample types (surface water, bottom water, and sediment). The vertebrate-specific dataset revealed additional fish and marine mammal diversity not captured with the general eukaryotic eDNA survey, including many commercially important and protected species such as cod, several species of flounder, tuna, and multiple whale species. Interestingly, the full picture of vertebrate diversity was able to be captured with just bottom water samples, although the relative proportions differed between sample types. Lastly, a closer inspection of samples containing sand lance DNA suggests that eDNA methods are more sensitive than traditional methods such as video surveys. These results provide a solid baseline for studying biodiversity on Stellwagen Bank, and GMGI would like to expand this study to include all habitats within SBNMS. In addition, we envision incorporating data generated from these studies into future SBNMS assessments and management plans to better inform current and future trends in biodiversity within the sanctuary.

Dave Wiley gave updates on billboard outreach campaigns with Conserve.IO and International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) to raise awareness about North Atlantic right whales and the Whale Alert App.

SBNMS research on dimethyl sulfide (DMS), correlations with North Atlantic right whale abundance and its potential role as a chemical cue for whales to find their food has been featured in popular media including *Scientific American*, Associated Press and *Hakai Magazine* and SBNMS research on sand lance, seabirds, and humpback whales was featured in *Bird Watching Magazine*.

We are in the third year of our project focused on DMS and right whales. Preliminary analysis of data indicates that right and sei whales aggregate in high concentrations of DMS. The goal is to explore whether DMS could be used as a predictor of North Atlantic right whale presence and serve as a tool for dynamic management.

In 2023, SBNMS research team and collaborators (Syracuse University, Ocean Alliance) tagged 6 sei whales with suction cup acoustic and motion sensor tags (CATS, DTAGS) using drone deployments. This is the second year of this project and significantly expands our knowledge of sei

whales. One scientific paper on sei whale acoustic behavior has been submitted to *Journal of Acoustical Society of America* (JASA) based on last year's data.

SBNMS has worked with Ocean Tracking Network and has been provided with 10 VR2W receivers for tracking tagged fishes in the sanctuary. Receivers will be attached to right whale detection buoys.

SBNMS and collaborators recently published a paper in *Royal Society Open Science*, "Deployment of biologging tags on free-swimming large whales using uncrewed aerial systems", documenting the first deployments of suction cup tags on large whales using drones representing a major advancement in tagging methodology.

SBNMS published a paper last year on using satellite tagged great shearwaters as near real time tools for dynamic management of human threats to large whales. In most years, months, and weeks in both SBNMS and the larger Gulf of Maine, the majority of humpback sightings fell within great shearwater core habitat use areas, suggesting that tagged great shearwaters are indicators of humpback locations in near real time.

SBNMS developed vulnerability matrices for sand lance and ecosystem services as part of our sand lance work/Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) report that could also be useful to consider as part of offshore wind development and cable routing.

4. *SS Portland* Symposium (B. Haskell)

SBNMS is organizing a 2-day symposium in Portland, ME to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the tragic loss of the steamship *Portland*. The symposium will be free and open to the public and will be held at the Southern Maine Community College on October 28-29. The symposium will feature presentations by explorers, ecologists, and sanctuary managers who will share the latest imagery and information on the condition of the wreck and its protection. A 3D digital model of the wreck will be unveiled for the first time. Other presenters will discuss the impact this tragedy had on Portland and the wider New England region.

5. Mapping Initiative (B. Haskell)

Senators Markey and Warren have awarded one million dollars to the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation to work with SBNMS on enlisting the help of fishermen to survey using side scan sonars as much of the sanctuary as possible. This work should commence this fall and will focus on surveying potential cable corridors for the transmission of energy from offshore wind farms in the Gulf of Maine. Once the corridors have been surveyed, the work will expand to other areas of the sanctuary for the purpose of inventorying historical resources and characterizing seafloor habitats.

