

# U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## Proposed Listing Actions for the Antillean manatee and Florida manatee



## Welcome / Bienvenidos!

The hearing will begin soon.  
Thank you for your patience as we wait for others to join.

\*Please join using computer audio

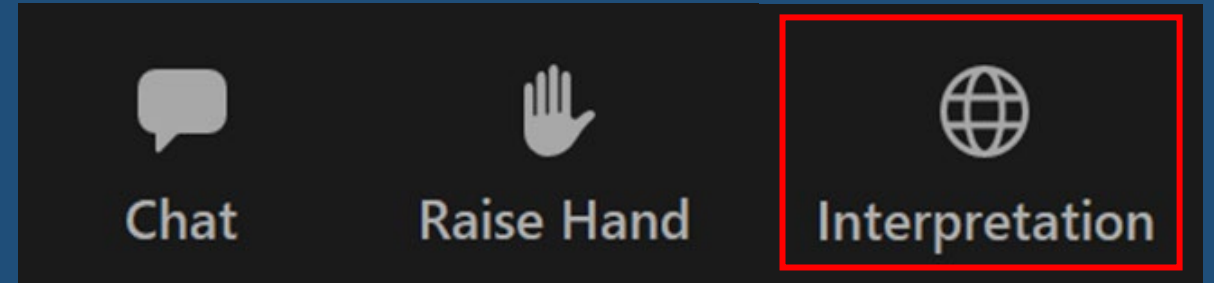
\*For English language closed captioning, click on the Closed Caption icon at the bottom of your Zoom screen

### ***\*PARA TEXTO EN ESPAÑOL***

- 1. Presione sobre el enlace en el chat del Zoom.*
- 2. Usted verá una ventanilla nueva que tendrá el texto traducido al español.*



# Language Interpretation Instructions



To access language interpretation, please:

1. In your meeting/webinar controls, click Interpretation.
2. Click the language that you would like to hear. You should see “Spanish” as an option.
3. (Optional) To hear the interpreted language only, click Mute Original Audio.

Please note:

- You must join the meeting audio through your computer audio/VoIP. You cannot listen to language interpretation if you use the dial-in or call me phone audio features.
- As a participant joining a language channel, you can broadcast back into the main audio channel if you unmute your audio and speak.

# Agenda

- Meeting Ground Rules
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Presentation
- Questions
- Public Comments
- Closing Remarks



Photo credit: Terri Calleson, USFWS

# Ground Rules

1. Microphones and videos of the audience will be turned off during the presentation.
2. This presentation will be recorded and posted to the website.
3. Comments can be submitted verbally today after the presentation, or via mail or regulations.gov (further information to be provided in this presentation).
4. Comments will be limited today to 2 minutes per participant to allow everyone who is on the pre-registered commenter list the opportunity to offer a comment. We ask that you be mindful and respectful of this time limit.
5. If guidelines are not followed, your microphone will be muted, and we will move to the next person.
6. Please note that this meeting will not address proposed critical habitat.

# Introduction

**Gian Basili**

**Deputy State Supervisor**

Florida Ecological Services Field Office



Photo credit: Carli Segelson, USFWS

## Manatee Listing Team

### Caribbean Ecological Services Field Office

- JP Zegarra, *Recovery lead for Antillean manatee*
- Lourdes Mena, *Field Supervisor*
- Jose Cruz-Burgos, *Threatened and Endangered Species Program Coordinator*

### Florida Ecological Services Field Office

- Terri Calleson, *Recovery lead for Florida manatee*
- Billy Brooks, *Biologist*
- Scott Calleson, *Biologist*
- Nikki Colangelo, *Supervisor for Division of Classification and Recovery*

### Southeast Regional Office

- Chandler Eaglestone, *Biologist*
- Kristi Young, *Acting Manager for Division of Conservation and Classification*

# Species Background

- Since 2017, the West Indian manatee has been listed as a Threatened species throughout its entire range and includes two subspecies:

