



Biscayne NP Bulletin

September 2009

Marine Reserve Zone Public Meetings

Message from the Superintendent

Biscayne National Park recently conducted three public meetings for the park's general management plan. Held July 21st, 22nd, and 23rd, 2009, in Homestead, Miami, and Key Largo, the meetings engaged the public in a discussion concerning the need for and potential locations of possible marine reserve(s) in Biscayne National Park. The goal of establishing marine reserve(s) is to preserve certain coral reef areas that remain in good condition while still allowing some recreational activities. The Biscayne National Park staff and I would like to thank everyone who attended and gave their time and energy to this process.

Mark Lewis

What We Did

The three meetings were conducted as workshops to give everyone present the opportunity to have his/her ideas, suggestions, or objections heard and recorded.



The format of each meeting consisted of these elements:

- a review of the general management plan process
- a PowerPoint presentation about the current science of marine reserves
- small group discussions

- a public comment period
- discussion of next steps

The NPS staff provided maps, markers, flip charts, and staff facilitators to record individual and group comments and suggestions to ensure that all attendees had an equal opportunity to express their opinions.

What You Said

Participants at the three meetings included the commercial and recreational fishing community, environmental organizations, and park neighbors.

In addition to the preparation of maps depicting each working group's ideas regarding the potential boundaries for marine reserve zones, a broad range of ideas, suggestions, and concerns was expressed including the following:

- National Park Service should show alternative maps for the public to review and critique.
- Because current restrictions in the Legare anchorage, Biscayne National Park should use this area as the marine reserve zone. It has enough biomass (reef) to act as a nursery.
- Instead of restricting fishing, the Park Service should designate more "poll and troll" areas, no anchor zones, and routes through the area. Control the destructive operation of boats.
- To ensure a variety of fish sizes, slot size limits should be implemented.
- Do not restrict access to recreational anglers unless they are the cause of a specific conservation problem.

- Providing access is important, but not at the cost of fishery habitat destruction. Protect our resources for future generations to enjoy, even if it means losing access to some areas or slowing down boats in shallow areas.



- The science presentation confirmed that marine reserve zones should be established to the maximum degree possible. Protecting coral reefs and fish will allow the majority of park visitors to experience why national parks were first established.
- More enforcement of existing laws and regulations is needed (with real consequences) as well as visitor education.
- Marine reserves will result in more fish outside the reserve, as well as inside.

What Comes Next

- preparation of a Draft GMP/EIS, which will include maps with proposed zones
- 60-day public comment period
- public meetings
- preparation of a Final GMP/EIS
- preparation of a "Record of Decision"