6. Update on Provincetown Visitor Center (P. DeCola)

Pete DeCola presented a PowerPoint of the conceptual design of the new Provincetown Visitor Center. It will be right on MacMillan Wharf in Provincetown, which is an extraordinary location and represents a tremendous commitment by our partners, the Town of Provincetown and Center for Coastal Studies. We are very excited about this Visitor Center being built as it will give the Sanctuary a sense of place which we don't really have at the moment. It would be a gateway to the Sanctuary and to Provincetown and will also serve to revitalize some of the infrastructure in the downtown area. According to the conceptual design study, the projected cost of the building is

\$21.3 million with the Office of Management and Budget and NOAA providing part of the funding. Staffing and maintenance will need to be addressed by all mutual partners. This is the beginning of a very exciting journey and very daunting. The estimate for completion is 3-4 years.

7. Budget/New Staff Hire Update (P. DeCola)

Our operating budget for FY23 is essentially the same as in FY22. We did receive approval for several projects funded with PAC money (procurement, acquisition, and construction/facilities funds). We funded a fairly large project to replace the small floating pier which is at the end of its service life, in addition to the HVAC and server room repairs. We are excited about getting our facilities facelifted and start to get the floating pier refurbished. PAC funds were also approved to dispose of the Animals without Passports exhibit and create an interpretive plan for SBNMS.

Samantha (Sam) Tolken is our new Resource Protection Specialist who will start work at Stellwagen on 20 June. She comes to us from the NOAA Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO). She will focus on resource protection.

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries' (ONMS) leadership approved our request to hire an outreach coordinator. The recruitment action is at ONMS Human Resources for the initial hiring process. This position is a consolidation of Anne-Marie Runfola's (Volunteer/SAC Coordinator) and Anne Smrcina's (Education/Outreach Coordinator) duties, as there is a lot of synergy in these two positions. We will let the SAC know when that position is ready to be publicly announced. The Maritime Heritage program is the next big staffing gap that needs to be tackled.

IV. Discussion on Agency/Governmental Written Reports

1. Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management (MA CZM) (T. Callaghan)

CZM continues to work with the NOAA Office of Coast Management and the State coastal programs from Maine and New Hampshire on a comprehensive seafloor topography map of the entire Gulf of Maine (including SBNMS). A second phase of mapping is now beginning that will use new data from off the coast of Maine, north and east of Stellwagen Bank, in southern Cape Cod Bay, and south of Cape Cod. CZM and NOAA, as co-chairs of the Habitat, Coastal, and Ocean Mapping committee of the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC), is in the process of an effort to prioritize interest/needs across the northeast for bathymetry, sediment, and seafloor video mapping (including in SBNMS). This participatory Geographic Information System (GIS) process will conclude in early June. CZM and MA Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) have been meeting with various fishery sectors to discuss where the fisheries concentrate their activities and how a future offshore, floating wind lease area in the Gulf of Maine might affect those activities.

2. Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF) (K. Whitmore)

Right Whale/Protected Species Conservation

- As result of ongoing presence of right whales in Cape Cod Bay, DMF extended the Small Vessel Speed Restriction through May 7, requiring small vessels (<65') to travel at speeds no greater than 10 knots in this area; a complementary federal speed restriction applied to vessels ≥65'. The Cape Cod Bay speed restriction was lifted May 8th after right whales had departed the Bay.
- DMF conducted a joint derelict gear removal program with MA Environmental Police and contracted commercial lobstermen, within the MA Restricted Area (MRA) for lobster and Jonah crab trap/pot fishing. We removed approximately 370 traps and 200 buoy lines in 2023.

Compliance greatly improved in areas such as Massachusetts Bay and the North Shore since 2022, when around 2,100 traps and 700 buoy lines were removed from the MRA.

- In March, DMF submitted a proposal to the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program to remove the humpback whale from the Massachusetts Endangered Species List. Humpbacks were removed from the federal Endangered Species List in 2016. Review and public comment on the proposal is expected in summer 2023.
- DMF is developing an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) application under Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act. In February, DMF submitted an updated draft of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), the main component of an ITP, to National Marine Fisheries Services. Review of the ITP and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis are expected over the coming year.