Florida manatee  
*Trichechus manatus latirostris*

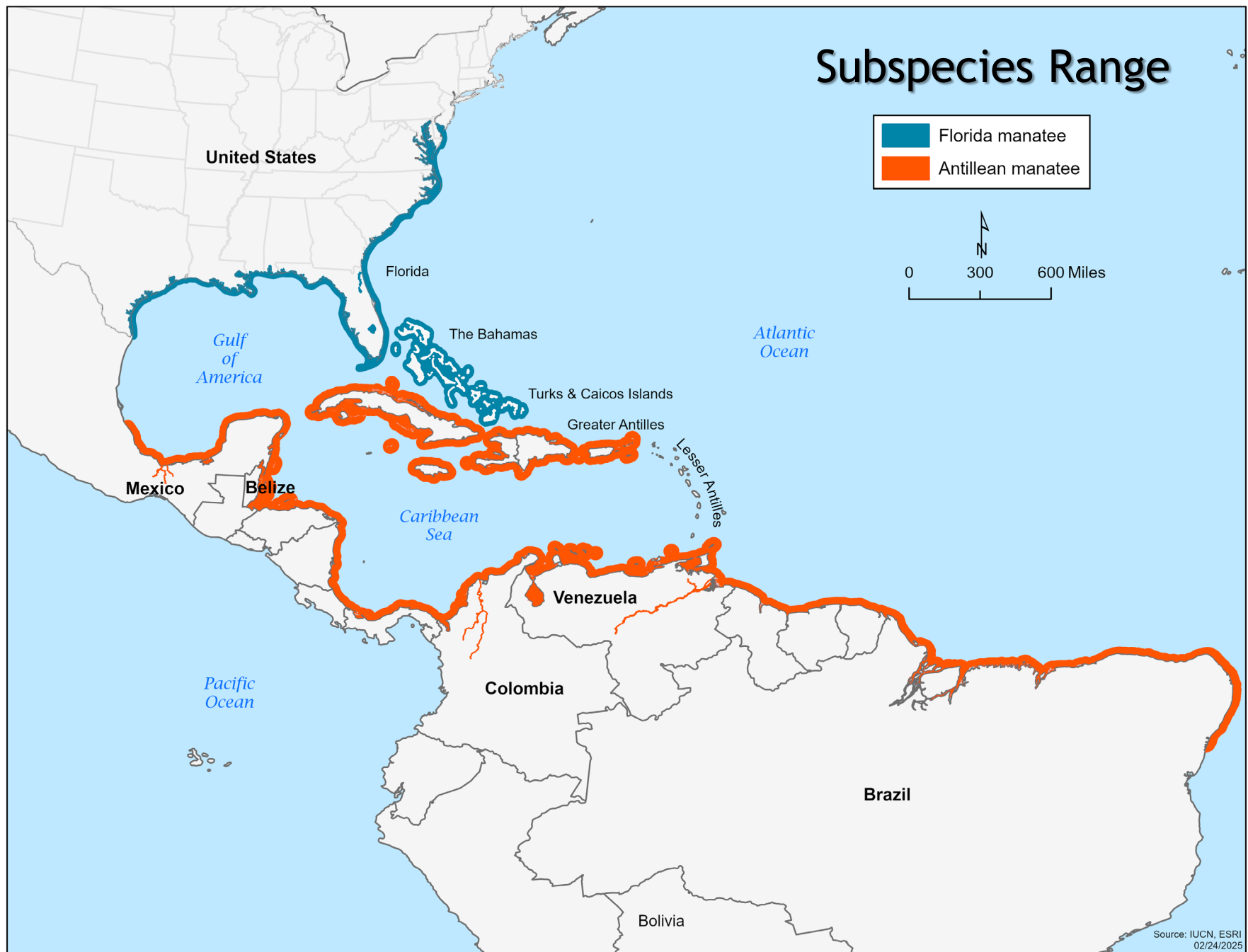


Antillean manatee  
*Trichechus manatus manatus*



# Species Background Summary

- Manatees are considered a wide-ranging marine mammal.
- Manatees use a wide variety of freshwater, estuarine, and marine habitats for their survival and life history needs.
- Manatees mostly feed on seagrass and other submerged, floating, and emergent vegetation.
- Differences between the subspecies include their range, general size and weight, skeletal measurements, genetics, and some threats and conservation needs.
- Distribution and ecological needs also vary by region. For example, Florida manatees inhabit the northern limits of the species' range and therefore require stable, long-term sources of warm water.



# Proposed Listing Action

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recognizes the Florida manatee and the Antillean manatee subspecies as separate listable entities under the Act.
- We are thus proposing to remove the species-level West Indian manatee listing and individually list both subspecies:
  - Antillean manatee as Endangered
  - Florida manatee as Threatened with “blanket” 4(d) regulations
- Blanket 4(d) regulations provide additional protections to a Threatened species that are automatically given to Endangered species.
- This is consistent with current management strategies.



Photo credit: Monica Ross, CMARI

# Proposed Listing Action

- This proposed listing action is informed by the Species Status Assessment Reports for both subspecies.
- For previous Federal actions on the manatee, please see the proposed listing rule (90 FR 3131; January 14, 2025).
- Critical habitat is being revised as a separate rulemaking action (89 FR 78134; September 24, 2024). Today's meeting only concerns the proposed listing actions.
- This proposed listing rule will also serve as our 12-month findings on two petitions and as our completed 5-year review of the West Indian manatee.

## Species Status Assessment Report for the Florida manatee (*Trichechus manatus latirostris*)

Version 1.1

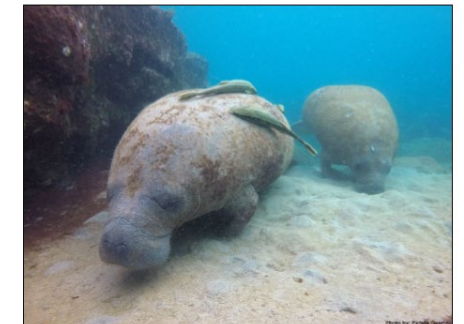


Photo Credit: Monica Ross, Clearwater  
Marine Aquarium Research Institute (CMAR)

April 2024  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
South Atlantic-Gulf and Mississippi Basin Regions  
Atlanta, GA

## Species Status Assessment Report for the Antillean Manatee (*Trichechus manatus manatus*)

Version 1.1



May 2024  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
South Atlantic-Gulf and Mississippi Basin Regions  
Atlanta, GA

# Current Condition Summary

- To assess the current condition for both the Antillean and Florida subspecies, we delineated resiliency units based on data availability, connectivity, and ecological and dispersal patterns.
- Simply stated, resiliency is the ability to sustain populations through the natural range of favorable and unfavorable conditions.
- Maintaining sufficiently resilient populations across the range of a species increases the ability of that species to adapt to natural selection processes, increasing the chances that the species will persist in a changing world.
- All units received a resiliency score from low to high.



