



**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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**35<sup>th</sup> SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**16 February 2012 9:30 am – 3:30 pm**  
**Holiday Inn, Rockland, MA**  
**MINUTES of MEETING**

**Present:**

Jennifer Anderson	Federal:	National Marine Fisheries Service
Michelle Bachman	Federal:	NE Fisheries Management Council
Jamie Cournane	Member:	Research
Deborah Cramer	Member:	At Large
Rich Delaney	Member:	Education (Chair)
CPT Peter DeCola	Federal:	USCG
Susan Farady	Alternate:	Education
Robert Foster	Alternate:	Diving
John Galluzzo	Alternate:	Maritime Heritage
Peter Gamache	State:	Massachusetts Environmental Police
Heather Knowles	Member:	Diving (Executive Committee, Acting Chair)
Judy Laster	Alternate:	At Large
Bob McCabe	Alternate:	Marine Transportation
Chris McGuire	Alternate:	Conservation
Maggie Merrill	Alternate:	Business/Industry
Tim Moll	Member:	Business/Industry
Rob Moir	Member:	Conservation
Rick Murray	Member:	Research
Robert Rocha	Alternate:	Education
Michael Sosik	Member:	Recreational Fishing
John Williamson	Member:	At Large (Executive Committee, Secretary)
Tim Willmore	Federal:	NOAA Law Enforcement

**SBNMS Staff:**

Craig MacDonald	Matthew Lawrence	Elizabeth Stokes
Ben Cowie-Haskell	Deborah Marx	Alice Stratton
Brad Cabe	Anne Smrcina	Nathalie Ward

**Others Present:**

Paul Ticco, ONMS, NE & Great Lakes Region  
 Kara Woo, ONMS HQ Intern

**I. Welcome, Review of Agenda and Approval of SAC Minutes (Rich Delaney)**

The Agenda was reviewed and approved. The 34th SAC Minutes were approved (unanimous).



Two new SAC members were welcomed: Pete Gamache, Mass Environmental Police, and Tim Willmore, NOAA Law Enforcement Program.

## **II. SBNMS Business (Craig MacDonald)**

i. Sanctuary Budget. FY08 to FY10 has seen level funding. There was an increase in FY11 funding due to an additional staff member, Alice Stratton who was transferred from ONMS Headquarters, and also because the ONMS Program Director has made an effort to allocate more of the national headquarters budget to the sites. The sanctuary is in a better position going into FY12 than previously anticipated. Funding for fixed costs (i.e., labor, maintenance, and service contracts) has been allocated. However, no discretionary funds have been allocated to cover other expenses. There are no large grants at the moment, as in the past, such as Navy funds for acoustics research. Sanctuary staff will need to place more reliance on partner agreements and teaming with other organizations and grant writing to make up for this shortfall. There are no PAC funds allocated (capital planning acquisition funds) to renovate and convert the boathouse to a marine operations center. These funds have been down since FY08, but not yet firmly allocated for FY12. But we do know that we were to be provided \$55K for *R/V Auk* and possibly \$75K for sanctuary exhibits. There is a remote possibility of small additional funding depending on some pending issues with NOS.

ii. 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration and SAC Challenge.

Nathalie talked about the upcoming 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary events and thanked SAC members who have contributed to this celebration. SAC members who have not yet provided Nathalie with a one-pager description of their event are asked to do so. The 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events are posted to the Sanctuary website.

## **III. SAC Business (Nathalie Ward)**

i. Council “Round Robin”. SAC members and alternates introduced themselves and provided updates of their respective organizations and issues, as well as an update on their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary contributions.

ii. Future Recruitment. There are two recruitments ongoing for Research Alternate and an At-Large Member (Theresa Barbo, At-Large stepped down). Nathalie will inform SAC members once the Federal Register Notice is released. SAC is also recruiting for a Youth Seat (Member and Alternate). Applications and criteria will be posted to the SBNMS website.

iii. 2012 SAC Meetings Dates. The next SAC meeting will be held in June. Meetings will be reduced from 4 to 3 due to budget constraints. *Update: Next SAC meeting will be held on Thursday, 7 June, at the Northeast Regional Office in Gloucester.*

iv. SAC Summit Webinar (April 2012). The annual SAC Coordinators Summit will be held in April in webinar forum since no funding is available for SAC Coordinators to meet. Nathalie asked SAC members to share any specific concerns that NMSP or SBNMS needs to raise at the upcoming SAC Summit. Dan Basta attends these meetings and wants to hear any concerns SAC

members may have. Rich Delaney will provide a report of SAC Summit issues at the next SAC meeting.