Offshore Wind Development and Fisheries/Habitat

- DMF continues to work with MA CZM, fishing industry, and federal partners to review and develop comments regarding regional offshore wind development.
- DMF staff co-authored a study comparing Atlantic cod spawning seasons in Southern New England offshore wind farm lease areas and MA Bay: Van Hoeck, R.V., Rowell, T.J., Dean, M.J., Rice, A.N., Van Parijs, S.M., 2023. "Comparing Atlantic cod temporal spawning dynamics across a biogeographic boundary: insights from passive acoustic monitoring". Marine and Coastal Fisheries. DOI: 10.1002/mcf2.10226

Winter Flounder Tagging

DMF is conducting multifaceted work to understanding spatiotemporal distributions of GOM winter flounder, including a 3-plus year acoustic telemetry study in Boston Harbor and adjacent waters of Massachusetts Bay including Stellwagen Bank. In addition to the 150-receiver coastal array, eight VR2AR receivers were deployed in the lower Stellwagen Bank Sanctuary. These receivers are maintained year-round and are whale safe, as they are affixed to the seafloor and retrieved using an hydroacoustic release.

Striped Bass Research

DMF is conducting a 2-year Striped Bass Citizen Science project; for more information and to sign up, visit: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/striped-bass-research>. An "On the Water" podcast recently featured this research effort: <https://www.onthewater.com/video/striped-science-with-ben-gahagan-and-bill-hoffman-on-the-water-podcast-19>

Atlantic Herring

DMF staff participate in Atlantic herring management. On April 27, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC)'s Atlantic Herring Management Board met to set initial effort control measures for the 2023 Area 1A directed fishery to manage the 2,220 mt quota for Season 1 (Jun 1 to Sep 30). On May 2, DMF implemented these initial measures by declaration (see Notice), which includes a July 16th season start date.

3. First US Coast Guard (USCG) (CAPT J. Frederick)

The First CG District is recapitalizing its fleet of 110-foot patrol boats with new 154-foot Fast Response Cutters. These six ships are incredibly capable with enhanced sea-keeping, speed and endurance. All six ships will be homeported in Boston, MA, but will service the entire First District

Area of responsibility. The third of six, *CGC MAURICE JESTER* will be commissioned in Newport, RI, on 2 June. The final three cutters will be commissioned in August 2023, October 2023, and March 2024.

4. NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) (J. Ray)

Observer Harassment

Prevention of observer harassment is a priority for NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement (OLE). No Northeast Fishery Observer Program cases have been reported in the SBNMS this period. On April 12, 2023 NOAA sent a notice to vessel owners and operators to remind them of their responsibility to provide a safe working environment for observers. That notice can be found here <https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2023-04/Notice-on-Preventing-Observer-Harassment.pdf>

North Atlantic Right Whale

OLE sent 130 Northeast Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) messages in calendar year 2023 to vessels in the vicinity of North Atlantic right whales. The decisions to send the messages were based on various sighting data. This number includes messages sent for areas inside and outside of the SBNMS. Although, the majority of the vessels were operating within Cape Cod Bay and areas surrounding Cape Cod. In January 2023, OLE participated in numerous Seasonal Management Area patrols in Cape Cod Bay alongside the MA Environmental Police and USCG partners. No speed rule violations were detected during that period.

Lobster Gear

OLE staff will receive side scan sonar training at the Stellwagen headquarters. OLE acquired this unit to increase capacity to locate fixed gear that is ropeless, unauthorized, or fishing as ghost traps. This unit will be used in an Area 1 lobster gear inspection early this summer.

Acoustic Project

OLE assisted the Acoustic Project by performing preliminary data matching using VMS records. The Northeast Science Fisheries Center (NEFSC) is performing the full analysis. This is a collaborative project between SBNMS, NEFSC, and OLE.

Scallops

The Northern Gulf of Maine scallop season was open from April 1 to April 21. The bulk of the activity was concentrated on the northern portion of Stellwagen bank. Only minor VMS and permitting issues were identified this season. No closed area violations detected.

Highly Migratory Species

Two HMS charter permitted vessels are under investigation for catching and landing bluefin tuna on a restricted fishing day in October, 2022. Both are pending NOVA issuance.