# ANTILLEAN MANATEE SUMMARY



## 14 Antillean manatee Resiliency Units



Grupo Ingeolan C.A., Esri, Garmin, FAO, NOAA

# Current Condition: Antillean manatee

- For each Antillean unit, main contributing factor to score resiliency was population trend. Declining populations equaled a low resiliency score.
- Abundance estimates for Antillean manatee populations are mostly considered highly uncertain, and the information indicates abundance is declining across most of the subspecies' range.
- Relative abundance estimates for each unit ranged from 20 to no more than 1,400 individuals.
- Declines are due to ongoing threats such as watercraft collisions, habitat loss and modification, poaching, lack of effective enforcement, and other threats.

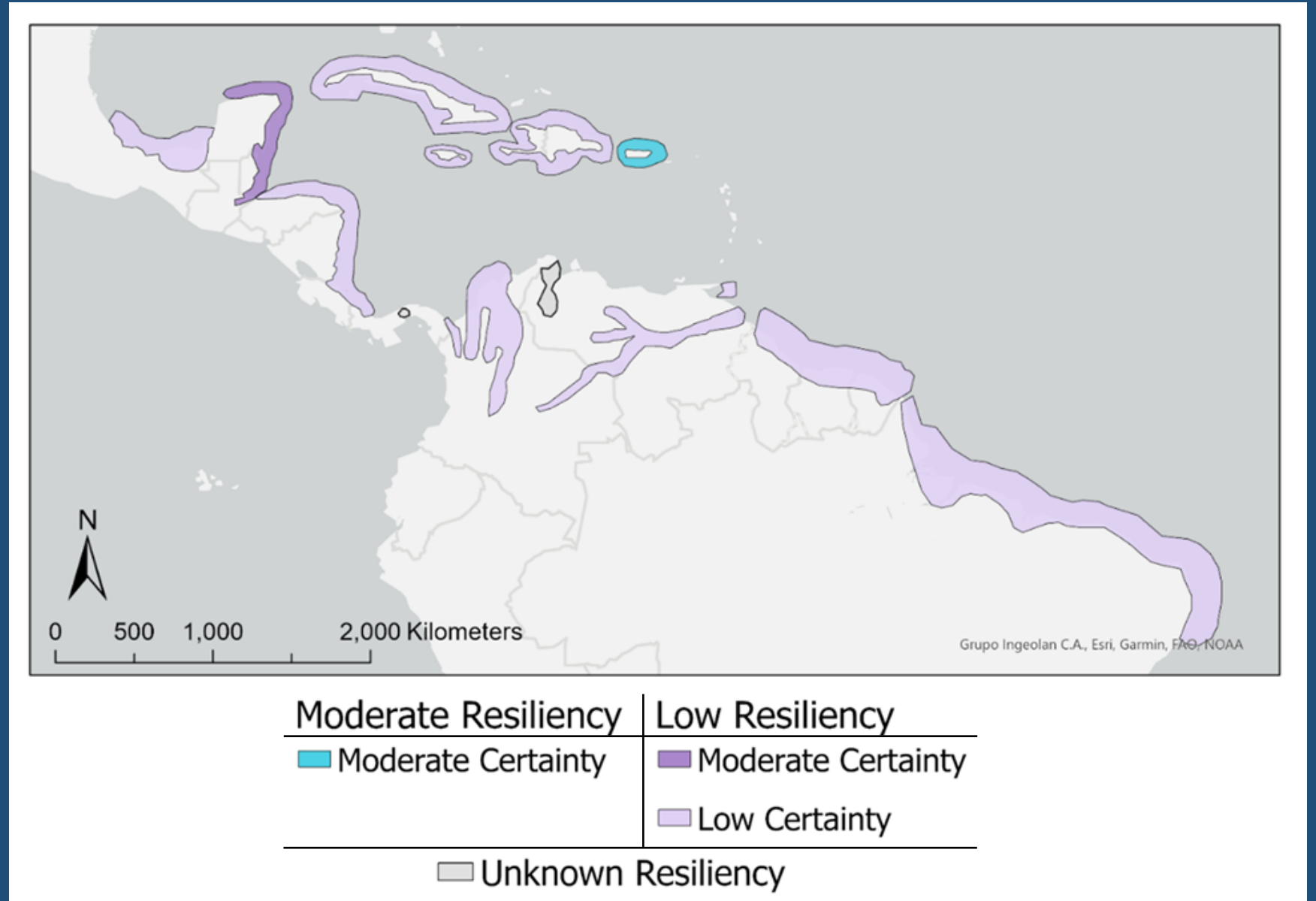


Photo credit: HJR Reefscaping

Resiliency Unit	Abundance (Certainty)	Trend (Certainty)	Trend Category	Current Resiliency
Brazil	> 1,104 (> 485-2,221) (Low Certainty)	Stable/Declining/Unknown (Low Certainty)	Low	LOW
Caribbean Mexico, Belize, Guatemala	650-1400 (Moderate Certainty)	Stable/Declining/Unknown (Moderate Certainty)	Low	LOW
Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama Coastal	800-950 (169-204 minimum) (Low Certainty)	Declining (Low Certainty)	Low	LOW
Gulf of America	600-850 (Moderate Certainty)	Declining (Low Certainty)	Low	LOW
Colombia Rivers	400 (100-1,000) (Low Certainty)	Unknown/Declining (Low Certainty)	Low	LOW
Puerto Rico	386 (sd = 89) (High Certainty)	Stable (Moderate Certainty)	Moderate	MODERATE
Cuba	100-500 (50 minimum) (Low Certainty)	Unknown/Declining (Low Certainty)	Low	LOW
Hispaniola	300 (38-53 minimum) (Low Certainty)	Declining (Low Certainty)	Low	LOW
Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana	300 (45 minimum) (Low Certainty)	Declining (Low Certainty)	Low	LOW
Venezuela Rivers	< 300 (Low Certainty)	Declining (Low Certainty)	Low	LOW
Trinidad and Tobago	100 (25-30 minimum) (Low Certainty)	Declining (Low Certainty)	Low	LOW
Lago de Maracaibo (Venezuela)	< 100 (Low Certainty)	Unknown (Low Certainty)	Unknown	LOW
Jamaica	50 (Low Certainty)	Unknown/Declining (Low Certainty)	Low	LOW
Panama Canal	20-25 (16 minimum) (Moderate Certainty)	Unknown (Low Certainty)	Unknown	LOW

# Current Condition: Antillean manatee

Results: Puerto Rico only unit with moderate resiliency. Rest of the 13 units with low resiliency due to a declining trend or unknown trend.



# Current Condition: Antillean manatee

- Our review of the best available information indicates that the Antillean manatee meets the Act's definition of an endangered species, that is, in danger of extinction throughout all of its range.

