


Memorandum

Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee

Date: August 4, 2008

To: Honorable Chair Bruno A. Barriero
Board of County Commissioners

From: Manny Prieguez, Chair 
Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee

Subject: Semiannual Progress Report

Ordinance No. 07-144, which established the Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee, requires a semiannual progress report be submitted to the Board of County Commissioners following the first organizational meeting of the Committee. This memorandum constitutes the first semiannual report.

All meetings of the Committee are noticed and open to the public. The Committee has met five times, including a public hearing. Approved minutes of the Committee and materials presented to the Committee are posted on a web page hosted by the Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM): http://www.miamidade.gov/derm/manatee_agendas_and_information.asp

The first organizational meeting of the Committee was held on December 17, 2007. As of that date, ten of the fourteen available seats on the committee had been filled. At this meeting, Assistant County Attorney Robert A. Duval reviewed the statutory requirements of the State of Florida requiring local Manatee Protection Plans and marine facility siting elements, and briefed the Committee members on the scope of authority and responsibilities defined in Ordinance 07-144. Robert Myers, Director of the Commission on Ethics and the Public Trust, provided training on responsibilities of advisory board members. As required by the Ordinance, the Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM) provided an informational presentation that included an overview of the current Manatee Protection Plan, a review of the types of data required by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), and an initial status report on the process to collect the data. DERM reported that it has been collecting data on manatee distribution since 1989, and has information on marine facilities derived from permitting programs and collaboration with the Park and Recreation Department. FWC recommended the Miami-Dade County update its data on boating activities, destinations, and compliance with speed zones in all seasons. Miami-Dade County conducted a competitive Request for Proposals, and has contracted with Mote Marine Laboratory to conduct this study, which began in February 2008. Data collection will continue through February of 2009, and a final report will be provided to the County in April 2009.

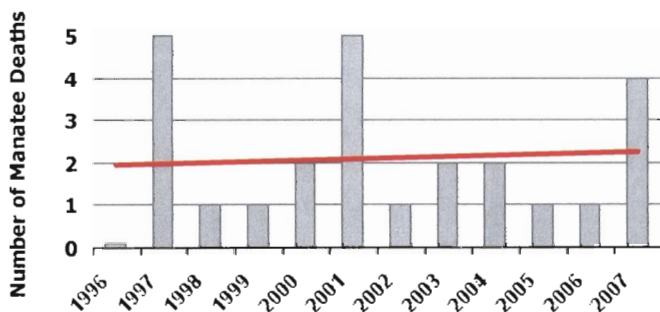
The Committee set a date and held a public hearing on April 8, 2008, for the purpose of receiving comments from interested members of the public regarding the nature and scope of information to be considered, as required by Ordinance 07-144. Forty-eight persons signed the attendance record, nineteen provided verbal comments, and two additional persons submitted written comments. The majority of speakers spoke in favor of maintaining or strengthening the current MPP. Two speakers recommended review of restrictions in the current plan that limit location or numbers of vessel slips. Additional details are available in the posted minutes, and a complete audio and video recording of the hearing is also available for review.

The Committee also met on February 29, May 21, and July 16, 2008. At each meeting, DERM staff members provide verbal reports to the committee on data collection progress, and provide information as it becomes available for review and discussion by the committee. Each meeting agenda also includes an opportunity for public comment. On February 29, 2008, DERM provided preliminary draft

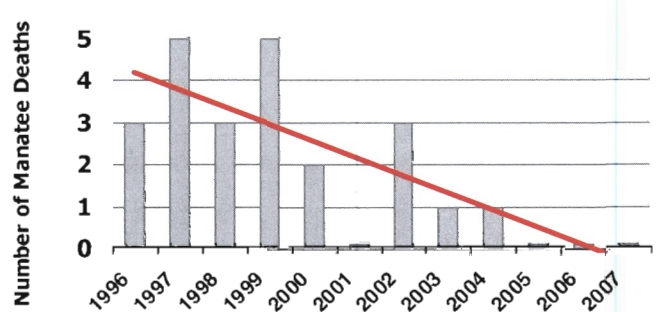
lists of marine facilities that were operating in 1995, and in 2007, with a comparison of the total number of wet and dry slips of all types reported in the operating permits in those years. Total wet and dry slips at facilities with operating permits have increased from 12,392 in 1995 to 13,286 in 2007. These figures do not include single family docks, or facilities that are not required to obtain operating permits. DERM also explained that the current MPP allows rebuilding or reconstruction of “existing facilities”, even in sensitive manatee habitats, as a matter of fairness and recognition of traditional riparian property rights and values. The definition is based on a determination of historical uses of the water at a particular site at any time from October 1984 to present, including the types and numbers of vessels. A site with established historical vessel use does not necessarily have to have an active operating permit from DERM or any other agency to be considered a previously “existing” use. Committee members and DERM staff identified topics for future review.