v. Programmatic Updates. Nathalie provided an overview of the programmatic updates that SBNMS staff provides. This report is sent to SAC members before each SAC meeting. It summarizes progress and future steps in the various programmatic areas and is sent by email rather than having staff provide oral briefings at each SAC meeting. (See Appendix for a summary of programmatic updates for this reporting period).

vi. SAC Youth Seat Subcommittee (Dave Robinson and Rob Moir). Rob Moir provided the SAC Youth Subcommittee update. The process is proceeding according to schedule. The SAC Charter has been amended to add an additional youth member and alternate (14-18 years old). Nathalie is preparing an announcement for the Federal Registry Notice calling for applicants for these positions. She will also host the selection process. Applications will be submitted by 27 April. The SAC Youth Seat Subcommittee will then convene and give their nomination recommendations to Nathalie to forward to the SAC Executive Committee for Executive Committee's considerations. This will be done in time to share with SAC at the June meeting. A number of organizations and school groups have offered to get the word out, and SAC members discussed additional methods to get the word out to a larger audience. More SAC members are needed to join the subcommittee. SAC Youth Seat Subcommittee members are:

Rob Moir  
Jamie Cournane  
Susan Farady  
Dave Robinson

vii. SAC Leadership Award Subcommittee (John Galluzo). John stated that all the necessary forms and paperwork are finalized and nominations are now needed. Rick Murray volunteered to help on the judging committee, but more SAC members are needed to help on the judging committee. SAC members are asked to contact John Galluzo if interested in being part of the judging committee.

**IV. Sister Sanctuary Program (Nathalie Ward)**. Reported in her capacity as External Affairs Coordinator and SBNMS international affairs. Nathalie provided an overview of the sister sanctuary program: The Sister Sanctuary relationship, established in 2006, between Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (SBNMS) and Santuario de Mamíferos Marinos de la República Dominicana (SMMRD) marked a new chapter for the *joint* management of the endangered humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) in the North Atlantic. The sister sanctuary was the *first* international accord to protect an endangered marine mammal migratory species on both ends of its range—in its northern feeding and nursery grounds in SBNMS and its southern mating and calving grounds in SMMRD. The sister sanctuary relationship 1) facilitates an ecosystem-based approach to cooperative sanctuary management of humpback whales through capacity building, research, monitoring and education; 2) serves as a template to elevate national and international awareness of the importance of the ecological connection between these marine mammal protected areas; and, 3) emphasizes the critical need to take a broader management view toward transboundary conservation of marine mammal species. The sister

sanctuary concept is part of a larger international and global vision of Marine Mammal Protected Areas (i.e., UNEP's Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol for the Wider Caribbean Region) that prioritizes management regimes that maintain ecological connections between marine protected areas in order to satisfy species' requirements. The sister sanctuary model promotes a strategy that defines emerging problems (beyond EEZs), kindles commitment to critical habitats, and manifests the true spirit of regional cooperation, which is a key element to ensure effective management for biodiversity protection and the conservation of migratory, marine mammal species. In 2011, SBNMS signed a sister sanctuary (SS) agreement with the French Antilles Agoa Marine Mammal Sanctuary and a Letter of Intent, expanding the sister sanctuary programme.

## **V. SERA Update (Craig MacDonald).**

### Presentation:

Craig gave a PowerPoint update on the proposed SERA. There was concern raised by some SAC members that findings were based on data from 1998-2009 prior to sector based management and that fishing patterns may have changed in 2010 as a result of sectors. Craig indicated that he is consulting with NERO on how best to analyze the 2010 VTR data. Once he gets input from NERO the plan is to incorporate the 2010 and eventually the 2011 VTR data and analyze changes in fishing patterns with respect to SERA boundaries.

### Questions/Discussion on Presentation:

Some members expressed concern about the increased number of boats fishing in the sanctuary and questioned whether this was real or an artifact of the data. Craig explained that the number of vessels is based on the unique hull IDs of vessels fishing within the sanctuary. We verified the VTR data against the observer data and feel confident about the analysis within the SERA subareas.

Michelle Bachman talks about council process and PDT actions. Aspects that are currently in the process. Management options are based on minimizing adverse effects of various types of gear fishing and assessing possible research areas.