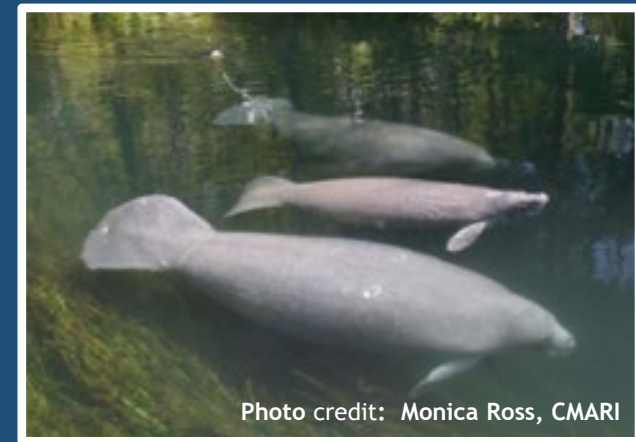


# FLORIDA MANATEE SUMMARY

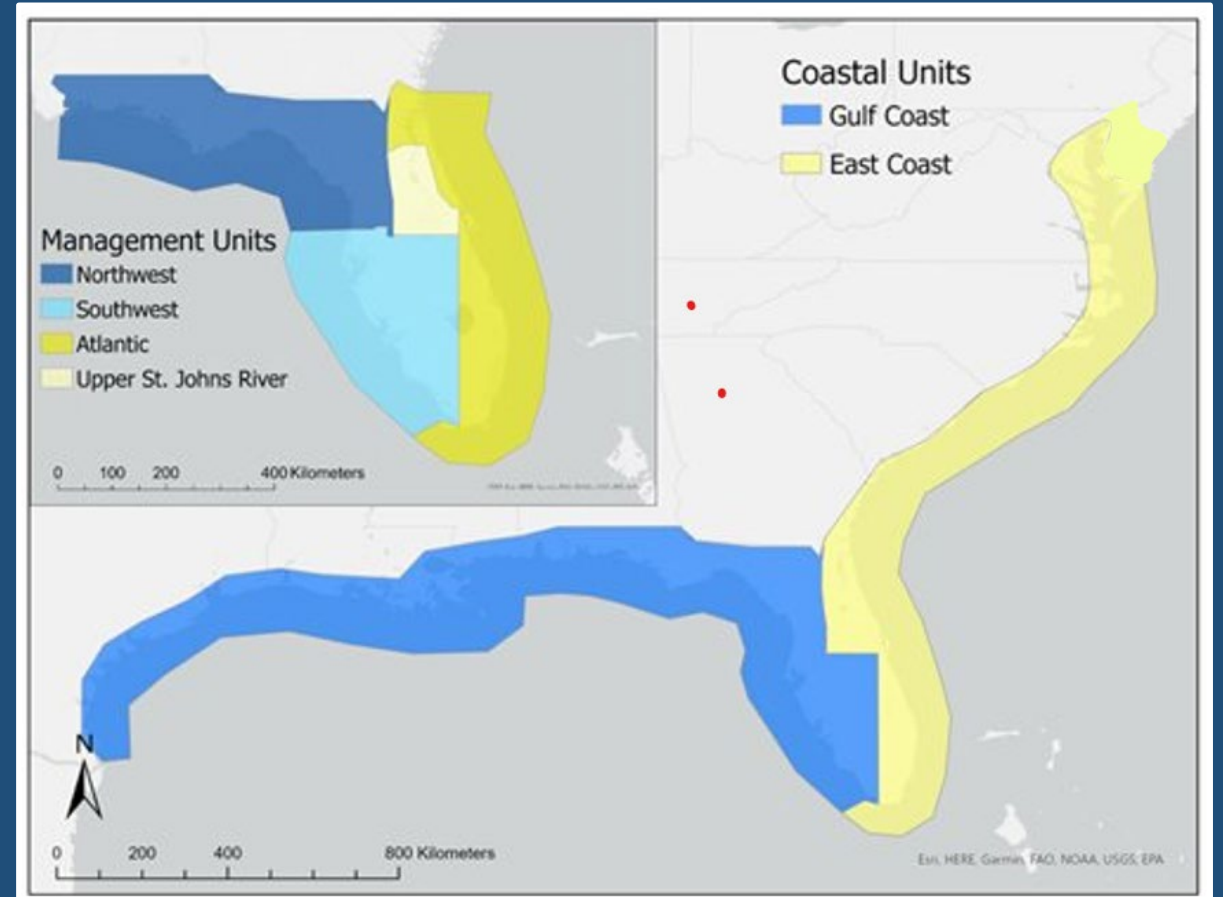
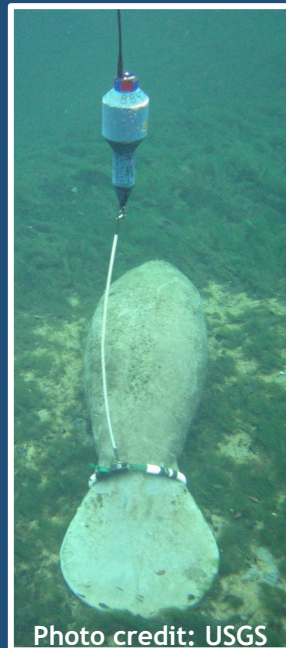


# Florida Manatee - Biology

- Wide-ranging marine mammal
- Distribution varies significantly by season
- Exhibit seasonal migratory behavior because warm water is necessary for survival
- Warm water is more critical for the Florida manatee due to northern distribution
- Foraging habitat - seagrass, eelgrass, other submerged, floating, and emergent vegetation



- To assess the current condition of the Florida manatee, we assessed resiliency within two resiliency units: East Coast and Gulf Coast.
- Resiliency units are each composed of two management units:
  - East Coast: Atlantic and Upper St. Johns River units
  - Gulf Coast: Northwest and Southwest units
- The four management units utilized in our analysis are consistent with those historically used in state and federal manatee management efforts.



# Current Condition: Florida manatee

- The most recent population estimate for the Florida manatee is between 8,350 and 11,730 individuals (FWC: 2021-2022 surveys)
- Resiliency evaluation included four condition factors:
  - Population trend (2011-2020)
  - Regional foraging habitat condition
  - Winter foraging habitat condition
  - Winter warm water refugia
- Resiliency ranged from moderate to high when evaluating the subspecies at each of the management unit and coastal resiliency unit levels.
