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July 12, 2007

Mr. Richard E. Walesky  
Palm Beach County  
Department of Environmental Resources Management  
2300 N. Jog Road - Fourth Floor  
West Palm Beach, FL 33411-2743

Re: Manatee Protection Plan for Palm Beach County

Dear Mr. Walesky:

I am pleased to provide the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) revisions to the June 2006 version of the Palm Beach County Manatee Protection Plan (MPP). As you know, after our review of your submitted MPP, the FWC offered in our December 13, 2006 letter, to have our staff make revisions to the document that we thought were necessary for it to gain state approval. These revisions were coordinated with various stakeholders, including the Save the Manatee Club and the Marine Industries Association, as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). While no stakeholder group completely endorses our revisions, we did consider all recommendations and many were included as revisions. FWC considers this plan to be approved contingent upon approval by the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners of the revised plan and funding for implementation. We feel confident that the FWS will concur with that approval.

We recognize that the County invested a great deal time, effort, and resources into producing the draft, many portions of which did not require revision. In particular the County deserves recognition for providing funding for protection of manatees with increased enforcement, data collection and monitoring, and increased public awareness. The FWC approval is contingent upon the additional protective measures included in the county's approved plan that provided annual commitments of \$200,000 for additional on-water law enforcement, and \$100,000 for data collection and educational outreach efforts. FWC applauds the County's major commitments and accomplishments in habitat restoration, including the \$700,000 in funding proposed in the June 2006 MPP. We understand that, like state government, county governments are being required to cut costs, and we anticipate that you may be reducing the initial one million in funds previously allocated for the MPP activities. From the FWC's perspective, our priorities for MPP initiatives are: adequate, additional law enforcement efforts, collection of a two year manatee distribution aerial survey, and manatee awareness efforts. While habitat restoration is certainly an important component in manatee recovery efforts, we feel that funding for law enforcement, aerial surveys, and awareness are a higher priority. With these commitments and our proposed adjustments to the MPP, this plan addresses appropriate locations for future development needs, while still providing long term protection for manatees and their habitat.

Realizing that the county has been working on this plan for many years, I applaud the effort of county staff toward improving manatee protection. The success of this effort

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resulted from the cooperation and hard work of many groups and we are pleased to be close to a conclusion.

We hope that the County will find this version acceptable, and we look forward to continuing to work cooperatively with County staff to use and implement the provisions outlined in the MPP. Please let us know of the outcome of your review of this revised plan. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Carol Knox or Ms. Mary Duncan of my staff at (850) 922-4330.

Sincerely,



Kenneth D. Haddad  
Executive Director

kdh/md

Attachments: Revised draft Manatee Protection Plan (June 2007)

cc: Mr. Paul Davis, Palm Beach County  
Mr. Kalani Cairns, USFWS  
Mr. John Sprague  
Mr. Pat Rose