5. Massachusetts Environmental Police (MA MEP) (CPT A.J. Ford)

2022 statistics for fixed gear removal within North Atlantic Right Whale Critical Habitat Area: 1813 traps and 504 surface lines were removed resulting in 470 violations.

2023 statistics: 416 traps and 246 surface lines were removed and violations are being compiled. The “Wedge” area has been a challenge as emergency closures are activated. The problem is that the message goes out and may not get to the fisherman for days and basically the area remains “open” until we can verify that the fisherman is and or was aware that the “Emergency closure” was

activated. We also enforced the speed restriction in the SBNMS area and Cape Cod and Massachusetts Bay areas.

6. New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) (T. Nies)

Atlantic Herring

Last year, as US District Court vacated a closure that prevented Mid-Water Trawl (MWT) vessels from fishing near the coast. The court ruled that the closure was not justified by its supporting analyses. The Council is revisiting the closure issue. In April, the Council discussed modifying the purpose of the closure to extend to the protection of river herring and shad. They also discussed having the closure apply to small-mesh bottom trawls and limiting the spatial area to the area of the previous closure. The Herring Advisory Panel will discuss these issues at its meeting on June 14, and the Committee will develop a recommendation on June 22, 2023. The Council will consider and may adopt the Committee recommendations at its June meeting.

Atlantic Sea Scallops

The Sea Scallop fishing year began on April 1, 2023. The specifications approved by the Council in December 2022, were implemented on time. These included a Northern Gulf of Maine Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 385,809 pounds. The NMFS closed the fishery on April 21, 2023. Preliminary information is that just over 1,900 trips were taken, and the catch was at least 85% of the TAC. Final data will be calculated later this month.

Northeast Multispecies

Fishing year 2022 ended on April 30, 2023. While complete data are not yet available, preliminary information for the commercial fishery is available at:

https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/ro/fso/reports//Sectors/Commercial_Summary_2022.html. Framework 65, approved by the Council in December 2022, hasn't been implemented yet and the fishery is operating under default measures. The framework will probably be implemented in July. Framework 65 proposes large cuts in the Gulf of Maine (GoM) haddock Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) because of a new stock assessment. Because the stock is about twice its target biomass, the Council requested an emergency action to increase the GoM haddock ABC. The NMFS is reviewing that request. Recreational measures proposed by NMFS are also pending and may be implemented in June. The research track assessment for the cod stocks continues. The final review meeting is scheduled for the end of July 2023. This assessment is in response to the new understanding that there are five biological cod stocks. Since two of the stocks overlap in space and time, the process may produce assessments for four stocks. This is a change from the two-stock model currently used and will require management adjustments. Any changes are likely to take effect at the start of fishing year 2025.

Large Whales

The Council formed an On-Demand Fishing Gear Conflict Working Group to discuss ways to reduce or prevent gear conflicts that may occur as fixed-gear requirements are changed to protect large whales. This will not only address ropeless/on-demand fishing by lobster and other vessels, but also potential changes to gillnet marking requirements (such as requiring only one marked end line). The first meeting will likely occur in July.

Atlantic Sturgeon

The Council and the Mid-Atlantic Council are cooperating to develop measures that will reduce interactions between gillnets used on the monkfish and dogfish fishery and Atlantic Sturgeon. Other: The spring bottom trawl survey conducted by the Northeast Fisheries Science Center encountered numerous problems that delayed sailing until May 8, 2022. Coverage of the GoM

area (Including the Sanctuary) may not be as thorough as in previous years. The Council continues to closely monitor offshore wind development, including in the GoM.

7. NOAA Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) (M. Kelly)

Whales and Wind Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

In response to recent speculation regarding interactions between whales and offshore wind energy projects, NOAA and BOEM have published the following FAQs -- Offshore wind and whales (NOAA); Necropsies of Marine Mammals (NOAA); and BOEM Offshore Wind Activities and Marine Mammal Protection Fact Sheet (BOEM).

Offshore Wind

New Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA) Executive Director. Renee Reilly is the new ROSA Executive Director. She previously worked for the NJ Department of Environmental Protection and was involved in offshore wind project reviews. GoM Task Force: Sue Tuxbury, GARFO's Offshore Wind Coordinator, attended the GoM Task Force meeting May 10-11.