- The Atlantic unit is considered low for the time period 2021-2023 due to the Atlantic Coast Unusual Mortality Event.



*Note: Additional data evaluation and population modeling efforts are ongoing - both retrospective and projecting forward.*

# Florida manatee: resiliency summary

Management Unit	Abundance	Trend (2011-2020)	Forage	Winter forage	Warm-water refugia	Overall Resiliency
NW	1,270 (790-1,840)	High	Good	Good	Good	<b>HIGH</b>
SW	2,966 (2,551-3,434)	Moderate	Good	Good	Good	<b>HIGH</b>
ATL	3,520 (2,750-4,430)	Moderate	Diminished	Diminished	Good	<b>MODERATE</b>
2021-2023		<i>Low</i>	<i>Diminished</i>	<i>Diminished</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i><b>LOW</b></i>
USJ	480 (460-510)	High	Good	Good	Good	<b>HIGH</b>
Coastal Resiliency Unit	Abundance	Trend	Forage	Winter forage	Warm-water refugia	Overall Resiliency
Gulf Coast	4,810 (3,820-6,010)	High	Good	Good	Good	<b>HIGH</b>
East Coast	4,000 (3,240-4,910)	Moderate	Caution	Diminished	Good	<b>MODERATE</b>

# Current/Future Condition

- The Florida manatee does not meet the definition of an endangered species because it is not currently at risk of extinction in all or a significant portion of its range.
- Based on an assessment of future conditions, the Florida manatee meets the definition of a threatened species, that is, one that is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.





