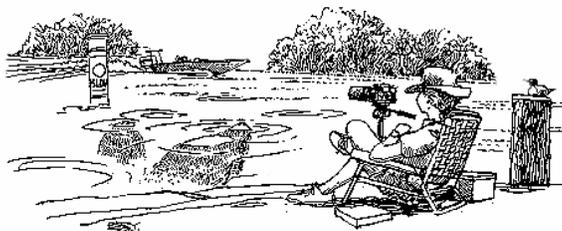


## **Marine Species Observer Experience Requirements**

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**June 2006**



Certain water-related construction, demolition, dredging, surveying, testing, or permitted marine events require a program that includes experienced observers to watch for and protect marine species (manatees, marine turtles, dolphins, and whales). Such experience includes field training under the direct supervision of an experienced observer, and repeated field observations dealing successfully with interactions with marine species during projects.

### **Procedure for Approval**

If a person is interested in becoming approved for a particular project, or would like to be listed in the wildlife agency's list of observers, a resume as well as a completed form called *Observer Experience and Education Documentation for Marine Species Watch Programs (June 2006)* should be sent to the following address: The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Imperiled Species Management, 6A, 620 South Meridian Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1600, or submitted at [fcmpmail@myfwc.com](mailto:fcmpmail@myfwc.com).

If more than 10 years has lapsed since a person has had experience observing marine animals, they will be qualified for one level lower than the number of hours and number of sightings outlined in this guidance. Their watch level can be upgraded as they gain more recent observation experience.

### **Levels of Watch**

Because some projects pose more of a risk to marine species than other projects, an observer's experience must be suited to the level of risk expected for a particular project. When a project's state or federal permit authorization requires observers, the wildlife agencies involved in the review of those permits typically must approve the observers on a project-by-project basis. A list of experienced observers is maintained to provide contractors with a list of possibly qualified individuals. Being identified on an agency's list does not automatically qualify an observer for a project. Individuals must still be approved on a project by project basis, based on their level of experience. This list will only be updated on an annual basis. A copy of the list can be found at: <http://www.myfwc.com/manatee/permits/Observer.htm>.

The following table provides guidance on acceptable levels of observer experience as it corresponds to types of projects. These criteria should be considered only guidance, and the wildlife agencies reserve the right to approve or disapprove observers for particular projects, listing, or level of watch experience as warranted.

## Marine Species Observer Experience Requirements

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Watch Levels	Type of project	Experience Required:	Notes:
<b><u>Level 1:</u></b> <b><u>Trainee</u></b>	This observer does not fulfill a permit requirement as a sole, secondary, or lead watch observer for any type of project.	FWC recommends that trainees watch the “Manatee Observation Video”, available from the FWC before performing field observation.	Trainees work as a second observer under the direct, on-site supervision of a Level 2 (or higher) observer. Observation experience is gained by on-the-job training, which is being performed to qualify as a Level 2 observer.
<b><u>Level 2:</u></b>	This observer may fulfill a permit requirement as a sole, secondary, or lead watch observer for water-related construction, dredging or demolition that is <u>not</u> located in an Important Manatee Area (IMA) and that does <u>not</u> involve blasting, boat races or movie production.	Must have obtained a minimum of <u>10 hours</u> of observation time from a land or boat-based position and a minimum of <u>five sightings</u> of any type of marine mammal or marine turtle. Experience must have been performed under the direct, on-site supervision of a Level 3 (or higher) observer.	This observer may gain observation experience as a trainee to qualify as a Level 3 observer for other types of projects; however, they will not be qualified to fulfill a permit requirement on projects that involve IMAs, blasting, boat races, movie productions, or aerial surveys.
<b><u>Level 3:</u></b>	This observer may fulfill a permit requirement as a sole, secondary, or lead watch observer for water-related construction, dredging or demolition, including blasting projects, boat races or movie production, and including activities located in Important Manatee Areas (IMA).	Must have obtained a minimum of <u>20 hours</u> of observation time from a land or boat-based position and a minimum of <u>ten (10) sightings</u> of any type of marine mammal or marine turtle. Experience must have been performed under the on-site supervision of a Level 4 Observer.	This observer may gain observation experience as a trainee to qualify as a Level 4 (aerial) observer for other types of projects; they may fulfill a permit requirement as a secondary observer or part of a watch team on projects that involve aerial surveys but are not qualified to perform as the aerial observer.
<b><u>Level 4:</u></b> <b><u>Aerial</u></b>	This observer fulfills a permit requirement as a sole, secondary or lead watch observer for any type of project.	Must have obtained a minimum of <u>30 hours</u> of aerial observation and documentation of sightings of any type of marine mammal or marine turtle <b>on at least half</b> of their documented flights. Experience must have been performed under the on-site supervision of a Level 4 Observer.	This observer may fulfill a permit requirement as aerial observer on projects that require aerial surveys.