Craig MacDonald. A robust vigorous draft proposal for the SERA is on the sanctuary website. Until the proposal is formally submitted by NOAA to the NEFMC, it will not be formally treated by the Council. How to get it back on the table. Anyone can read the proposal and submit it to the Council for consideration. As a draft we have little ability to directly advance what we feel are the needs of the sanctuary. Can use the information but cannot formally transmit it to the Council. It's a very awkward situation for everyone involved.

Deborah Cramer: What was the response and outcome of letters by scientists and John Williamson?

Craig MacDonald: We don't know what the response will be. The letters were sent to DOC and congressionals and one to head of NOAA. Didn't see letters and don't know about any response.

John Williamson: Two letters – one to Senator Kerry from scientists, and the other two from four interest groups to DOC Secretary Bryson and another from Friends groups through NMSF to Secretary Bryson; no response -- not unusual -- about 1 ½ months now. May still be forthcoming. Suggested that this discussion be picked up after Jen Anderson gives her report. GoM cod problem is holding everything over this proposal as well as the sector politics.

Rich Delaney: No reason why the members of the NEFMC's Plan Development Team (PDT) cannot look at the elements of the science and information that went into the proposal and can use it as conceptual info. NEFMC could look at document.

Michelle Bachman: Council very sensitive to public perception, it is an awkward situation. Trying to hash out details through a working group can't say what kind of knowledge and background will be at the table, but everyone knows that it's out there and some of their thinking will be informed by the SERA. At this stage, PDT won't be reviewing it as an entire proposal with all its elements, maybe just turning it into some type of management option tool. NEFMC will not take up an issue that does not have entire support from NOAA. Certainly it has been reviewed by a lot of members of the PDT. If SAC as a whole would recommend it, the NEFMC would speculate why the sanctuary isn't submitting it.

John Williamson: Really important that NEFMC is an open public process. Folks need to understand this. There are opportunities for fishing public to get up at Council and committee meetings and make their concerns and interests known. Fishing industry groups can bring in entire concepts to be flushed out. These get incorporated into the planning. Interests of the general public are not treated necessarily the same way but the general public needs to make these wishes known. Need for general public to go to these meetings and say what they want – make their ideas known.

Chris McGuire: At the last NEFMC meeting a motion was made to include an emergency action to open a number of closed areas to include Sliver in the W GoM. Question: If that were to be opened on an interim basis for a year, what effect long term would it have on research going on in that area?

Craig MacDonald: If the Sliver went away we would see a \$3m investment go away, a remarkable investment in fish habitat recovery. It is serving as a relatively unimpacted reference site to understand what's happening. The sanctuary would go completely out of business for habitat research. Was told that the vote on the motion was taken primarily on the groundfish mortality portion of the closure. It was our understanding that the habitat closure would not be affected by this vote at the last Council meeting.

*Back and forth discussion on habitat closure areas/habitat mortality closed areas, etc., and opening up Sliver and NEFMC process.*

Jen Anderson: Can't speak on Council why members voted the way they did. The Council requested that the agency take interim actions and she described them. Agency agreed to look

into all of this. Premature to say what's going to happen but agency will take everything under consideration.

CPT Peter DeCola and John Williamson: Intent of motion includes habitat closure.

Chris McGuire: It does not refer to habitat or mortality – just ‘closures’. Almost entirely in the habitat closure area. Encouraged that the time frame is very short -- trying to move forward with these things as quickly as possible.

Craig MacDonald: Response to Chris McGuire about what sanctuary interests and concerns are. Opening up Sliver? Would very strongly oppose it.

Jen Anderson: If NMFS would take action, would need to have a NEPA in place and with the time constraints also being looked at to get something in.

John Williamson: Agree. There is a real need to call attention to a whole set of issues - the cod issue. Dire for 2013. More at stake than fishery and habitat.

Craig MacDonald: The closure motion was raised with no reference to map/chart after 11 hours of meeting that day and a lot of people had already left.

Jamie Cournane: NOAA needs to recognize SERA by June or before the June NEFMC meeting?

Michelle Bachman: Assuming NEFMC considers these options in June which is optimistic. Needs to be recognized by early May at the latest for time to get feedback on it from the PDT in order to recommend it back to the Council end of June. Ideally April would be easier. More talk about time line.

