

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: July 18, 2019
Subject: Biscayne National Park Fisheries Regulations – Staff Report

Purpose:

Review and discuss the Biscayne National Park (BNP) fisheries management and science plans, FWC's role in managing fisheries resources within the Park, proposed regulatory actions, and stakeholder input timeline.

Summary:

Located in Miami-Dade County, 95% of BNP is marine, making proper management of the park's fisheries critical to overall successful management of the park. Park managers face a variety of management and environmental challenges stemming from the BNP's proximity to highly-developed urban areas, including reduced water quality, marine debris, vessel groundings, and fishing pressure. To manage for these diverse challenges, BNP and FWC jointly developed a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) that seeks to balance recreational and commercial fishing in BNP with protection of park resources so that fishing can continue as a long-term, sustainable activity. The FMP was developed in part through a series of Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) between FWC and the National Park Service and is intended to guide fisheries management decisions for at least five to 10 years. The FMP adopted a goal to increase the abundance and average size of fishery species inside BNP by at least 20%. A suite of changes to FWC's fishing regulations within BNP will be considered as a means to achieve this goal.

Staff will present the following potential management options, as identified in the FMP, for discussion:

- Modifying size limits and bag limits
- Limiting spearfishing
- Creating coral reef protection areas and no trap areas
- Creating no-trawl zones
- Eliminating lobster mini-season

Staff will also present details of the Science Plan created in collaboration with BNP to monitor fishery responses to any regulatory changes and recommend a new MOU between FWC and BNP related to managing and monitoring BNP fishery resources be signed.

If directed, staff will hold a series of public workshops on these potential rule changes and return with a draft rule package at the October 2019 Commission meeting.

Staff Recommendation:

Return to the October 2019 Commission Meeting with a draft rule package following public input.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Jessica McCawley, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries Management