



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

DEC 23 2002

To: Director, National Park Service

From: Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks *Fredy M...*

Subject: Manatee Conservation

As you know, manatee mortality due to boating activities and other causes in Florida remains a concern. I appreciate very much your personal attention to this matter over recent weeks. I commend Deputy Director Randy Jones for his quick action in response to my request for information on this matter. As we have previously discussed, I ask that you take the following measures immediately:

1. Review and strengthen protections for manatees in General Management Plans currently under revision or about to be revised at Biscayne, Everglades, and Big Cypress National Parks.
2. Review the adequacy of, and revise, if necessary, watercraft regulations at the above-named parks.
3. Ensure that within all National Parks in Florida slow speed and caution signs are posted within all navigable channels and near boat slips where manatees are known to congregate.
4. Where necessary, propose new speed restrictions and no-wake zones or non-combustion engine zones to reduce the probability of vessel collisions or disturbances. Where necessary, expand existing no-wake zones in the Parks.
5. Propose manatee protection and habitat site requirements for inclusion in the Joint Fisheries Management Plan for Biscayne National Park which is now under development with the State of Florida.
6. Participate in statewide synoptic manatee surveys this winter. Conduct cooperative monitoring with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of Florida including aerial and boat surveys for manatees this winter.
7. Institute strict enforcement of no-wake, speed limit, and no-motor zones within the National Parks in Florida.

8. : Ensure that all NPS employees in Florida operating boats as part of their official duties attend and pass the DOI-NPS Motorboat Operator Certification Training Course.

Thanks to the efforts of NPS personnel in Florida, current assessments indicate that population trends are stable at Cape Canaveral NP, Everglades NP, and Big Cypress NP and actually increasing at Timucuan Historical Park and Ecological Preserve. The measures outlined above will help maintain these positive trends and contribute to the conservation of manatees beyond the boundaries of the Parks.