### ***Afternoon Continuation Under “IX. New Business”.***

Susan Farady: Sanctuary's posture in terms of the SERA and also in terms of what may be proposed at the ground fish closed areas. Is this something to go before the Chair and coordinators meeting with Dan Basta or general counsel, so many discussions at this body and so many presentations about how the sanctuary interacts with NOAA Fisheries. The takeaway she gets is that it doesn't matter what the Sanctuary superintendent recommends in terms of interaction with fisheries unless NOAA agrees to take it forward. This is interesting and troublesome especially where we have a couple of “house fire” situations here in New England. So maybe the sanctuary program should go over to the DOI and leave everybody else in DOC. Strikes me that the sanctuary is in a situation like this trying to talk to another agency, the sanctuary should be treated differently than just as another member of the public or stakeholder. It's an inter-agency consultation sort of thing, yet because of this little dance that we have to do under the same agency, it gets pretty convoluted.

Paul Ticco: The SERA is bottlenecked at NOAA and NOS level. There are socio-economic issues, political issues that's why we are stuck. Relationship is improving and other issues are

being worked. There is constant coordination and communication at NMSF and Dan's level (ONMS). There is ONMS level, NOS level, sanctuary and NMFS level - Not near a dead issue - it's being worked on with new data new studies and new relationships issues, it's a convoluted, long term process. Goal is to establish the best way to go through that process. Totally issue related. This issue is at the forefront of frustration. Goal is to establish the best way to go through that process. He cannot speak for NOAA. He's working on the same issue with sanctuary staff to get the SERA to move forward into the process.

Craig MacDonald clarified Paul Ticco's position. Paul's role has been in a position to help us facilitate this process. Paul is the regional coordinator NE&GL Region and is trying to facilitate the process and move the proposal forward. It's essentially people in positions above him who are trying to decide next step.

Deborah Cramer: Appreciates that it's convoluted and that everybody is communicating, but bottom line is that we were told pretty explicitly that we could not do anything without going to NEFMC. Now we're trying to do that and we are told we can't do that. It cannot be nothing, it has to be one or the other. After a great deal of difficulty the sanctuary followed that advice but where did this get us. May pay more attention to it if SAC submits it.

*Public member speaks at this point chastising NOAA for obsfuscation.*

Rich Delaney: Need to examine our frustrations and our role as SAC.

John Williamson. ONMS is not the problem. They've been doing everything they can to move the SERA proposal forward. Reiterate to move this forward, citizens need to have just as much say as fishing interests. Economic analysis has been used against the proposal falsely.

Jamie Cournane: SERA proposal should be part of the NROC process.

Craig MacDonald: I don't think it will be offered into that process. Proposal is on the website. It is ready to go forward.

Rich Delaney: Put it on the table.

Susan Farady: Leary of this with NROC. There is a real problem here. Directly impact jurisdiction of the sanctuary. Sanctuary Act versus Magnusen Stevens Act. Entitled to carry out two laws and one isn't being treated on equal footing. Sanctuary is in a real bind right now, really at a stalemate. Concerned with crisis in the fishing industry right now.

Rich Delaney: BOEM (DOI Bureau of Energy Management) is participating in Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) up and down east coast.

Paul Ticco: No doubt that Dan and ONMS favor the draft SERA proposal. It's really an issue of going through the process of getting all the voices heard. This is the position we're in. There are political issues of the next election that play into it.

Ben Haskell. Two critical hurdles in the next couple of months. Public needs to make their views known at Feb 23 Habitat committee in NH, second hurdle likely the June Council meeting when they vote on habitat measures. Keep that in mind, that's where the voice needs to be heard.

Rich Delaney: Send another letter?

John Williamson: Letter to NEFMC explaining what the process has been and that we support it.

Rob Moir: What can the SAC do to help move forward any charge of SERA in the planning process? NOAA can't do anything right now. So what can the SAC do? Bottom line is to help influence the habitat committee. Don't need to get everything we want. Attach the proposal...mention the SAC's majority vote.

*Discussion ensued on whether to send a letter to NEFMC supporting the SERA.*

Jamie Cournane: If someone on the habitat committee wants to accept it, they could. Awkward situation because it would be introduced by the SAC. Would a motion like this pass the habitat committee? Concerned doing this circumvents the process in a way and creates a problem to get this into the management process. Circumventing the process may be too risky. As much as I'd like to see it move forward, it may be too risky.

Craig MacDonald: How would the Council react?

Michelle Bachman. Probably not accepting but finds herself consistently surprised by decisions that are reached. She talked about measures that would be taken in the EFH Amendment EIS process. May be opportunities beyond June to add to this amendment. She encouraged folks to come to the Habitat Committee meetings. The Plan Development Team's (PDT) perspective keeps lots of options and ideas on the table. PDT is exploring this area and will do additional analysis. Individual comments that come at committee meetings, anytime the committee makes a motion, the audience can speak. Long explanation about how NEFMC process and PDT will proceed with lots of options on the table. Anyone's individual comments will be listened to by the Committee.