East Coast Climate

We recently completed the fishery managers summit and brought 50 managers from all three east coast councils (New England, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic), the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commissions, and NOAA Fisheries to discuss potential actions to address future possible states. The summit focused on governance/jurisdictional issues, managing under increasing uncertainty, and data and enhancing partnerships. The report was recently submitted to the Northeast Region Coordinating Committee (NRCC) and is available at <https://www.mafmc.org/climate-change-scenario-planning>. A set of potential actions is being finalized incorporating the NRCC discussion.

V. Round Robin, Discussion on SAC Member Written Reports (T. Callaghan)

Laura Howes

Spring whale watch started last Friday. The delay in starting the season was due to an increase in Right Whale Voluntary Dynamic Management areas in Boston Harbor and Massachusetts Bay. So this year, we did an exercise in conducting harbor island cruises rather than whale watching in the spring. This is a new product and part of the exercise was to see how this process would work. We are the only whale watch company that abides by Voluntary Dynamic Management Areas, and so this was a first step in an action a whale watch company can take to aid in right whale conservation.

Les Kaufman:

Work with Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) on offshore wind - Volume 2: Multi-scale Integrated Model of Ecosystem Services (MIMES)/ Marine Integrated Decision Analysis System (MIDAS) Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) model draft 1 completed.

Shearwater Biology -working on matching up stable isotope, poop e-DNA, and telemetry data with SBNMS colleagues to better understand productivity and habitat use patterns and what could be driving them in the Sanctuary.

Randall Lyons

The Massachusetts Marine Trades Association (MMTA) continues to work with our members, state and national partners regarding the NOAA proposed speed restriction. Unfortunately, when NOAA originally made this proposal, they did NOT seek input from industry stakeholders and many of their data points were flawed. MMTA just returned from Washington DC and the American Boating

Congress, and this remained a top priority with many of the conference Senators and Representatives speaking and understanding our concerns with the proposal. From an advocacy standpoint the recreational boating and fishing industry remains committed to working with NOAA and bringing the appropriate stakeholders to the table to come up with a more sensible solution to safe boating around whales rather than just a blanket closure that will result in boater safety issues, closure of small industry businesses, a regulation that is not feasibly enforceable and additional concerns. What we promoted on our Capitol Hill visits was as follows:

- Provide \$5 Million in FY2024 Appropriations to NOAA for the North Atlantic right whale real-time monitoring program authorized in the FY2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).
- Prohibit the use of government funds to change existing vessel speed regulations until real-time monitoring programs are implemented as authorized by Congress in the most recent NDAA.
- Direct NOAA to leverage emerging technologies in collaboration with the recreational boating and fishing communities, to implement advanced marine wildlife tracking.

The MMTA's goal continues to be promoting the advancement of safe boating around whales and working with NOAA in a collaborative manner as I thought we had been doing until this proposal blindsided the recreational boating and fishing industries.

Chris McGuire

This is not really new business. Hudson Canyon designation is an opportunity for some SAC cross pollination, such as lessons learned with regard to building a new SAC in a region not far from us. Alice Stratton will take this back to the Hudson SAC since she is working on the Hudson designation team and there is a lot of interest from the Hudson team. Send an invitation to their SAC to join our next meeting.

Monica Pepe

Please help us keep boaters and whales safe during peak boating season by sharing the See A Spout course: <https://seeaspout.org/>. This short, self-guided course shares best practices for boaters that will help to keep themselves and whales safe. Whale and Dolphin Conservation is also offering an incentive of free polarized sunglasses to the first 300 boaters who complete the course!

VI. Old and New Business - None.

VII. Public Comment - No public comment.

VIII. Adjourn

Motion by Bill Adler to adjourn the 66th SAC Meeting. Jeff Rosen seconded the motion.

The 68th SAC meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm.

“Audio recording of SAC Minutes and Presentations and Discussions are available on request. Contact Alice.Stratton@noaa.gov or Elizabeth.Stokes@noaa.gov”