U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is establishing an emergency rule to create a Kings Bay Manatee Refuge to be in effect from November 15, 2010 through March 15, 2011.

This emergency rule will be followed with a subsequent rulemaking process to propose a more permanent proposal to address manatee needs and concerns over human/manatee interactions.

Why is this being proposed?

The existing network of Federal manatee protection measures in Kings Bay is too small to provide the protection needed for the increasing number of manatees using this area.

Factors considered included the listed items.

- The number of manatees using Kings Bay has increased.
- Human use of Kings Bay has increased with increasing population, increasing types of uses, and increasing numbers of watercraft.
- Concerns over take in the form of manatee harassment during winter viewing activities.
- A manatee refuge designation offers more management flexibility than the more restrictive manatee sanctuary designation.

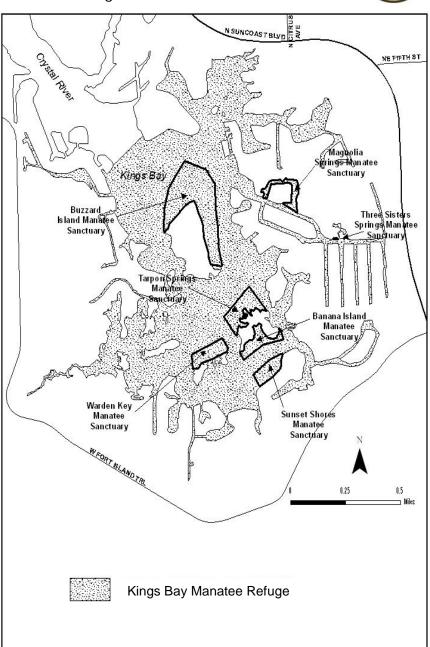
What will a Kings Bay Manatee Refuge mean for users of these waterways?

Designation of this area as a manatee refuge will not restrict access to waterways. However, users will have to avoid designated sanctuaries and "no-entry" areas and follow specific restrictions within the manatee refuge as posted and/or permitted.

Public and private waterfront property owners and their designees retain riparian access to their properties and can maintain property and waterways when his/her property adjoins or is located in the Kings Bay Manatee Refuge.

This manatee refuge designation will include restrictions on waterborne activities outside of the sanctuaries within Kings Bay to help minimize harassment and take of manatees.

The new manatee refuge overlaps previous seasonal manatee sanctuaries (areas where all waterborne activities are prohibited) and allows for the establishment of additional "noentry" areas with boundaries posted to better reflect manatee use during the winter. This will ensure that the protection areas are of a size and duration adequate to meet the varying needs of manatees using the sites.



For More Information:

To view more information about this emergency Kings Bay Manatee Refuge rule, including the Federal Register notice, Frequently Asked Questions, and a press release, visit:

http://www.fws.gov/northflorida



You have Questions, We have Answers!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service invites interested parties to attend upcoming public meetings to learn about the Kings Bay Manatee Refuge.

The emergency rule informational public meetings on November 16 and 18, 2010 afford interested parties an opportunity to hear information on what an emergency rule designation is, what's in the Kings Bay manatee refuge rule, why we took this action, what's next in the process, and an opportunity to ask questions about the emergency designation.

The non-decision making, informal public meetings on November 20 and December 2, 2010 provide an opportunity for information exchange and offer interested parties the chance to get information and ask questions about the next steps in the more formal rulemaking process, as well as provide the Service information and/or data that may be useful in the process of formally establishing this manatee protection area.

Public Meetings

Kings Bay Manatee Refuge and Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge

To facilitate public understanding of the emergency manatee refuge designation in Kings Bay and to discuss the process of formally establishing the manatee refuge, the Service has scheduled four (4) informal public meetings at:

Plantation Inn and Golf Resort 9301 W. Fort Island Trail Crystal River, FL 34429

Emergency Rule Informational Meetings:

November 16, 2010 - Tuesday, 6:00-9:00 pm

November 18, 2010 - Thursday, 6:00-9:00 pm

Two informational public meetings will answer questions about the emergency rule that will be in effect from November 15, 2010 through March 15, 2011.

Informal Public Meetings:

November 20, 2010 - Saturday, 1:00-4:00 pm

December 2, 2010 - Thursday, 6:00-9:00 pm

Two non-decision making, informal public meetings will provide an opportunity for information exchange and for interested parties to be able to get information and ask questions about the next steps in the more formal rulemaking process.