Rob Moir: SAC and staff worked really hard together. Kudos to everyone. Is there something there?

Craig MacDonald read from SAC Charter about the administrative process on how a letter from the SAC has to be approved by SAC Chair and Sanctuary Superintendent.

*Back and forth discussion on how to get the letter to NEFMC.*

John Williamson. SAC is committed to mitigating any economic impacts to the fishing community. We need to communicate this individually to Council members.



Rich Delaney: As individuals, can participate in varying degrees in the fish management council process. Bigger political scale, as individuals communicating to the Secretary of Commerce or do this through constituencies. Get involved at Feb 23 meeting.

*Back and forth about how to proceed with letter to Council. Following motion proposed and passed.*

***Motion: That SAC authorize the Chair to write a letter to the Superintendent reminding him that a lot of work went into the development of the SERA, that the SAC is following the advice to work with NEFMC, and as a body voted at the last SAC meeting to endorse the SERA and ask Secretary of Department of Commerce to release the report to the NEFMC. Deborah motions, Robert Rocha seconds.***

**VI. Working Luncheon – “Do Lobsters Make Decisions that Effect their Population?” OR “Lobsters: Dumb Human or Sophisticated Robots” (Dr. Jelle Atema).** Dr. Atema, former Director of the Boston University Marine Program, has studied the behavior of lobsters, reef fish, and sharks for the past 15 years. His presentation focused on the different lobster populations, their behavior, habits, and habitat, from Rhode Island and the Gulf of Maine.

## **VII. Partner and Constituent Reports.**

i. New Bedford Whaling Museum (Robert Rocha). Bob Rocha talked about numerous upcoming lectures, presentations, and exhibits, and learning programs that are taking place at the New Bedford Whaling Museum. The museum now includes exhibits on conservation and science in general. For more information, please visit the New Bedford Whaling Museum website: <http://www.whalingmuseum.org>.

ii. NOAA Fisheries Regional Report (Jen Anderson). Jen Anderson presented the NMFS report and provided the following summary:

### **Atlantic Sturgeon Endangered Species Listing**

On January 31, 2012, NOAA announced that five populations of Atlantic sturgeon along the U.S. East Coast will receive protection under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). The listings become effective on April 6, 2012. The Gulf of Maine population of Atlantic sturgeon has been listed as threatened while the New York Bight, Chesapeake Bay, Carolina, and South Atlantic populations have been listed as endangered. Atlantic sturgeon from the five populations mix in coastal waters which means that an Atlantic sturgeon listed as threatened can occur alongside an Atlantic sturgeon that is listed as endangered. We do not expect federally managed fisheries to be closed as a result of listing these five populations of Atlantic sturgeon. NOAA Fisheries Service has already been working with the industry to develop methods to reduce Atlantic sturgeon bycatch and bycatch mortality. We will continue to work with Fishery Management Councils, ASMFC, state agencies and stakeholders under several provisions of the ESA to evaluate the best options for minimizing impacts to Atlantic sturgeon without unduly hampering fishing activities. Addressing bycatch is one step toward the recovery of Atlantic sturgeon. We continue to support research that provides vital information for recovery, and we are working closely with Canadian authorities to understand the impacts of activities in those

waters for Atlantic sturgeon that are spawned in U.S. rivers. NOAA Fisheries Service is also working to address the other threats to Atlantic sturgeon, including water quality, vessel strikes, and impacts to habitat. Further information on these topics is available on the Northeast Regional Office, Atlantic Sturgeon webpage at: [www.nero.noaa.gov/prot\\_res/atlsturgeon/](http://www.nero.noaa.gov/prot_res/atlsturgeon/).

### **Cape Code Common Dolphin Mass Stranding (Numbers as of 2/13/12)**

The stranding response implemented by NOAA Fisheries Service's Marine Mammal Stranding Health and Response Network:

Total common dolphins that have stranded and received field numbers: 166

- 106 found dead
- 60 found alive
  - Of the 60 that stranded alive:
    - 46 were released (43 successfully)
    - 14 died or were euthanized (these are NOT included in the dead total above.)
  - Of the 46 that were released:
    - 3 subsequently re-stranded dead (one with a sat tag), these are not in the dead total, see note above.