On May 21, 2008, the Committee conducted a meeting at Seaquarium, and received briefings by animal care and public education specialists, focusing on manatee injuries, rescue, and rehabilitation. DERM presented charts and maps on human-related causes of manatee deaths, particularly focusing on updating what has occurred since 1995, when the current MPP was adopted.

Manatee Deaths by Watercraft

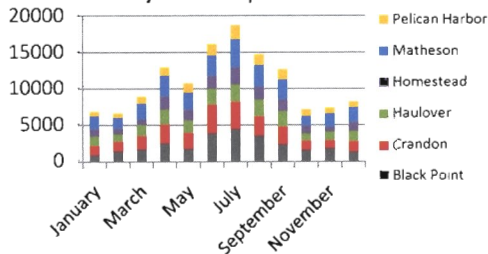


Manatee Deaths by Flood Gate

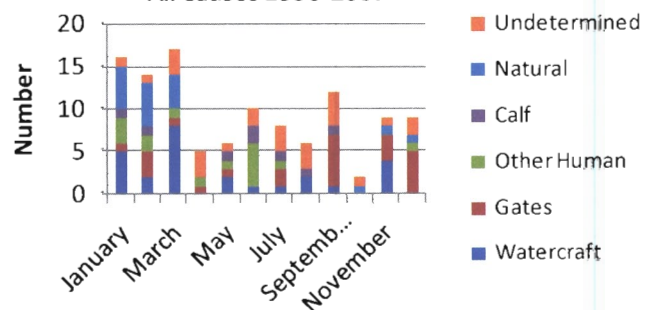


On July 16, 2008, discussion of the data presented by DERM continued, and additional information on Miami-Dade County public boat ramps and dry storage uses was presented, including comparisons of weekday vs. weekend launches, and launches in all months. Graphs showing seasonal patterns in manatee deaths were also provided. Boating occurs in all months, with peak usage in summer. Manatee carcasses are recovered in all months, with greatest numbers in winter when more animals migrate to warm waters of south Florida.

County Boat Ramp Launches 2007



Manatee Deaths by Month All Causes 1996-2007



The Committee has expressed strong interest in further discussion of enforcement and compliance, improved signage, clarifying procedures for determining numbers and types of vessels historically using sites and a process for facilitating transfer of previously existing but unwanted slips from one site to

another. Members have also urged that the Committee sunset date of 18 months be extended to allow full consideration of new boating activity and compliance data being generated by the Mote Marine Laboratory study and analysis.

It should also be noted that two seats on the committee are vacant currently vacant. No representative has been appointed by Commissioner Souto, and the original appointee of Commissioner Diaz has resigned, due to relocation out of Miami-Dade County. In accordance with Ordinance 07-144, commissioners representing even-numbered districts and the Mayor shall appoint manatee/environmental advocates, and commissioners representing odd-numbered districts shall appoint waterway users, in order to maintain a balance among stakeholders.

Cc: Carlos Alvarez, Mayor
Jose Diaz, Commissioner, District 12
Audrey Edmonson, Commissioner, District 3
Carlos Gimenez, Commissioner, District 7
Sally Heyman, Commissioner, District 4
Barbara Jordan, Commissioner, District 1
Joe Martinez, Commissioner, District 11
Dennis Moss, Commissioner, District 9
Dorrin Rolle, Commissioner, District 2
Natacha Seijas, Commissioner, District 13
Katy Sorenson, Commissioner, District 8
Javier Souto, Commissioner, District 10
Rebecca Sosa, Commissioner, District 6