

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: December 12, 2019
Subject: Draft Rules – Biscayne National Park Fishery Management Plan

Purpose:

Obtain approval for advertising a series of draft rules that would implement fishing regulations for Biscayne National Park (BNP) pursuant to BNP's Fishery Management Plan (FMP).

Why:

In 2014, the FWC and National Park Service (NPS) finalized the BNP FMP intended to improve the average size and abundance of targeted fish by 20% and to conserve fishery habitats within BNP. It was also agreed that FWC would adopt fishing regulations as provided by the FMP to help achieve these goals.

Top Points:

- 1) The BNP FMP was developed jointly by FWC and BNP and was approved by the Commission in 2013.
- 2) Changes to fishing regulations within BNP are needed to achieve the goals of the FMP.
- 3) There is considerable disagreement among stakeholder groups about what management measures are needed and appropriate at this time for BNP.
- 4) A joint science plan has been developed to guide monitoring of fisheries resources following implementation of the FMP.
- 5) Staff will update the Commission on changes in fisheries following FMP implementation and will consider whether additional adaptive management measures are needed at the end of the first 7-year science plan cycle to achieve the FMP goals.

Affected Parties:

Recreational and commercial fishers and for-hire guides that fish in, or transit through BNP; Non-consumptive divers, dive charter operators, and members of the public that use park waters for recreational activities; and other concerned citizens with an interest in management of BNP's natural resources.

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 adopted a goal to increase the abundance and average size of fishery species by at least 20% and provide habitat protection within BNP. Staff conducted public workshops in August and October to gather feedback on a suite of fisheries management options that were presented to the Commission at the October Commission meeting. Staff will recommend draft rules that have been modified based on public feedback and Commission direction received to date and are intended to accomplish the FMP goals:

- Increase the minimum size limit for certain targeted finfish within BNP

- Establish a 10-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.

Staff Recommendation:

Approve the draft rules as proposed.

Contact and/or Presenter:

Jessica McCawley, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries Management

ATTACHMENT: Reference Map

