

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: February 19, 2020
Subject: Final Rule – Biscayne National Park Fishery Management Plan

Purpose:

Obtain final approval for rule amendments that will implement fishing regulations for Biscayne National Park (BNP) relating to the park's Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and obtain Commission approval of the Science Plan and new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Why:

In 2014, FWC and the National Park Service (NPS) finalized the BNP FMP, which is intended to improve the average size and abundance of targeted fish within the park by 20% and to conserve fishery habitats within BNP. FWC and BNP agreed that FWC would promulgate fishing regulations as provided by the plan in an effort to achieve these goals.

Top Points:

- 1) The BNP FMP was developed jointly by FWC and BNP and approved by the Commission in 2014.
- 2) Changes to fishing regulations within BNP are needed to achieve the goals of the FMP.
- 3) There is disagreement among stakeholder groups about what management measures are needed and appropriate at this time for the park.
- 4) A joint Science Plan has been developed to guide monitoring of fisheries resources in the park following implementation of the FMP.
- 5) Staff will update the Commission on changes in the fishery following FMP rule implementation and will consider whether additional adaptive management measures are needed at the end of the first 5-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. 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.

Staff conducted public workshops in August and October to gather feedback on a suite of fisheries management options that implement the FMP. Staff recommend the following final rules, that were approved at the December draft rule hearing, 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 will be prohibited
 - Re-evaluate effectiveness after five years
- Establish inshore and offshore no-trawl zones within the park

Staff are also seeking Commission approval of the Science Plan and new MOU.

Staff Recommendation:

Approve the final rules as proposed, the Science Plan, and the MOU.

Contact and/or Presenter:

Jessica McCawley, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries Management