



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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50th SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL
May 31, 2017 9:30 am-3:00 pm
NOAA Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, Gloucester, MA
MINUTES of MEETING

Present:

Bill Adler	Primary: Fixed Gear Commercial Fishing
Jennifer Anderson	Federal: NOAA Fisheries GARFO
Michelle Bachman	Federal: New England Fishery Management Council
Jeanine Boyle	Alternate: At Large
Tim Brady	Alternate: Recreational Fishing
Todd Callaghan	State: Coastal Zone Management
LT Kevin Clayton	State: Mass Environmental Police
Deborah Cramer	Primary: At Large
Tracey Dalton	Primary: Research
Rich Delaney	Primary: Education (Vice Chair)
Tim Donovan	Federal: NOAA Office of Law Enforcement
Susan Farady	Primary: Education
CPT Brian Fiedler	Federal: First US Coast Guard District
John Galluzzo	Alternate: Maritime Heritage (Secretary)
Heather Gaughan	Primary: Youth
Vito Giacalone	Primary: Mobile Gear Commercial Fishing
Jon Grant	Alternate: At Large
Kirstyn Haley	Alternate: Youth
Laura Howes	Primary: Whale Watching
Martin Klein	Alternate: Maritime Heritage
Heather Knowles	Primary: Diving (Chair)
Joseph Levine	Research: Alternate
Randall Lyons	Alternate: Business Industry
Chris McGuire	Primary: Conservation
Frank Mirarchi	Alternate: Mobile Gear Commercial Fishing
Monica Pepe	Alternate: Education
Wayne Petersen	Alternate: Research Primary
David Pierce	State: Mass Division of Marine Fisheries
Kevin Powers	Primary: At Large
Carol Voigt	Alternate: Marine Transportation
Mason Weinrich	Primary: Research
John Williamson	Primary: At Large

SBNMS Staff:

Ben Haskell	Demian Schane	Tasia Blough
Matthew Lawrence	Anne-Marie Runfola	Elizabeth Stokes
Alice Stratton	Mike Thompson	Nathalie Ward



Staff, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries:

John Armor, Director

Brad Barr, Senior Policy Advisor

Paul Ticco, Northeast & Great Lakes Regional Coordinator

I. Welcome and Seating of New SAC Members, Approval of 49th SAC Minutes and Review of 50th SAC Agenda (H. Knowles)

The 49th SAC Minutes were accepted and passed unanimously.

II. John Armor Director, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS)

i. Ben Haskell introduced and welcomed John Armor, ONMS Director to the SAC meeting.

John Armor was delighted to attend and address the SAC. He expressed his appreciation to SAC members who have taken time out of their busy schedules to spend the day with sanctuary staff to provide advice and recommendations. This is important and means a lot. The SACs are part of a rich national program. There are over 440 SAC members across the country who are dedicated to the mission and John greatly appreciates their time and commitment.

John Armor reported on some key issues regarding the National Marine Sanctuary Program:

He was pleased to report that the FY17 budget just passed and ONMS did better than anticipated. The initial FY18 budget has come out. It is more of a policy statement by the President rather than a budget. That policy statement actually has several NOAA programs such as the National Estuary Reserve System, CZM grants to States, and the SEA Grant program among others zeroed out in the President's request. This is just the beginning of the budget process and it is suspected that several members of Congress are probably not too keen on this reductions. So there is still a lot of negotiation and discussion ongoing in Congress before the FY18 budget will be finalized. This isn't the first time these specific programs were zeroed out. But if those cuts do stand, there are some concerns on the impact to the sanctuary program.

There was an exchange among John Armor and some SAC members about how the sanctuary can reinforce support for these programs. One way is to continue to actively engage the public and support strong economic ties with the community. Sanctuaries are all about conservation because people care about these places, and there is an economic benefit to protecting them. To the extent that we can keep highlighting our sanctuaries and playing up the economic benefits of SBNMS, that goes along way.

Rich Delaney: As citizens -- there is a group of organizations in Washington DC that calls itself the "Blue Group". It is comprised of a lot of major environmental organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Oceana, NRDC, among others and they are very actively involved in organizing a campaign of support for all of the ocean programs, and they are looking for examples of success. For example, where have sanctuary and coastal zone programs done things that have resulted in successful outcomes for the community and creating jobs. They welcome input and this is a place to voice citizens' concerns in addition to contacting congressional representatives. This is a good organization to be aware of.

Joe Levine: Would there be any benefit or would it be appropriate for the SAC to form some type of subcommittee for outreach? There is an incredible collection of pure brainpower on the SAC with diverse backgrounds. There is education, youth, research -- to look at ways to do exactly that which is to point out the data that shows SBNMS is a significant economic benefit to the local economy.

Heather Knowles: This is an important question raised. Heather suggested that this be earmarked as a New Business topic for later in the Agenda.

John Armor met with Rich Delaney, SAC Vice-Chair and Director of Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown to talk about forming a long-term partnership to support a visitor information center in Provincetown. He is excited about what the future holds with this new partnership.

President Trump signed two executive orders -- the first one pertaining to the monuments designated over the last 20 years under the authority of the Antiquities Act. That review is being led by the Department of the Interior (DOI). The other one focuses on offshore oil and gas energy that has a number of different things that it asks the agency to do. Neither of these EOs affects SBNMS directly. The first E.O. requires that for any future sanctuary designation or expansion, the agency must go to DOI and that agency has to give a full accounting of any energy resources in that area. The agency is already doing that as part of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. But the second thing is to look back at the last 10 years of sanctuary expansions and monument designations, to review what energy potential is there in these places and disclose that. Both of those reviews under DOI are: 1) monuments and 2) offshore energy called "America First Off Shore Energy Strategy". They are both ongoing with the Monuments one expected to be completed in August and the Offshore Energy one in October. There are seven criteria that DOI is supposed to consider in the executive order. It's not just oil and gas, it's wind and minerals among the list. But the main focus is oil and gas. A report will be generated from the review.

Susan Farady asked about the Management Plan review process for all of these sanctuaries.

John Armor: Committed to continuing with the Management Plan process. Last time this SAC went through a Management Plan review it was tantamount to a new designation and basically was started from scratch and a rewrite of the old plan. That was a very involved process and took a long time. Now the ONMS team is looking at if there is an agreement that the management plan is mostly good, then possibly there is a more streamlined approach that can be used to review it along with the advisory councils but without the long drawn-out multi-year process as in the past. This will be necessary for some sites, but a lot of these plans are really designed for more than a 5-year horizon and are even more durable than that. So streamlining is the approach, but the Condition Report need to be lined up so that assessment is on a 5-year schedule feeding into whether it's an expedited management plan review or more in depth.