The Florida manatee was determined to be threatened due to the following primary threats:

- Watercraft collisions
- Habitat loss (including seagrass loss) and modification from coastal development
- Unusual mortality events
- Natural processes (including cold weather events and harmful algal blooms)
- Human interactions
- Loss of warm-water refugia



# Florida manatee - how the proposed rule affects this subspecies

## Changes

- Listed entity changes to subspecies level



## Same

- Listing status (threatened)
- Protections
  - ESA and MMPA
  - Management efforts continue



# Key Florida Manatee Conservation Efforts

- Research Activities: State, Federal, NGOs, and other partners working on abundance and distribution, health surveillance, mortality investigations, population modeling, and other efforts
- Rescue and Rehabilitation: Over 2,600 manatees rescued and counting; efforts coordinated through the Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Partnership (cooperative of 24 organizations)
- Warm Water Habitat Action Plan and Regional Partnership Teams
- Spring and habitat restoration efforts

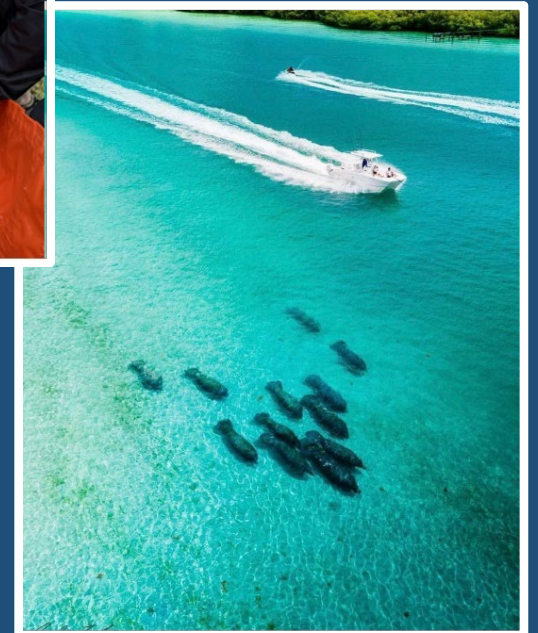


Photo credit: Terri Calleson,  
USFWS (top and left);  
Jakewub Visuals (right)

# Key Florida Manatee Conservation Efforts (cont'd)

- Florida Manatee Recovery Plan, the Florida Manatee Management Plan, and Stock Assessment Reports
- Manatee protection strategies will continue at state, federal, and local levels including:
  - Manatee protection zones
  - Countywide manatee protection plans
  - Protections for water control structures
  - Project consultations
- Ongoing enforcement and educational initiatives



