

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: October 2, 2019
Subject: Biscayne National Park Fishery Management Plan – Draft Rule Update

Purpose:

Obtain approval to gather further public feedback on potential draft rules that would implement fishing regulations for Biscayne National Park (BNP) relating to the park's Fishery Management Plan (FMP).

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 an 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 Memoranda of Understandings 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% and provide habitat protection within the park. Staff conducted a series of public workshops in early August to gather feedback on a suite of fisheries management options. Staff will present the public input received and provide an overview of the following potential draft rules that are intended to accomplish the FMP goals.

- Increase the minimum size limit for certain targeted finfish within BNP
- Establish a 20-fish aggregate bag limit for select commonly targeted food and sport fish harvested or possessed inside the park
- Establish a trap-free zone near BNP headquarters
- Establish Coral Reef Protection Areas inside BNP where traps and lobstering would be prohibited
- Establish inshore and offshore no-trawl zones within the park
- Prohibit the use of air-providing equipment while spearfishing in BNP

If approved and directed, staff will gather further public input on these potential draft rule changes and return for a draft rule hearing at the December 2019 Commission meeting.

Staff Recommendation:

Direct staff to return for a draft rule hearing at the December Commission meeting.

Contact and/or Presenter:

Jessica McCawley, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries Management