Heather Knowles: There are a lot of opinions about the sanctuary's current Management Plan -- whether it meets the needs. The previous management plan didn't result in regulatory changes; it was essentially strategies which are open to interpretation and that is problematic for some of the SAC members. So, there are a lot of different opinions about whether a streamlined or a full overall of the management plan is appropriate. She is glad that the topic has come up and there is ongoing dialogue.

III. SAC Business (N. Ward)

i. Welcome and Seating of New SAC members

There was a recruitment in February for 4 vacancies – 3 of which were incumbents. The Executive Committee welcomed back Deborah Cramer, At Large Primary; Vito Giacalone, Mobile Gear Commercial Fishing Primary; and Tracey Dalton, Research Primary. Also welcomed was John Mandelman, newly-seated Conservation Alternate who was unable to attend the meeting. John is Vice-President of the Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life at the New England Aquarium.

The ongoing recruitment closed May 31st for the following seats, the majority of which are held by incumbents:

- At Large Primary
- At Large Alternate
- Business Industry Primary
- Conservation Primary
- Education Alternate
- Youth Primary
- Youth Alternate

It is hoped to have newly appointed members from the May recruitment seated in time for the fall meeting on October 11th.

ii. 2017-2018 SAC meetings

The 51st SAC meeting will be held October 11th at the Plymouth Yacht Club in Plymouth. The schedule for 2018 meetings will be discussed then.

iii. Re-engage Tourism and Industry Subcommittee

John Galluzzo, Chair, is reinvigorating the Business and Tourism Subcommittee. It had started under Craig MacDonald, former sanctuary superintendent, but the subcommittee waited for marching orders from HQ ONMS that were slow in coming, and then Craig retired. The subcommittee did things like try to reach out to MA State office of travel and tourism. John said he will reach out to past members and hopes to recruit new ones. SAC members are asked to consider joining the subcommittee.

Former Subcommittee Members:
John Galluzzo, Chair
Rich Delaney
Vito Giacalone
John Williamson
Jonathan Grant

iv. Programmatic Updates

Nathalie Ward explained that programmatic updates are highlights from each sanctuary program on staff accomplishments during the past summer/winter 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. These updates also keep the SAC informed of current and innovative research and education outreach that sanctuary staff is involved with. Sanctuary staff is well engaged and doing a lot of work. Thanks to those SAC members who contribute to sanctuary programs.

v. SAC Summit Webinar

Rich Delaney reported the SAC Summit is a procedure where SAC Chairs or Vice Chairs from each of the sanctuaries have a chance to meet on a regular basis to compare notes on emerging issues or lessons learned. This particular update was a conference call held on 23 March at the same time the White House released a meager budget that generated a lot of concern of what that would mean for NOAA. It also preceded another critical point as to whether Congress would pass a continuing resolution by 28 April, which ultimately they did. Fortunately, the sanctuary program fared fairly well. So the remainder of this FY seems to be level funded. During the summit, John Armor, ONMS Director provided an update on the new administration's appointees. In particular, the new Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross. Another update was the progress being made on the Draft Strategic Plan for the sanctuaries. Also, the SAC enforcement policy letter was discussed; almost every sanctuary has endorsed it and it is now in the works. Hopefully it will bring attention to this issue as new appointees come on board in the new administration. A final note that there are Minutes generated from these summits which have all the details of other sanctuaries' issues. The plan is to continue with regular summits as the Chairs and Vice Chairs find them very productive.

vi. Election (Secretary)

The SAC Executive Committee is comprised of the Chair and Vice Chair which are both 2-year terms, and the Secretary which is a 1-year term. The incumbent for the Secretary is John Galluzzo whose term has expired.

Rich Delaney nominated John Galluzzo for another 1 year term. John has been an excellent Secretary to the Executive Committee. He was nominated to continue to serve as Advisory Council Secretary for a second 1-year term. Passed unanimously.

vii. Annual Staff and SAC Work Plan

Nathalie Ward reported that sanctuary staff is engaging in and currently revving up for an internal staff work plan that will match the elements of the sanctuary's next Management Plan, working along with Brad Barr in terms of leading the Condition Report process. In that respect, the SAC Charter calls for a SAC Work Plan which has not been inaugurated before. Nathalie has been looking at SAC work plans generated from other sanctuaries and will pull together a strawman to present at the next SAC meeting. It's a roadmap to what the SAC would like to accomplish within the year and highlights sanctuary activities.

viii. Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW): SBNMS and National Volunteer of the Year

Anne-Marie Runfola, Ben Cowie-Haskell and Heather Knowles presented Kevin Powers with the 2017 Stellwagen Bank Sanctuary Volunteer of the Year award. The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation also named Kevin the 2017 National Volunteer of the Year.

Kevin is an internationally-known seabird researcher whose studies provided input into Representative Gerry Studds' efforts to create Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary in 1992. In retirement, Kevin returned to Massachusetts--and the sanctuary his work influenced--to volunteer with Stellwagen Sanctuary Seabird Stewards program, and soon expanded his volunteer efforts to work with whale tagging, sand lance, and great shearwater research teams. Kevin also serves as an at-large member of the Sanctuary Advisory Council. His research and data analysis expertise significantly increases the capacity of the sanctuary and raises the profile of Stellwagen Bank and all national marine sanctuaries as living laboratories that inform marine conservation actions.

The Foundation and NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries will honor Kevin at a gala during Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW) in Washington DC in June. Anne-Marie will accompany Kevin to CHOW, where he will also meet with our congressional representatives, Senator Elizabeth Warren, Senator Edward Markey, and Congressman William Keating.

The Volunteer of the Year award, offered through the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, formally recognizes volunteers for the significant services they donate to key sanctuary programs. The award highlights how other members of the public can get involved with NOAA and make a difference.

ix. Sanctuary Staff Announcements

Ben Haskell introduced Demian Shane. Demian is from Juneau AK and is currently a NOAA Leadership Competency Development Program Fellow. He will be the sanctuary's Acting Deputy Superintendent for 3 months before he moves on to Iceland. His normal job in Juneau is with NOAA General Counsel on the protected resources side. He will not be assisting us as an attorney but rather as a program lead on various projects. Ben is very pleased to have Demian on board for the next 3 months. Demian will be working immediately on operations and some big picture related issues, and help keep the Management Plan review on the front burner along with Alice Stratton, sanctuary ecologist, who has agreed to serve as the sanctuary's Management Plan review coordinator.