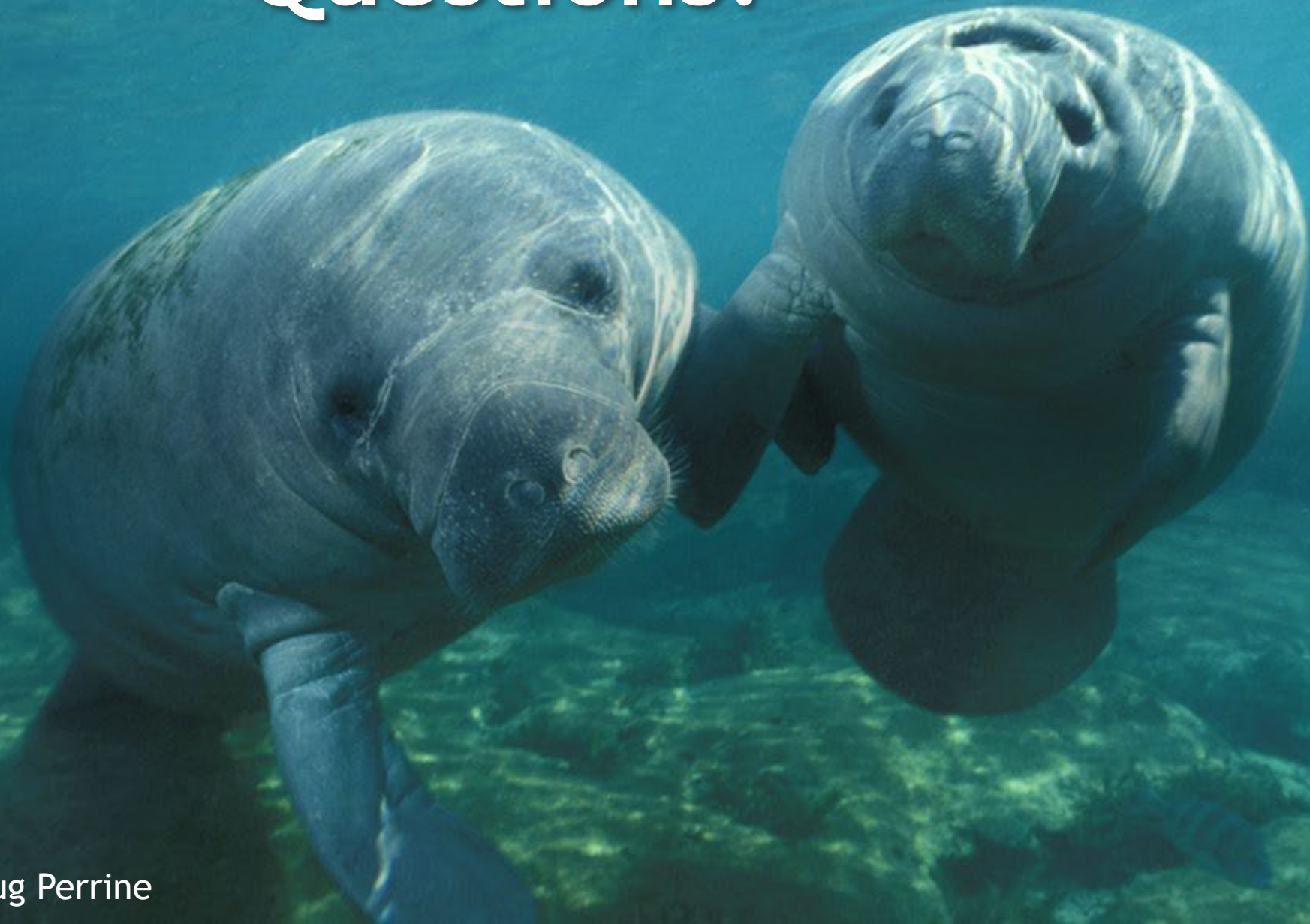
Photo credit: Terri Calleson, USFWS

# Next Steps

- We will accept comments received or postmarked on or before March 17, 2025
  - <https://www.regulations.gov/commenton/FWS-R4-ES-2024-0050-0001>
  - 90 FR 3131; January 14, 2025
- FWS will then:
  1. Review comments on the proposed listing actions
  2. Evaluate new information
  3. Respond to substantial comments in final rule



# Questions?

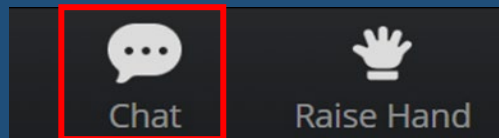


# Question and Answer Session: Instructions



## Using the Zoom Web Platform or App

- Click on the “chat” icon at the bottom of your Zoom screen to write and send your question to Hosts and Panelists

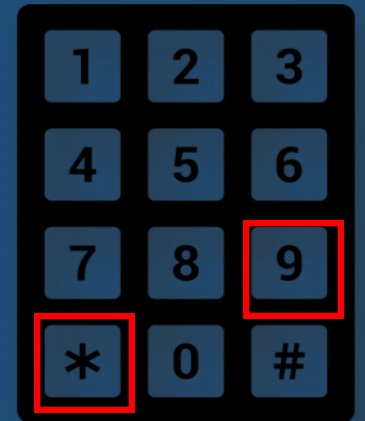


- The moderator will read questions aloud for all participants to hear and a USFWS staff member will respond to questions aloud.
- We will try to answer questions in the order they are received.

## Using Your Phone



- Press \*9 to “raise your hand” to let staff know you have a question. The moderator will then unmute you so that you can ask your question.
- You can unmute yourself by pressing \*6 on your phone keypad.
- You will be identified by the last four digits of your phone number.



# VERBAL PUBLIC COMMENT PORTION: GROUND RULES

- The USFWS wants to hear from all members of the public. We will be using the following guidelines:
  - Be mindful of the length of your comment, so that everyone can speak
  - Please be respectful of others
  - Refrain from profanity
- If guidelines are not followed, your microphone will be muted, and we will move to the next person.



Photo credit: Terri Calleson, USFWS

## ***\*PARA TEXTO EN ESPAÑOL***

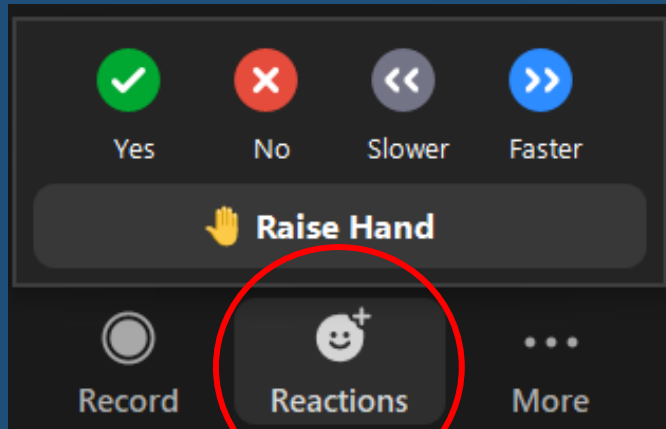
- 1. Presione sobre el enlace en el chat del Zoom.*
- 2. Usted verá una ventanilla nueva que tendrá el texto traducido al español.*

