



Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners
Department of Environmental Resources Management

Manatees

The Florida manatee (*Trichechus manatus*), or sea cow, is a large plant-eating aquatic mammal commonly found in shallow coastal waters, rivers, canals, and springs of Florida. They range in color from gray to brown, and are seal-shaped in appearance, with flat, rounded tails. Adult manatees average 9.8 feet in length and weigh over 1,000 pounds.

Where are manatees found in Palm Beach County?

Manatees are present in Palm Beach County year round and are most common during winter months, when many migrate to the warm water discharge at the Florida Power and Light Riviera Beach Power Plant. This area, within Lake Worth Lagoon, is recognized as one of the most important water manatee refuges on the east coast of Florida. Manatees are also commonly seen near Jupiter Inlet, Munyon Island, Boynton Inlet and Lake Wyman. They are often observed swimming, resting, or feeding near submerged seagrass beds. In dark colored water, manatees are more difficult to see, but may be identified by their dark, round snouts which break the surface of the water to breathe. Large, circular swirls in the water may also indicate the presence of manatees.

What are the major threats to manatees?

Many manatee mortalities are human-related. The primary threat from humans in Palm Beach County is collision with watercraft which accounts for 35% of manatee strandings. Other causes of human-related manatee mortalities include being crushed and/or drowned in canal locks and flood control structures; ingestion of fish hooks, litter and monofilament line, entanglement in crab trap lines; and vandalism. Loss of habitat is also a serious threat facing manatees. High mortality, primarily associated with human activity, as well as a low reproductive rate and loss of habitat continue to keep the number of manatees low and threaten the future of the species.

How does Palm Beach County protect manatees?

Approved by the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners on August 21, 2007, the Palm Beach County Manatee Protection Plan (MPP) was designed to improve overall protection for manatees while ensuring adequate public access to County waterways. The primary goal is to establish guidelines and policies that direct new (or expanded) boating facilities to areas posing the least risk to manatees and away from areas of relatively high risk. Other goals include protecting manatee habitat, promoting boating safety, and increasing public awareness

of the need to protect manatees and their habitat. The Palm Beach County MPP relies heavily on education and enforcement as a means of protecting manatees within the County and mitigating for the effects of new boat slips. The plan covers all estuarine waters and the portion of Lake Okeechobee within Palm Beach County.

The plan was Municipalities are encouraged to adopt the plan as part of their Comprehensive Land Use Plans.

To report violations, manatee injuries, or deaths, call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 1-888-404-FWCC. Cell phone users can dial *FWC or #FWC, depending on your service provider

General Information

[Manatee Brochure](#)

[Manatee Protection Zone Maps](#)

[Manatee Protection Plan](#)

Technical Reports

[Countywide Survey 2009 – 2011](#)

[Monthly Survey Results 2009 – 2011](#)

[FPL Riviera Beach Power Plant Survey 2011 – 2012](#)

[Manatee Protection Report 2010 – 2011](#)

[Boater Speed Compliance Study](#)