June 2, 2011

Memorandum

To: Chief, Branch of Permits, Division of Management Authority, Arlington, Virginia
From: Field Supervisor, Jacksonville Field Office, Jacksonville, Florida
Subject: Calendar Year 2010 Annual Report for Marine Mammal and Endangered Species Permit PRT 770191

Manatee rescue, rehabilitation, and release activities are authorized under the Marine Mammal and Endangered Species Permit PRT 770191, issued to the Field Supervisor in the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Jacksonville Field Office. This permit was reauthorized on March 4, 2005, and expired March 4, 2010. In December 2009 a renewal package was sent to the Division of Management Authority for the existing permit.

During 2010, the Service’s Jacksonville Field Office and The Manatee Rescue, Rehabilitation and Release Program (Rehab Program) participants holding Letters of Authorization for Cooperators (LOAFC) from the Service were involved in the following manatee activities:

Summary of rescues and releases: Rehab Program participants were contacted by the public to verify the status of hundreds of manatees believed to be in need of assistance. A total of 114 manatees were rescued during this year (see attached Rescue Report), which is the highest number of rescues on record since the program began in 1973. Of the total rescues, 79 were brought into captivity for further medical attention and 30 were treated onsite and released. Five animals were caught incidentally including two females netted during rescue attempts to capture their calves requiring medical attention. Two rescues were unsuccessful, in which the animals did not receive assistance. Reasons for rescue (see attached Rescue Report) included: exposure to cold (45), entanglements (12), watercraft strikes (13), orphaned calves (10), tidally stranded (8), entrapments (5), calves with injured dams (4), dams with injured calves (2), relocation due to not suitable habitat (2), other human related reasons (3), and natural causes including buoyancy problems (4), emaciation (2), other causes (1). Of the 79 manatees brought into captivity, 27 were released back into the wild (see attached Release Report), 31 died and 21 remain in captivity (see Facility Inventory Report) receiving further medical treatment and rehabilitation.

Captive animals: At the year’s end, 52 manatees comprised of 33 females and 19 males were in captivity for medical treatment and rehabilitation with long-term care (see attached Facility Inventory Report). One facility, the Caribbean Stranding Network, did not have captive manatees at the end of the year. Four captive manatees are known as “pre-Act” because they were obtained for display purposes prior to the enactment of the Endangered Species Act. Four captive manatees have been designated as “conditionally non-releasable” and are currently not considered viable release candidates. Fourteen animals are not actively being treated and are considered long term captives awaiting release and tracking. Other captive animals still receiving medical treatment include those individuals rescued as orphaned calves (12), exposed to cold (11), injured from
watercraft (5), and entrapped in structures (2); one dependent calf is awaiting medical clearance of its mother before it can be released.

**Releases:** Last year 48 manatees were released (see attached Release Report), of which 21 were rescued prior to January 1, 2010. All animals released were PIT-tagged and photo identified; individuals without distinguishing marks (e.g., body mutilations) were freeze-branded to facilitate identification in the wild. Radio and satellite tags were attached to ten released individuals to monitor adaptation to the wild. Monitoring of all tagged animals is set for a minimum of one year, and if warranted, may be longer. The Manatee Rehabilitation Partnership, a sub-group of the Facility Management Team, in conjunction with the Service, coordinates all post-release monitoring.

**Transfers:** Thirty-five manatees were transferred in 2010 (see attached Transfer Report). Transfers were necessary to: create room at critical care facilities (21), assist with management-related decisions (8), provide staging for pending releases (5) and provide a companion animal for another captive manatee (1).

**Births:** One manatee was born in captivity during 2010 as a result of wild female being rescued while pregnant. The dam and calf were subsequently released back to the wild once the calf was deemed stable.

**Deaths:** Forty-four manatees died within the Rehab Program during 2010 (see attached Death Report). Of these, 31 were individuals rescued in 2010, while three were animals rescued in previous years. Deaths occurred while in captivity undergoing treatment/rehabilitation (22), following release into the wild (10), during rescue (6) and during transport (6). Causes of death included: natural (18), watercraft (10), undetermined (3), human other (1) and ingestion of foreign material (1) (see attached Manatee Rescue, Rehabilitation and Release Program Report 2009 for detailed causes of death).

**Facilities:** A total of 19 organizations/facilities hold a LOAFC to participate in manatee rescue, rehabilitation and release activities. Currently 11 facilities have a LOAFC to hold manatees. Due to numerous LOAFC violations, SeaWorld of San Diego was requested to return their manatees to Florida and was not invited to renew their authorization for further participation on the Rehab Program. The Jacksonville Field Office has requested additional LOAFC holders to participate in the Rehab Program including the U.S Coast Guard, The Dolphin Conservation Field Station and Sea to Shore Alliance; information on these new partners is included in the pending permit renewal package that is awaiting final issuance.

**Program meetings:** The Rehab Program held two meetings with LOAFC holders and the Facility Management Team during 2010. The spring meeting was held at Miami Seaquarium in Miami, Florida and the fall meeting was held in Sarasota, Florida at Mote Marine Laboratory. Agenda items included: updates on health and distribution of all captive manatees; rescue, release and transfer planning and reporting; post-release monitoring updates; death reports; relevant captive program research; release guidelines; future release location planning; contingency planning; capacity building; health assessments and the releasability of long-term captives. The annual meeting for facility veterinarians was held in March at Miami Seaquarium in Miami, Florida. Veterinarian discussion topics included: individual manatee case studies; post-release monitoring health assessments; research topics related to manatee health; medical treatments and protocols;
training of new veterinarians; captive care weight management and daily diets and non-releasable manatee guidance.

The winter of 2010 proved to be very demanding on the Rehab Program. Record low temperatures for extended periods in Florida resulted in extensive cold stress syndrome and cold shock within the manatee population. This unusual weather contributed to the higher number of manatee rescues this year from January through April. LOAFC holders worked exhaustive hours to provide rapid response and immediate medical attention to the numerous manatees in need. It should also be noted that over 500+ manatee carcasses were retrieved during the winter, designating this as an Unusual Marine Mammal Mortality Event.

LOAFC holders also participated in the rescue and response efforts from the Deep Horizon Oil Spill from April through December of 2010. LOAFC holders assisted in the preparation of oil response protocols for manatees and received authorization to rescue and transport oiled manatees to facilities in Florida. Aerial surveys were flown from May through November to record manatee sightings and migrations in the Gulf of Mexico after the oil spill. Daily surveillance of coastal waters in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama was also implemented. Although manatee sightings did correspond to oil arriving onshore, no animals were deemed in imminent danger needing assistance (e.g., rescue, relocation).

Enclosures

cc: Dave Flemming  
    Jeff Weller