

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners

From: Dr. Thomas Eason, Director, Division of Habitat and Species Conservation

Date: February 10, 2016

Subject: Consent Agenda: Manatee Protection Zones on the Homosassa River in Citrus County (68C-22.011, FAC)

Purpose:

Staff is seeking approval to make a minor modification to the manatee protection zones on the Homosassa River, as requested by Citrus County.

Summary:

State manatee protection zones on the Homosassa River have been in place since the early 1990s. In early 2015, as part of routine maintenance work on regulatory markers throughout the county, two marker installations near Monkey Island were moved several hundred feet so that they accurately mark the zone boundary as described in the rule. Some area residents and boaters believe the marker relocation has caused confusion and created a less safe environment for both people and manatees. They raised this issue with the Citrus County Board of County Commissioners and the County subsequently requested that the markers be returned to their previous locations, which is where they had been located for over 20 years. Because the previous locations do not accurately mark the legal boundary of the zone, the rule will need to be amended in order to allow the markers to be relocated to their original positions. Staff evaluated the request and determined that the previous location of the posted zone was appropriate and reasonable for boater understanding of the zones and the protection of manatees.

FWC staff has coordinated with the County and, as required by statute, requested that the County form a Local Rule Review Committee (LRRC). Given the small scope of the requested change and the fact that the County has already discussed this issue and adopted a resolution in support of the change, the County decided not to form a LRRC so that FWC could proceed more expeditiously with the rule making process.

Staff Recommendation:

Approve the proposed rule change to revise the zone boundary and direct staff to advertise and file for adoption as soon as possible, without further public hearing unless one is requested by the public.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter

Carol Knox, Section Leader, HSC Imperiled Species Management Section