Ben announced that Nathalie Ward will retire on June 30th. Nathalie has been with SBNMS since 2001. Her capable efforts on the advisory council will be missed and her support has been phenomenal. She has managed the Sister Sanctuary Program which has now grown to a total of 5 countries -- 3 in the Caribbean: Dominican Republic, Dutch Antilles and French West Indies as well as Bermuda. This was her brainchild well over 10 years ago. She has a long history of working in the Caribbean and conceived the idea to protect humpback whales at each end of the migratory route. The Sister Sanctuary Program has now turned into the world's largest distributed network of marine mammal protected areas involving over 600,000 square km. Nathalie has accomplished a great deal and will continue her efforts to protect humpback whales.

Ben is happy to announce that Anna Robuck and Samara Haver are recipients of the Nancy Foster Fellowship. This is a scholarship fund that is very competitive and managed by the

National Marine Sanctuary Program. SBNMS is very fortunate to have Anna and Samara doing their research in the sanctuary.

Anna will be focusing on contaminants and water quality in the SBNMS. Anna is a second year PhD in the Lohmann Lab at the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography. Before joining URI-GSO, Anna earned both a Masters and undergraduate degree at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington. Anna has been working with sanctuary staff for the past two years to design a project focused on water quality and contaminants in the SBNMS, a topic that, until now, has represented a significant gap in our knowledge about conditions in the sanctuary and the sanctuary's scientific enterprise. This information will be vital to the SBNMS as we enter the next phase of management plan review.

Samara Haver received a Nancy Foster Scholarship beginning in 2017 to support her PhD work at Oregon State University. Samara's work focuses on analyzing soundscape information across NOAA's Noise Reference Station Network, including from the station in SBNMS. She works in close collaboration with NOAA PIs that lead this work, including Leila Hatch at ONMS, Sofie Van Parijs at NEFSC, NMFS HQ Science and Technology and OAR's Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory (Oregon). Her support as a Nancy Foster will allow her to take the lead on analyses of interest to sanctuaries and to generate outreach materials to support noise and sanctuaries, particularly for the places that support stations in the network, such as Stellwagen Bank.

John Armor added that the Nancy Foster Scholarship Program is a fantastic program that has been running for about 15 years, with ONMS running it for about 8 years. To have two out of three selected Nancy Foster scholars focused on SBNMS is pretty amazing and speaks volumes to the diversity of the issues that are of interests to Masters and PhD students. The SAC and staff should be very proud of the fact that it has attracted this talent. The Program was named after Nancy Foster who used to run the National Marine Sanctuary Program years ago, and ultimately was head of NOAA's National Ocean Service. It was designed in her name to encourage women and minority students at the Masters and PhD levels to get into marine conservation.

IV. Discussion Topics (H. Knowles)

i. Council Round Robin

Heather Knowles: This is an opportunity for SAC members and alternates to give brief updates on issues from their constituencies or if there is particularly newsworthy or important information that someone needs to pass along, this is the forum. It is intended to be short and concise and is entirely optional. (Note: If a SAC member wants their Round Robin address to be included in the SAC Minutes, please email a write-up to Elizabeth.Stokes@noaa.gov.)

CPT Brian Fiedler, First US Coast Guard Ex-Officio member, will be leaving on 1 June for a new duty assignment in the Florida Keys. His replacement will be CPT Kevin King. Ben Haskell thanked Brian for partnering with SBNMS staff as well as his commitment to providing support in the sanctuary over the last several years.

ii. Modeling Workshop Report (B.Haskell and A. Stratton)

On March 20th, sanctuary staff hosted a conceptual modeling workshop with assistance from NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and participation from 23 subject experts

including six SAC members. The objective of this effort was to identify the key linkages and drivers of change in the SBNMS ecosystem, in order to help inform our effort to update the SBNMS Condition Report. Although the group didn't have time to identify all of the linkages and the strengths between them, the model they developed was complex. While it is hoped that the group can refine the model in the future, in order to make the model immediately useful and to assist in understanding the relationships, the group consolidated like elements of the initial version to create a more simplified version. This version identifies the major components within the ecosystem, including human uses and sanctuary objectives, and the relationships between them. While some of the detail of the initial version have been lost, because so many of the linkages are similar, the broader connections between ecosystem components are retained and provide a solid basis from which to build the condition report. Contact Ben Haskell for the PowerPoint presentation.

iii. Condition Report Update

Brad Barr (lead in the Condition Report process) and Ben Haskell provided the following update:

- CR assesses the conditions and trends of national marine sanctuary resources through a standardized summary of resources, the drivers and pressures influencing those resources, current conditions and trends for resources and ecosystem services, and management responses to those pressures that threaten the integrity of the sanctuary ecosystem.
- Include information on water quality, habitat, living resources, and maritime archaeological resources present in the Sanctuary, and the human uses that affect them, through addressing 17 systematic questions posed to all NMS as a part of this evaluation.
- Provides ratings for each resource based on assessments developed for the report, prepared by relevant staff, and evaluated by an expert panel convened for this purpose.
- Closely coordinating with the NMFS Northeast Fisheries Science Center in Woods Hole on data and information sources to inform this evaluation, as well as other agency and academic colleagues with specific expertise relevant to the resources being evaluated.
- In practical terms, the condition report is the first step in the process of management plan review.
- Report is focused on the decade of observed changes since the last condition report was published (2007).
- Coordinating with Headquarters Science Team on condition report development.
- Relevant sanctuary staff have been engaged in developing sections of the report which will address these 17 key questions related to water quality, living resources, habitat, and maritime archaeological resources.

- This staff writing assignments from the staff will be completed by mid-July [now Dec.1], and aggregated into the body of information that will be presented to the expert panel, which will be convened in mid-November [now end of January 2018].
- Findings of this expert panel workshop will be captured and incorporated into the draft condition report, which will be submitted to Headquarters for their review by no later than March of 2018.

iv. Small Boat Interactions Working Group: Report

Laura Howes provided the following report:

The SAC is concerned about small boat interactions with whales.

Scope: In order to minimize the risk of collision and disturbance to whales, it is important that the sanctuary gets a greater understanding of the nature of the risk to both whales and vessels, and determines the optimal safety and outreach programs to address the issue. The Management Plan's three Action Plans (MMBD, MMVS, MME) define the goals, objectives and strategies to inform, assess and potentially minimize marine mammal disturbance induced by human activities.

Potential Issues to Address in Working Group (WG):

- Small boat strikes on whales
- Tuna gear hooking whales
- Vessels transiting bubble nets and/or clouds
- Increasing small boat safety at sea
- Increasing small boat awareness of whale

The goal of this group is to write out a written recommendation to the SAC within a year.