Herding:

- 2/11/12 - 5 animals were successfully herded with pingers and boat deterrents
- 2/9/12 - 50 animals were successfully herded with pingers
- 2/8/12 - 3 animals herded (twice)
- 2/3/12 - harbor master herded ~7 animals out of Blackfish Creek
- 2/1/12 - six animals herded and all stranded
- 1/23/12 - 1 herded with pingers initially and then metal rods out of Rock Harbor (dolphin later stranded on a sand bar outside of the harbor)

### **Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team Meeting January 9-13, 2012**

NMFS conducted a meeting of the ALWTRT Jan. 9-13, 2012 in Providence, RI. NMFS is developing a rule to address the entanglement risk to large whales from vertical lines in commercial fishing gear. The meeting focused on discussion of vertical line risk reduction proposals put forward by stakeholders and members of the TRT. The proposals included many ideas including: increasing trawl lengths, exemptions for state waters, exemptions due to proposed trap reductions, closures, and increased gear marking. The proposals will be analyzed for their conservation benefit and used to shape NMFS' alternatives for the DEIS.

### **Gulf of Maine (GOM) Cod Update**

- The 2011 GOM cod assessment found that the stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring.
- The stock was to be rebuilt by 2014 but the new assessment indicates that is no longer possible.
- The New England Fishery Management Council (Council) has two years to revise the GOM cod rebuilding plan but overfishing must be ended by 2013.
- The Council has requested that NMFS take interim action in 2012 to reduce overfishing and NMFS is considering the Council's request.
- The Northeast Fisheries Science Center is in the process of updating the GOM cod stock

assessment.

iii. NEFMC Report (Michelle Bachman). Michelle presented the NEFMC report and provided the following summary:

New England Fishery Management Council staff provided input during the discussion of the SERA proposal. Council members have received copies of the proposal, but have not discussed it during recent Council or Habitat Committee meetings. The Council's Habitat Plan Development Team and Committee are currently developing measures to minimize the adverse effects of fishing on habitat. These measures include possible revisions to the existing habitat closures, as well as new habitat management areas and dedicated habitat research areas (DHRAs). While the management options and areas are substantially developed, the PDT is just now developing detailed proposals for DHRAs. Options for habitat management areas will be packaged with options to modify the groundfish closed areas and forwarded to the Council for their consideration later this year, during their June meeting at the earliest. DHRAs will also be considered by the Council at that time. Additional analyses will occur after the Council approves the management and research area alternatives for further consideration in the Amendment. Once an Environmental Impact Statement is completed, the Council will approve the measures for public hearings. Final Council decisions on Omnibus EFH Amendment measures are scheduled for 2013.

During constituent reports, New England Fishery Management Council staff provided an update on recent activities. A major issue facing the Council is the updated Gulf of Maine cod assessment its potential effects on annual catch limits for 2013 and beyond. NOAA Fisheries is drafting an interim action that will include a catch limit for 2013 and associated management measures. At its January meeting, the Council recommended a range of catch limits and measures for their consideration. Other groundfish management actions currently under development include Amendment 18, which just finished initial scoping and will consider possible accumulation limits and consolidation issues, a framework action to update the sector management system, catch limit specifications for the 2012 fishing year, and possible revisions to the groundfish closed areas, including the Western Gulf of Maine closed area, as a component of the Essential Fish Habitat Omnibus Amendment. Also in January, the Council approved Multispecies Amendment 19 for public hearings. This action will implement annual catch limits and accountability measures in the small mesh multispecies fishery for red, silver, and white hake. This spring, the Council plans to finalize Amendment 5 to the Herring Fishery Management Plan. Public hearings will be conducted in March and final action is expected in June.

### **VIII. New SAC Issues.**

John Williamson. The development of the regional planning body of the National Ocean Policy is moving ahead now. The question is how the sanctuary will figure into the planning. Susan Farady added that everyone is waiting for guidance from the NOC and governance committee. Rich Delaney said it is his understanding that it has somewhat stalled at the national level, but the regional council has been forging ahead anyway.

**IX. New Business.**

i. Continuation of Discussion - Draft SERA Proposal (*please see section V. SERA Update*).

ii. Rob Moir reported on the film, *Ocean Frontiers – The Dawn of a New Era in Ocean Stewardship* by Green Fire Productions. Rob urges everyone to watch the film. Anne Smrcina added that the New England Premier of *Ocean Frontiers* at the New England Aquarium IMAX theater will be on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. This is one of the one of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary events with a panel discussion that will follow the film.

**X. Public Comment. No public comment.**

**XII. Adjournment. 2:30 pm.**