



Update on selected management tasks from the Manatee Management Plan

June 17, 2009

Division of Habitat and Species Conservation

The Manatee Management Plan was approved in December 2007 and it provides a framework for conserving and managing manatees in Florida. The conservation goal of the Plan is to remove manatees from the state imperiled species list and effectively manage the population in perpetuity throughout Florida.

The Plan identifies many tasks and strategies that need to be pursued and establishes target dates to complete specific tasks. There are tasks related to research, law enforcement, and intergovernmental cooperation. This update focuses on selected tasks specifically related to management activities.

Three general categories of management actions will be addressed:

- Manatee Protection Plans
- Permit Review
- Manatee Protection Rules

Manatee Protection Plans (MPPs)

- MPPs are being implemented by both the FWC and FWS in the original 13 key counties
- Review of approved MPPs
 - Collier County
 - Duval County



MPPs are in place in all 13 counties that were designated as key counties by the Governor and Cabinet in 1989. The Management Plan calls for these plans to be periodically reviewed and revised as needed. The first two MPPs to be reviewed are in Collier County and Duval County. The Collier MPP was approved in 1995 and the Duval MPP was approved in 1999. Currently efforts are underway to gather additional boating data and to evaluate existing manatee data. Revisions to the documents and eventual review for approval are anticipated by the end of 2010 if no unforeseen obstacles arise.

Permit review

- Assisted federal partners in revising “manatee key”
- Working to apply federal key to state process
- Developing GIS desktop application to improve efficiency of state permit process



The Management Plan identifies several tasks related to refining and improving the process FWC uses when coordinating with permitting agencies to perform manatee impact reviews.

The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) uses a manatee key to evaluate and process review of in-water projects that may impact manatees and manatee habitat. FWC staff were instrumental in assisting the USACE and the US Fish and Wildlife Service in updating this key using the most current data.

FWC staff are presently working on a similar approach to the state permit review process so that DEP and Water Management Distinct will have a more efficient process. Staff is working to identify certain types, sizes, and locations of projects that can be addressed programmatically by the permitting agency without case by case input from the FWC manatee program.

We are working with DEP to implement this through a Geographic Information System (GIS) application. Once implemented this will allow state processors to evaluate certain types of projects using the GIS application on their desktop computer and determine the appropriate manatee conditions for those projects. This will result in a less lengthy review for some applications and allow staff to focus more time on more complicated projects with greater impacts.

Manatee protection rules

- Review of Sarasota County rule
 - Local Rule Review Committee (LRRC) meetings May – July 2009
 - FWC staff will prepare a written response to LRRC report and present findings and recommendations at a future FWC meeting
- Review of permits for commercial fishing and professional guiding
 - Management Plan recommends amending the rule to allow permits only for commercial net-setting.
 - FWC staff will meet with stakeholders and current permit holders to discuss potential changes and likely impacts
 - Findings and recommendations will be presented at a future FWC meeting



The Management Plan sets out an ambitious schedule for reviewing existing manatee protection rules and considering other rule-related issues. The first two actions identified in the Plan are a review of the Sarasota County rule and consideration of possible changes to the permits currently issued to commercial fishers and professional fishing guides.

FWC staff notified Sarasota County in early April of the need for the County to form a Local Rule Review Committee (LRRC) to consider potential rule changes. The County selected the members of the LRRC in May and the LRRC will meet multiple times through mid-July to prepare its report. FWC staff plans to attend all of the LRRC meetings. As required by the Manatee Sanctuary Act, FWC staff will review the LRRC report and prepare a written response before a final decision is made on the need for rule changes. Staff recommendations for possible rule changes will be presented at a future meeting, probably in September or December of 2009.

Regarding the permits for commercial fishing and professional guiding, the Management Plan recommends amending the rule to allow permits only for commercial net-setting. This is how these permits were handled in the two most recent manatee protection rule actions (Manatee County in 2004 and Lee County in 2005). FWC staff plans to meet with stakeholders and current permit holders over the next few months to discuss this issue. Staff recommendations for possible rule changes will be presented at a future meeting, probably in September or December of 2009.

Questions?