Present:

Laura Howes	SBI-WG SAC Chair
Nathalie Ward	SBNMS Staff Lead – Dave Slocum will be taking over the position
Mason Weinrich	Research
Tim Wilmarth	Federal Enforcement NOAA OLE
Steve Milliken	Whale Watching
Walt Taylor	Coast Guard
Allison Rosner	GARFO
Monica Pepe	Education and Outreach
Shelley Brown	Conservation
Alex Hill	Technical Advisor (Dolphin Fleet Whale Watch)
Mendy Garron	Observer (GARFO)

Others in group (not present):

2. Recreational Fishing (Tim Brady)
3. Marine Transportation (Carol Voigt)
9. State Enforcement (Phil Desroches)
11. Commercial Tuna Fishing (Chris Weiner)
12. For Hire Recreational Boating—Freedom Boat Club (Matt O'Connor)
13. Cape Cod Harbormaster Association (Steven Mone)
14. Tourism/Business (not confirmed yet)

15. 6-pack Whale watching (not confirmed yet)

Technical Advisors

Regina Asmutis-Silvia: Director, Whale and Dolphin Conservation

Presenters:

Laura Howes (background of issue from previous SAC presentation in fall) – main message is that the recreational boater problem is a growing concern, and harassments are witnessed.

Alex Hill

Presented her recently published research about vessel strike scarring on Gulf of Maine humpback whales. Found a 14.7% vessel strike rate, which is most likely a under representation. 10% of injuries were fresh (but no evidence of being reported). Other takeaway messages were that management is needed and perhaps new definitions of serious injuries and healing rates need to be made.

Monica Pepe

See-a-Spout program review. Main takeaways: needs funding and to be revitalized. Vessel strikes are highly under reported. Discussion with the WG decided that we should combine efforts and progress from See-a-Spout program with SBI-WG efforts.

Following the presentations, lots of discussion, ideas, and plans for action items occurred. Summary of ideas and action items:

Define a “small boat” as a group- created a matrix of 4 categories, all also defined to be ≤65 feet (which aligns with North Atlantic Right Whale Regulations):

Commercial Fishing

Charter

6-Pack

Recreational non-licensed

Action items and potential ideas:

- Utilize current See-a-spout resources
- Create electronic posters, stickers with guideline/viewing information
- QR code to link to whale watching guidelines and See-a-Spout website.
- Add whale watching guidelines to Whale Alert app.
- Utilize SBNMS volunteers at popular marinas during summer weekends.
- Encourage the SBNMS BOWW (Auk outreach program to recreational boaters) to continue.
- Allison Rosner mentioned that there is a new forthcoming See-a-Spout brochure, which she will share with the SBI-WG for feedback on what to improve and add.
- Creation of survey recreational boater members of Sailors for the Sea, and other possible recreational boater organizations

Ideas for future discussion:

- How to reach a diverse complex audience (i.e. thinking of the 4 categories discussed)
- Posters and handouts – what type of design
- Creation of small boat whale watching guidelines?
- Creation of transiting guidelines and/or regulations?
- Need to get more advice from marine transportation, recreational fishing, commercial tuna fishing, freedom boat club, cape cod harbormaster seats in SBI-WG (all unable to attend first meeting)

- Next meeting: late summer/September

v. Management Plan Subcommittee and Timeline

John Williamson reported: The subcommittee has not yet been assembled. It's been hamstrung by sanctuary resources to get going but is now ready to launch. Alice Stratton is the designated sanctuary staff person lead for this. John and she will be getting together to schedule a conference call in July to organize the first subcommittee meeting in late August or September with SAC members who volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. If SAC members are interested in participating please sign up.

Susan Farady: The Minutes from the last meeting reflected that there were 10 people who volunteered for this subcommittee – that's over half of the SAC which is one interesting observation. We have the modeling thing at some point; we have the Draft Condition Report due next summer; we have this committee and it's not clear to me what it's representative of or really how it fits in with going forward with the Management Plan review process where there are working groups with subject matter experts from the public as well as SAC members leading those working groups. Maybe you haven't thought through those steps and maybe you have, but I'm not seeing them. What is this committee doing and how does it relate?

Heather Knowles: It evolved from a climate change focused working group or subcommittee into this current representation and as time has gone on and we've been waiting for work to begin with this group, more stuff has been thrown in and it's started to take on a different form. And more and more, the conversation has become about the Management Plan per se where initially that is not where we started. What is being asked is a very valid question. Ben Haskell and John Williamson need to help tie it together in terms of how it's dovetailing with the Condition Report work. The remit of this group is ultimately does this lead us to the Management Plan revision process.

Ben Haskell: Confusion is understandable. Due to the fact that SBNMS has been short staffed, we have not been able to put together a plan of how these all fit together. Planned to have it done by now. Had it been done, he would be able to show flow diagram of how things mesh together. Apologized that it's not ready. He and Alice Stratton need to work with ONMS HQ as to what their experience has been at other sanctuaries that are doing a Management Plan review right now and get input from HQ on how they think this sanctuary process should evolve. Working with Alice and John Williamson, the SAC will be provided with a document that explains how these things fit together and what the timeline is for all of them.

Susan Farady: The site needs to get a grip on what a Management Plan is used for and when you revise it and how you apply it in management and how to engage the public. It's pretty simple and straight forward. This sanctuary is not the only one that has wrestled with what these plans are and how long they take and this is system-wide. The SAC just today is talking about conflicts of different types of fishing gear, protecting sanctuary resources whether it's the bottom or shipwrecks, small boat interactions with whales. It all comes down to what is the point of this piece of the ocean and what is the purpose of this sanctuary? What are its priorities? Those are conflicts. There are ways to resolve these conflicts. Pet peeve here is that there was a working group that actually looked at the compatibility determination business in the Sanctuary Act that can give managers some guidance and nothing has been done with that [in the current Management Plan]. Understood that it was handed off mostly to HQ and that would be appropriate because it's a piece of the law that governs all sanctuaries. It was a working group that this SAC had that we were going to defensibly resolve these questions.

Recommendations were given. Someone from HQ came to all of the meetings in the interest of making that anything this site was going to do with interpreting the law, that HQ had a hand in it. There has been no guidance that has come out since 2005 when these [recommendations] were submitted. It would be really helpful to a lot of sanctuaries. This can give managers and stakeholders a good tool to figure out how this place is resolving all of these different conflicts. These recommendations were part of the Management Plan – part of the working groups [that compiled and produced the Management Plan action plans]. So it's an interesting piece of information that is there. What is the framework that helps managers make decisions when these conflicts arise. Not sure "lean and mean" is what is needed or taking 12 years to do a plan like the last time is what needed. Management Plans are important not because there are lots of meetings and documents, but it's a transparent structure for the sanctuary sites to manage and for the SACs and constituents to engage in. It should be more of an ongoing tool that we should all be engaged in. Don't know why it is so much harder for sanctuaries than other programs. Plans and reviews are done all the time. It keeps coming back to having a Management Plan review that just needs to be useful tool and actually works and not a painful process, and should be "lean and mean" or all things to everybody. It just needs to be useful.