## **Glossary**

**Important Manatee Areas (IMAs)** – Important Manatee Areas are those areas that have been identified in the federal Manatee Key as areas within certain counties where increased densities of manatees occur due to the proximity of warm water discharges, freshwater discharges, natural springs and other habitat features that are attractive to manatees. These areas are heavily utilized for feeding, transiting, mating, calving, nursing or resting as indicated by aerial survey data, mortality data and telemetry data. Copies of these maps can be found at:

<http://www.myfwc.com/manatee/permits/CorpMaps.htm>

**Lead Observer** – The responsible party of a watch team, considered the supervisor of that team and responsible for the logistics of the watch. The Lead Observer coordinates watch activities before, during, and after the water-related activity, recommends whether or not to continue the watch and/or project activity and is responsible for all reporting requirements.

**Level of Watch** – A combination of observer hours and sightings resulting in different levels of watch qualification. The intent of assignment to a watch level is to match an observer's qualifications with the level of risk to a marine species from a particular water-related activity.

**Observer Positions** – Stationary or mobile platforms from which to observe marine species. Observer positions generally are ground, watercraft and/or aircraft-based; bridges and buildings may also be utilized for specific types of projects. The type, size, and location of the water-related activity, as well as the species being observed, usually dictate the number and kind of observer positions. The highest position over water often is the best for detecting animals. Observer qualifications are based on time spent in the different positions as well as the number of observations recorded.

**Qualified Observer** – A qualified observer is a person that has provided adequate personal information and observation experience to the appropriate resource agencies in order to be approved for a specific project. Wildlife resource agencies determine the specific Level of Watch these observers are qualified to perform. Observation experience for marine species must include manatees, marine turtles, dolphins, or whales.

## Observer Experience and Education Documentation for Marine Species Watch Programs

June 2006

Certain water-related construction, demolition, dredging, surveying, testing, or permitted marine events require a program that includes experienced observers to watch for and protect marine species (manatees, marine turtles, dolphins, and whales). Such experience includes field training under the direct supervision of an experienced observer, and repeated field observations dealing successfully with interactions with marine species during projects.

In order to be approved as an observer for a specific project, or to be added to a list of experienced observers maintained by both State and Federal resource agencies, this form should be filled out and returned to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, 6A, 620 South Meridian Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1600, or emailed to [fcmpmail@myfwc.com](mailto:fcmpmail@myfwc.com).

This list of experienced observers is only maintained to provide contractors with a list of possibly qualified individuals. Being identified on an agency's list does not automatically qualify an observer for project. Individuals must still be approved as appropriate on a project by project basis, based on their level of experience. The list will only be updated on an annual basis.

<b>Observer Contact Information</b>				
Name and Address	Company Name and Address	Phone number and Cell phone number	Email Address	
<b>Education</b>				
Degree/Major	Institution	Year		
1.				
2.				
<b>Experience</b>				
1. Name of Project/Permit Number	Description of Project Work/Location	Number of hours spent observing	Number/type of marine animals sighted	Name and contact information for supervising/training observer
	Position in watch (land-based, boat-based, air, etc.)	Actions taken		
2. Name of Project/Permit Number	Description of Project Work/Location	Number of hours spent observing	Number/type of marine animals sighted	Name and contact information for supervising/training observer

	Position in watch (land-based, boat-based, air, etc.)		Actions taken	
3. Name of Project/Permit Number	Description of Project Work/Location	Number of hours spent observing	Number/type of marine animals sighted	Name and contact information for supervising/training observer
	Position in watch (land-based, boat-based, air, etc.)		Actions taken	
4. Name of Project/Permit Number	Description of Project Work/Location	Number of hours spent observing	Number/type of marine animals sighted	Name and contact information for supervising/training observer
	Position in watch (land-based, boat-based, air, etc.)		Actions taken	
<b>Training</b>				
Please provide details concerning any specific training or training materials completed (such as the NMFS training, or viewing the FWC observation video:				
Observer Signature:			Date:	