## VERBAL PUBLIC COMMENT PORTION: INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMMENTERS

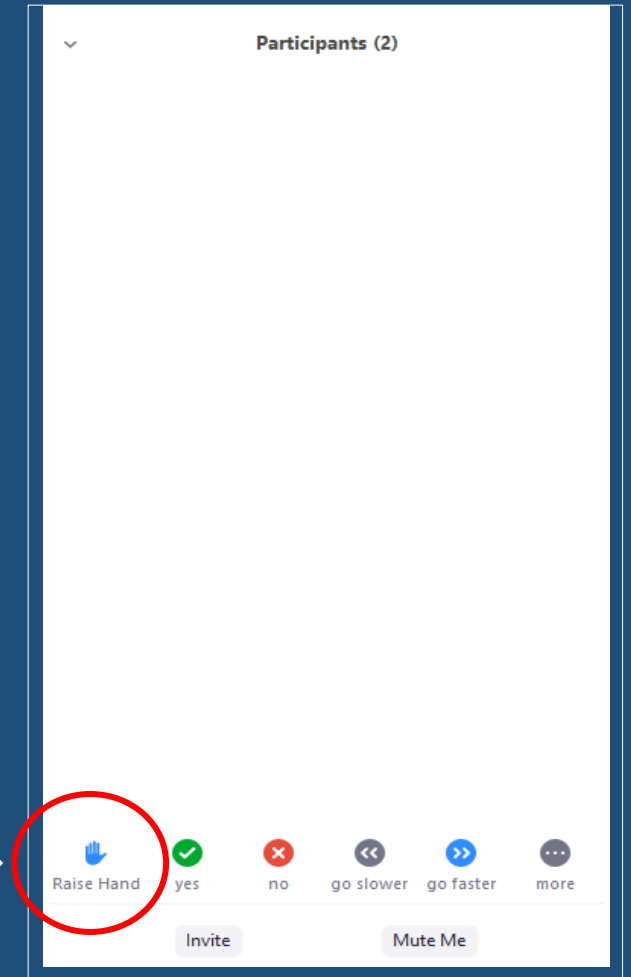
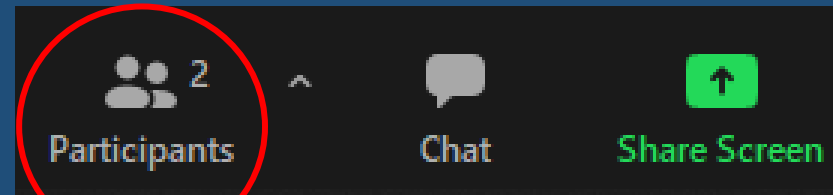
- Verbal public comments will be accepted in order of registration.
- When it is your turn, the moderator will call out your name and display your name on the screen.
- Use the “raise hand” feature at the bottom of your participants list or, if you are calling in through the phone, press \*9 to “raise your hand.”
- The moderator will then unmute you. Please spell out your full first and last name for the record before you provide your comment.
- You will have 3 minutes to offer your comment. The moderator will prompt you to finish your comment once you have reached this 3-minute limit.
- Your comment will be included in the project record.

# Raise Hand Feature in Zoom

## Zoom Reactions Icon



## Zoom Participants Icon



To access the raise hand feature, click on the participants list icon at the bottom of your Zoom screen, then click on the raise hand button at the bottom of your participants list. If you are calling in using your phone, press \*9 on your keypad.

*Para la opción de levantar la mano, presione sobre el símbolo de la lista de participantes en la parte de abajo en la pantalla del Zoom, y luego presione el símbolo de levantar la mano. Si llamó por teléfono, presiones \*9 en su teléfono.*

If you are having issues with your computer microphone, please dial in to the hearing: Phone: 346 248 7799 ; Webinar ID: 853 4914 7820

*Si está teniendo problemas con el micrófono de su computadora, puede llamar al 346 248 7799 y utilice el siguiente código.*

**Current** Commenter:

**Next** Commenter:

3:00

If you are unable to offer or complete your verbal public comment during the hearing today, the USFWS encourages you to submit your comment in writing via [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)

*Si no puede ofrecer o finalizar su comentario público verbal durante la reunión de hoy, le exhortamos a que envíe su comentario por escrito en [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)*

# Thank you!

The USFWS is available to accept verbal public comments until 7:00 pm EST.

*If you would like to offer a verbal public comment, please let us know by accessing the raise hand feature at the bottom of your participants list, in your Zoom reactions icon, or by pressing \*9 on your phone keypad. You can also chat directly to Hosts and Panelists.*

The Service will accept comments postmarked on or before March 17, 2025. Comments submitted electronically using the Federal eRulemaking Portal must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on the closing date. Supporting materials are available at <https://www.regulations.gov> at Docket No. FWS-R4-ES-2024-0050.

**Docket No. FWS-R4-ES-2024-0050, must be received by 11:59 p.m**

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# Closing Remarks

Lourdes Mena

*Field Supervisor,  
Caribbean Ecological Services  
Field Office*



Photo credit: Alex Arrow, USFWS-CRNWR