Carol Voigt: Referring to the Management Plan, questioned the delivery date and what needs to be done to get there. There are very large stakeholders and stockholders. Why can't a delivery date just be set? Businesses are run like that, and this should be run like a business.

Ben Haskell: There is not yet a scheduled date for the next draft or final Management Plan and there won't be for at least a year. Working on the Condition Report at this time, and the Management Plan subcommittee that is going to start talking about the issues that the next Management Plan should address. One of those is small boat interaction with whales, so that is underway. Not even sure what form the next Management Plan will take.

vi. SAC Enforcement Letter Update

Heather Knowles, SAC Chair signed the SAC enforcement letter. John Armor, ONMS Director, added that he has the letter. He appreciates all of the SACs weighing in on this issue. This is a really important for the sanctuary program nation-wide. The goal here was to let the incoming NOAA administrator know how important this was to the advisory councils and the sanctuary program. There is no NOAA administrator in place yet so its effect is still to be determined. But a lot of thought was put into it by the SACs. It is planned to summarize the letter down to a couple of key messages for the incoming NOAA administrator.

vii. Mid-Water/Pair Trawling Update¹

Ben Haskell: At the last meeting, the SAC passed a motion for Ben in his capacity as sanctuary superintendent to continue 1) work with the fishing industry to achieve protection of herring on top of the bank by not fishing in less than 120 feet of water during the research set aside season which is October into December; and 2) continue to work with NMFS and NEFMC staff to address this issue. In response to 1) not much has been done because the fishing industry is not willing to voluntarily give up fishing grounds shallower than 120 feet on the top of the Bank. He is focusing his effort working with Peter Christopher at NEFMC. They have had some good in-depth conversations about midwater pair trawling in the sanctuary and

¹ "Please refer to 51st SAC meeting Minutes for the council's review/approval of edits to this section of the 50th SAC Minutes. The version that appears herein is the final, revised version approved by the council."

clarifying language has been added to Amendment 8 about the experimental fishing permit process.

Ben feels that really good progress is being made to come up with a solution that addresses the research set aside fishery that happens in the fall. The problem is that NEFMC has already decided that RSA compensation fishing would be exempt in any new areas closed to address localized depletion (assuming localized depletion areas are adopted in Amendment 8; the Council could take no action). RSA compensation fishing is currently exempt from the seasonal closure of Area 1A (June-September). The solution being worked on would ask the Council to revisit their decision to exempt RSA compensation fishing in any new localized depletion closures, particularly if they overlap with SBNMS. That may be difficult for the Council to approve because RSA compensation fishing is only attractive when vessels can fish in areas that are otherwise closed, but staff is trying. Ben has communicated these concerns with NEFMC staff and progress is slowly being made.

viii. Notification of Scallop Fishery Activity in SBNMS

Ben Haskell: Reported on an extraordinary event that took place in the sanctuary back in March. He happened to get on AIS Marine Traffic and saw a lot of boats focused on scalloping activity in the northwest corner. This was followed by news reports that small and large boats were vying for the same scallop bed. This caused some conflicts. The sanctuary staff doesn't intend to stop this fishery, but it is concerned about impacts on historic shipwrecks of which there are 3 in the northwest corner. There is also some concern about the effect on fine scale biological habitat growth particularly on sandy habitats in that area.

Michelle Bachman presented on the incident and provided the following write-up: The Council is working on annual scallop specifications, and updates to the scallop fishery management plan, via Framework Adjustment 29. Of interest to the SAC is the scallop fishing that occurred on Stellwagen Bank this spring. Much of the Sanctuary is located within the Northern Gulf of Maine (NGOM) Management Area, which is managed through a total annual catch limit for general category vessels. Ms. Bachman provided some background on this issue, and showed some maps of scallop fishing activity relative to the Sanctuary boundary.

Catches by vessels with a NGOM permit, or with a Limited Access General Category (LAGC) IFQ permit, count towards this annual limit. Limited Access (LA) vessels, which are larger boats that typically focus their effort on Georges Bank and/or in the Mid-Atlantic, can use their limited days at sea to fish in the NGOM Management Area, but LA vessel catches do not count toward the LAGC's NGOM annual limit. LA vessels have not typically fished much in the NGOM due to relatively low scallop abundance, but during the past two fishing years, there has been an increase in LA activity in the NGOM area due to higher biomass of scallops. Some of the 2016 fishery and much of the 2017 fishery occurred on Stellwagen Bank. LAGC-NGOM and LAGC-IFQ permitted vessels fished down the NGOM annual limit quickly this year, to trigger closure of the area and prevent further removals by LA vessels. The Council is considering how best to address this issue. Under the fishery management plan, LA vessels may use their days at sea in all open areas, except for rotational closures. The Council will be working on management approaches this summer, and plans to take final action on the framework in December.

John Williamson: Controversy same as a couple of years ago when groundfish vessels were coming in.

Vito Giacalone: For full disclosure, he does not represent any scallopers and has no stake in the scallop industry. Biologically are there distinct stocks that the northern area is purely a management line and not for the purpose of creating some biologically desired catch level on two different stocks? It's to basically manage?

Michelle Bachman: The line goes right through the middle of the sanctuary. Doesn't think there is anything biologically meaningful about that. These animals are not part of the stock assessment. This stock is George's Bank and the mid-Atlantic bight and this is called an extra assessment outside the footprint of the federal survey.

Vito Giacalone: Whoever is groundfishing on SBNMS knows exactly where the wrecks are and they share that information. But the scallop fleet may not. Trawlers aren't sharing that information with the scallop fleet. If there is a new wreck like the *Patriot* and is not an historic wreck yet, but it's important to the fishing community because they know people who died on that boat. He is sure that got wacked around right where those boats were fishing. It's also about trying to protect them from trawl gear. It's a catch 22 -- we don't want to tell people where the historic wrecks are so that they don't go after them and dive off them and try to steal things off of them. But if we are really trying to protect them from trawl gear, is there a better way for SNMBS to get the information out more broadly to some of these wrecks that we really care about it. There isn't a mobile gear fisherman that wants to get near a wreck. There are 3 known wrecks counting the *Patriot* in that area. If fishermen had a heightened awareness by knowing where these wrecks are to prevent them from being hit, maybe that would be the solution needed to keep people from hitting the wrecks. There is no bottom habitat damage that you can do in that area. It's silly for us not to be able to unravel that and share it. It's not going to be targeted by mobile or fixed gear people, it will be targeted by divers stealing from the wrecks. Don't have to tell them which is which, but a series of coordinates so that everyone stays away from them. I can assure you the scallop fleet will stay away from those areas if given the information.

Heather Knowles: What Vito is touching on goes much beyond even this topic which is -- why are the wreck sites not more well known? Why is there no disclosure of the positions of the wrecks? Why don't we have the diving program for the sanctuary that is robust, that has proper rules, proper oversights and allows for access and the sharing of information that can be utilized by other groups -- make that information more accessible, so that exactly this type of topic where there is a negative impact to shipwrecks that we care about; because we don't disclose the location because we're afraid disclosing the location will harm the shipwreck. There is a conundrum in that.

John Armor: Doesn't have the solution. Is very interested in hearing what the SAC has to say. Knows it's a catch 22. It's a problem that the sanctuary program has everywhere. One of the biggest issues is person power. If we had ability to reliably enforce these things and get the word out in a way, than you might be able to do it. It really does come down to a resource availability issue. That's not necessarily what wants to be heard but that is certainly what is at the base of it.

Heather Knowles: Prioritize this topic of how to manage shipwrecks in sanctuaries. These sanctuaries are best visited by diving. This should be part of the core of sanctuary management to allow access with protection. When that topic is addressed some of the issues are solved. This is not the first time this has come up. Discussions in the past on shipwrecks on the bank being impacted and how to get the word out to protect the wrecks.

Chris McGuire: Putting on his ship captain's hat from his previous life. There is a clear process for this. The USCG manages this using the notice to mariners. It goes out widely and that's how information appears on charts. It feels like a tremendous safety liability for the sanctuary to be knowingly not sharing information about an underwater obstruction. He's not a fisherman but suspects that hanging up on a wreck like this, a small boat could turn over by hanging up hard on a wreck. Doesn't understand how this has been allowed not to be shared through the USCG. This is a plain safety issue. That is what charts are for and why updates happen so that people know where underwater obstructions are and can avoid them for exactly these reasons. Don't reinvent the wheel. Really be looking at ourselves when a small limited access scalloper flips over and one of their crewmen dies because there is a wreck that we know about but didn't share that information. Feels pretty strongly about that for somebody who made his life at sea for a long time. Astonishing conversation to be honest.

Ben Haskell: This is an example of why we do Management Plan reviews periodically because new issues come up, or old issues come up and we need to be revisit them. This is a prime topic for the next Management Plan process. Based on the last Management Plan process, it was the sanctuary's policy not to disclose shipwrecks because it's our responsibility under the National Historic Preservation Act to protect historic wrecks. So that is what our policy of non-disclosure is based on. This is done elsewhere not just in SBNMS. This situation with scallops has caused us to specifically (Matt Lawrence and Ben) question ourselves whether that non-disclosure policy is still the right way to go. It's a classic risk assessment situation. Is the risk greater if you disclose the wrecks or is it not. In this particular example, the risk is greater not disclosing where these wrecks are. Wouldn't be surprised if these wrecks are pretty much crushed or disturbed by this activity. We have no recourse if they are because traditional fishing is exempt from disturbance of the seafloor in this sanctuary. We do intend to go out in July and do some sonar side scanning and some dives on these 3 wrecks and see what the status is. If we find they've been majorly disturbed, then it will be a glaring example of how we should have disclosed these wrecks. Point is we are reevaluating this policy.

Bill Adler: Reiterate that fixed gear fishermen do not want to get involved with any of the wrecks for their own loss. Glad that sanctuary staff will take a look at this. There has got to be a way to get information out for the safety of the wreck and the safety of the fishermen.

Carol Voigt: Impressed with the inclusivity of this organization and the stakeholders, and their chance to be at the meetings and part of the decision making. But is astonished that you think a historic wreck should be protected from the population. They deteriorate -- every storm system that comes through is going to affect it. There is a lifespan for that. Why are you protecting it? Is it the history? Is it a lack of money to evaluate the historic significance of it? Because right now it's a resource that is deteriorating. This is a perfect example. How often do you survey this? How many other times has somebody hooked on that and dragged them. Rather than share it while it's here for a limited time, control the diving, have the money from that resource to be able to research it, photograph it, invite others to learn more about the history that caused it to be a wreck. Celebrate the individuals who operated those vessels and memorialize those who died serving this community. You're protecting something that isn't going to be here very much longer. I'm offended -- has an undergraduate degree in marine science, sailed 10 years on tankers, been around the world and for you to have that resource protected. And the reason I'm so violent about this, we did an exercise in the Harbor Islands and in this scenario a vessel ran aground and they didn't want to tell anybody where the historic sites were or where the unexploded ordnance was because they didn't want anybody to go there. So they put responders at risk and they deteriorated the quality of their

own historic sites by not telling people of other strategies that might be used to protect those when they were doing a response. I really think that you have an opportunity to shift the focus of this organization for inclusivity and the bigger stakeholders to broaden this. Look at it as a lesson learned and then move on. It's tragic.

Heather Knowles: Carol just spoke exactly to the sentiment of many divers and how they feel about the current status quo of the way diving is managed in the sanctuary and their access to shipwrecks.

Ben Haskell: Reiterated this needs to be revisited in the next Management Plan process. There is a community out there that doesn't share this view and sanctuary staff must be responsive to them as well. The historic preservation community and staff are trying to learn as much as they can from these time capsules sitting on the seafloor. But there are very limited resources and funding to do that. Raised some good points that need to be reconsidered.

Matt Lawrence: Appreciates the broad perspectives offered on the topic. Sanctuary staff is considering management updates and ways to provide shipwreck location information to its constituents so that fishermen can avoid them and divers can enjoy visiting them.

Heather Knowles: Personally would be really pleased to see this topic get more coverage and discussion by the SAC. As a small diving constituency, they are often on the periphery of things because there are some very dominant topics here which are important. But thinks the way this conversation has unfolded has been very interesting because it shows the inter-relatedness of some of this. It elevates the importance of some of these topics. Regardless of where we land, more discussion on this topic is needed and is another plug for a robust Management Plan review and update.

John Armor: As the SAC looks into this topic, resources were mentioned. Let's talk about that. It's assumed that the resources are there, but we need to incorporate that into the evaluation and recognize that there are limited resources to do these things. Get the resources to manage this properly [marking the modern wrecks], so that they can be marked so people don't hang up on them.

Heather Knowles: There is a concern that divers would disrupt the wreck site by removing artifacts. Artifacts that are basically part of that archaeological site. The concern is that wreck divers especially are often interested in recovering and restoring artifacts. The current regulations in place prohibit removal of artifacts. There are many other examples of sanctuaries or marine protected areas where artifact removal is not allowed. People are largely compliant with it. There are always instances where someone breaks the rules. But generally, there are a number of examples where this model has been successful of divers being able to visit shipwrecks without disturbing artifacts. That is the fundamental concern. Many divers feel that there are much greater threats to a shipwreck than an individual. Through education, outreach, and collaboration and having enforcement, we can have a successful program where divers can dive wrecks and minimize that risk. It's not so much a safety risk as there are legitimate concerns about whether or not the wreck can be harmed by someone removing things from it.

Jen Anderson: Sympathizes with the sanctuary on issues concerning resources and how hard it can be to find time, money, and energy to look more thoroughly at this. But this issue raised about the safety to fishermen does pop a red flag in the Management Plan process. If

it's a safety concern, urges caution and make the process go a little faster. Think of the optics if something did go wrong.

Ben Haskell: Major concern in that area is the *Patriot*. Not so much the historic wrecks. The location of the *Patriot* is well known, hopefully to the scallop fleet.

John Williamson: There is a whole set of other issues concerning sanctuary management that are embedded in this one incident that ties into the Management Plan and some of that has to do with how we interact with the NEFMC process and NOAA Fisheries. In a general way that is something we haven't been doing a really good job of. Where we've had failings in the Management Plan, that is one of the areas where we just haven't been able to get a lot of traction. This plays out in this case that has to do with the overall footprint of fishing in the sanctuary. The Designation document allows fishing in the sanctuary, but there is threshold level where that is beginning to affect the set of resources in the sanctuary. There are policy questions that flow from that that are actually in the realm of the fishery management process. Is it really our intent to have big scallop vessels coming in from ports not associated with Mass Bay and wiping out a piece of resource that the smaller vessels fish in Mass Bay rely on. These smaller vessels could be fishing on that scallop resource for years if it wasn't being cleaned out. What is our policy on that? Do we have one? We don't. It would take some doing for us to get there, but this is just an example and this is being played out with groundfish as well, with herring, and could be playing out with sand lance. This is not an isolated incident. Question is, it has to do with a topic that has come up at the Fishery Management Council time and time again over the years. It has to do with, you want to encourage a bifurcation of small boat inshore fleet and a large boat offshore fleet. You want to create an inshore/offshore line. Is that consistent with our goals within the national marine sanctuaries? Do we want to develop a relationship with all of the small ports and large ports like Gloucester, that are all associated with fishing in the sanctuary? We want to create an information structure so that we're managing for the sanctuary's goals at the same time we're managing for fishery management goals – all part of the discussion that could be part of the Management Plan review.

Marty Klein: In response to Carol Voigt's remark, it's not that simple. He is on the Advisory Board of Underwater Archaeology. These shipwrecks are unique pieces of history and it's a shared responsibility that we have. Granted they are deteriorating, but shipwrecks reach an equilibrium with the environment and degradation slows dramatically. Some shipwrecks archaeologically studied are a thousand or several thousand years old. But there still is a fair amount of mindset among a small percentage of the population that what we should have is finders keepers. "I found it it's mine and I'll take anything I want." As long as that is still around, we have to be careful. Feels in the long run that Carol Voigt and others are completely right. Shipwreck locations will be widely available on GPSs. But in the meantime that is something the we should be getting ready for, and as a council it's more important that we foster the appreciation that these are a part of our joint marine heritage. They are not someone else's property. Because you found it, you can't go take the wheel and the bell. Our long range goal should be to have that diver access. It's done in many places. Our long range goal should be the education and appreciation of the public for the shared maritime heritage.

There was more discussion among Vito Giacalone, Todd Callaghan, Heather Knowles, Ben Haskell, Deborah Cramer, Michelle Bachman, Chris McGuire on scalloping questions and suggestions on potential methods and solutions to address the impacts to shipwrecks and

fishermen which will be taken into consideration in the Management Plan review process (audio available upon request).

V. Youth Seat Presentation

Heather Gaughan, Youth Primary, and Kirsty Haley, Youth Alternate started their presentation with three questions from a “Jeopardy” game called the “Stellwagen Volunteer Test” in order to test the SAC members knowledge of the sanctuary, to show what kind of information is shared while volunteering. Next, Heather and Kirsty began their PowerPoint to explain who they are, their beginning connections to Stellwagen through the Gates Environmental Club, and a brief overview of what each of them has done while volunteering with SBNMS to date. To wrap up their presentation, Heather and Kirsty introduced new ways to get more volunteers. This included a website that could be displayed on school and community websites in order to reach a wider population of potential volunteers.

VI. Industry-Based Survey for Cod Update

The presentation given by David Pierce, MA Division of Marine Fisheries, can be found at the Appendix.

VII. Constituent Reports

ii. Sharing the Seas: Safe Boating for Sailors and Whales

Monica Pepe, Whale & Dolphin Conservation and Education Alternate provided the following report:

Through the North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium’s Education Committee, Whale and Dolphin Conservation partnered with the Audubon Society of RI and the New Bedford Whaling Museum to develop outreach materials for the sailing community on safe boating around whales. This new project is a branch of the See A Spout, Watch Out! program for outreach to recreational boaters, on which NOAA Fisheries and SBNMS are partners. Using the acronym SAIL, sailors are encouraged to familiarize themselves with whale watching guidelines and regulations, as well as commonly seen species for the region(s) in which they will be sailing. They are also provided with easy to remember tips for safe operation around whales, as well as the NOAA regional hotline number to call in the event they come across an injured, entangled, or dead whale. In an effort to promote marine stewardship, we also encourage sailors to collect any marine debris they might come across and be sure that they aren’t letting anything blow overboard. Successes to date include: partnering with US Sailing and Sailors for the Sea; distributing customized information to Atlantic Cup participants; hosting an informational booth at the Atlantic Cup Race Village; program presentation at the 2017 National Sailing Programs Symposium with attendees from US Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf coasts; and over 700 website visitors in the last year with little promotion outside of the aforementioned efforts. Next steps include contacting sailing race organizers to distribute customized information packets, hosting workshops at local community sailing centers and yacht clubs throughout MA and RI, and launching a digital marketing campaign to drive additional traffic to the website.

VIII. Agency/Government Reports

i. MA Coastal Zone Management (T. Callaghan)

The Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) company, Neptune (now owned by Engie), has applied to the US Maritime Administration (MARAD) to decommission its Deepwater Port. The port, which consists of two buoy systems and associated piping, is located west of Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (SBNMS) in waters 125-250 feet deep. The two mooring buoy parts of the port are each anchored to the seafloor by eight suction anchors. The suction anchors were originally supposed to be removed as part of the decommissioning, but are now proposed to be left in place and covered by large concrete mats that Engie is calling “trawl guards.” The concrete mats will be 25.5' x 25.5', 38.5' x 38.5', or 45.1' x 45.1' in dimension (length x width), and 6.4' high. The estimated 12 million cubic feet of natural gas residing in the pipeline is proposed to be flared. An estimated 21 hours of flaring will occur at the seaward end of the port, in federal waters adjacent to SBNMS, from the south riser manifold. CZM is also aware that Northeast Gateway, a similar deepwater LNG port adjacent the SBNMS will also be decommissioned in the next couple of years.

Three offshore wind lease holders (Baystate Wind, Vineyard Power, and Deepwater Wind) are engaged in the permit process for developing their leases south of Martha's Vineyard. Each of the developers has a point of contact whose job is to communicate and coordinate with the various fishing industries that might be affected by the surveying and construction activities (John Williamson for Baystate Wind, Beth Casoni for Deepwater Wind, Jim Kendall for Vineyard Power). Each lease holder is in the process of developing or submitting a Sampling and Analysis Plan and Construction and Operations Plan. These plans detail how the lease holders will address potential environmental impacts including the use of marine mammal spotters, infrared cameras, and acoustic buoys to detect and avoid harm to marine mammals. CZM director Bruce Carlisle commented at a recent Habitat Work Group meeting with the developers and interested parties that the fisheries-related studies were not well described at this point and that more effort is needed in this realm.

CZM and other state agencies have met with Atlantic Link, a company seeking permits to bring 900 megawatts of renewable energy to Massachusetts. Atlantic Link's preliminary route would travel 371 miles from New Brunswick, Canada to Plymouth, MA via the seafloor. The cable would be hydroplowed three to six feet below the sediment surface. The current proposal places the submarine cable to the west of SBNMS and will come nearest the sanctuary's boundary near Cape Ann.

ii. NOAA Office of Law Enforcement

Tim Donovan, Assistant Director NOAA OLE, could not attend the meeting but provided the following update:

- OLE conducted multiple boardings with USCG during the NGOM scallop closure open period. Possession limit violations were investigated.
- OLE conducted a patrol with USCG Station Boston within the sanctuary focusing on HPTRP and ALWTRP compliance – No violations identified.

- Station Boston has expressed continued interest in conducting joint patrols in the sanctuary with focus on LMR enforcement within the sanctuary.
- We are still looking into the death of a female yearling right whale that occurred in CC Bay last month.
- A NOAA patrol boat for this area is still in the works. In the meantime, MEP will continue to assist with sanctuary patrols in the coming months.
- OLE is participating in the sanctuary's Small Boat Interactions working group.
- OLE's new priorities will come out in FY 2018, which will continue to include Stellwagen enforcement activity.
- EO Tim Wilmarth met with MEP, PRD, and Ben Haskell to discuss enforcement priorities in the sanctuary prior to the busy season.
- MEP is on track in meeting their patrol hours under the Joint Enforcement Agreement.

iii. New England Fishery Management Council (M. Bachman)

Ms. Bachman provided an update from the New England Fishery Management Council. The Council is currently developing two actions of interest to the SAC. One is Atlantic Herring Amendment 8. Among other measures, the amendment includes measures to address localized depletion concerns. Localized depletion may result from herring fishery removals concentrated in space and time. There are concerns that such removals affect consumers of herring, including fishes, birds, and whales. One approach the Council is considering is year-round closure of Area 1A to mid-water trawls. Area 1A includes the entire inshore Gulf of Maine and overlaps the Sanctuary. Presently, provided there is quota available, 1A is only open to mid-water trawls during October, November, and December, and is open to other directed fishing (i.e. purse seining) between June and December. The Area 1A quota is divided seasonally, about 70% is available during the months of June – September (excluding MWT gear), and about 30% is available during the months of October – December; the area is closed to all herring fishing between January and May. In addition there are seasonal spawning closures implemented by ASMFC that close portions of Area 1A during the fall as well.

In April, the Council approved a range of alternatives for Amendment 8, including this approach, for analysis. Most of the alternatives under consideration are focused on areas farther south, i.e. off the backside of Cape Cod. The Herring Plan Development Team will be working on analysis this summer, and the Committee plans to meet in September. The Council could approve the amendment for public hearings during their September meeting, if sufficient analysis has been completed by that time.

Ms. Bachman also noted that the rulemaking process for Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment 2 remains ongoing; this action includes a Dedicated Habitat Research Area overlapping the Sanctuary.

iv. NOAA Greater Atlantic Region Fisheries Service (J. Anderson)

LARGE WHALE UPDATES

- Regional Office staff received activity reports from the Northeastern Massachusetts Aquaculture Center, Salem State University, Rockport longline mussel project - located outside the boundaries of the Sanctuary - and no listed species interactions have been reported as a result of their project.
- The Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team met in late April. The purpose of the meeting focused on providing the Team with the latest information regarding right and humpback whale distribution/abundance, entanglement events, recent research on gear modifications, and provided a forum to discuss potential future actions.
- In April, an Unusual Mortality Event was declared for humpback whale stranding events occurring from January 2016 to present. A total of 44 humpback whale stranding events have occurred from Maine through North Carolina during this time frame. Approximately half of the cases were examined via necropsy examination.
- Approximately half of the cases examined (N=10) have preliminary findings consistent with vessel interactions. Priority sampling efforts continue to screen for morbillivirus, biotoxin, and human interaction.

v. Regional Recreational Fisheries (M. Kelly, NOAA GARFO Coordinator)

GARFO Recreational Fisheries Coordinator, Moira Kelly, introduced herself and her role to the SAC. She noted the regional implementation plan and an increased focus on collaborative outreach with the Sanctuary, particularly the volunteer program. Moira is working with SBNMS staff on an information document describing fisheries management in the Sanctuary and the roles, responsibilities, and limitations of each group involved.

IX. New Business

Heather Knowles: The Executive Committee will follow up with Joe Levine and vet his suggestion regarding the formation of a subcommittee to look at ways SBNMS has economically benefited the local community. If the Executive Committee finds the suggestion appropriate, it will be addressed at the next SAC meeting.

IX. Public Comment: No public comment.

X. Adjourn: 3:20 pm.