



October 6, 2009

Via Mail & Web Submission

Biscayne National Park
Attn: Fisheries Management Plan
9700 SW 328th Street
Homestead, Florida 33033

Dear Sir or Madam:

The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA), the nation's leading recreational marine industry association, and the American Sportfishing Association (ASA), the sportfishing industry's trade association, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Biscayne National Park Fishery Management Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Recreational boating and fishing activities have been a historically important use in the park, and we seek to ensure that these valuable activities remain viable and sustainable within the park for years to come. NMMA and ASA are pleased to submit these formal written comments regarding the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Biscayne National Park's Fishery Management Plan. NMMA and ASA strongly oppose Alternatives 3, 4, and 5 as proposed in the draft EIS as unduly restrictive for recreational boating and angling access.

NMMA represents nearly 1,700 boat builders, engine manufacturers, and marine accessory manufacturers who collectively produce more than 80 percent of all recreational marine products made in the United States. The recreational boating industry is a major consumer goods industry with expenditures on recreational marine products and services of \$33.6 billion nationwide in 2008 alone. The boating industry provides Floridians over 30,000 jobs and \$9.1 billion in economic impact statewide each year, with a substantial portion of that economic output occurring in South Florida (Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach tri-county region). Nationwide, recreational boating contributes to 337,758 jobs and over \$10.4 billion in labor income.

There are currently 12.8 million registered or documented recreational boats owned in the United States, with more than 70 million boaters and more than 60 million recreational anglers. Additionally, there are nearly one million registered recreational boats in Florida, ranking the state first in the nation for boat registrations. Florida is also ranked first nationwide for sales of new powerboats and associated equipment, with \$1.6 billion in sales in 2008. Many boaters are

also anglers because fishing and boating are closely linked. More than 60 percent of boats are purchased for the primary purpose of angling.

ASA represents the interests of over 700 manufacturers, distributors, and retailers of fishing equipment and related fishing accessories, as well as members of the outdoor media. ASA invests in long-term ventures to ensure the industry will remain strong and prosperous, as well as safeguard and promote the enduring social, economic, and conservation values of sportfishing in America. America's 60 million anglers are conservationists first and foremost and have a long history of making sacrifices for the betterment of the resources. The heritage of fishing as a family friendly outdoor activity has a legacy of conservation with anglers and the sportfishing industry having paid over \$5 billion since 1950 for fisheries conservation. These funds have gone far to support forward looking practices that perpetuate and grow the resource base.

Anglers generate over \$45 billion in retail sales with a \$125 billion impact on the nation's economy creating employment for over one million people. Florida's approximately 2 million saltwater anglers contribute over \$5 billion to the state's economy, including approximately \$3 billion in retail sales, 50,000 jobs, over \$375 million in federal tax revenues, and over \$310 million in state and local tax revenues.

Recreational fishing and boating have been an important and economically valuable uses in Biscayne National Park for many generations. The new Fisheries Management Plan for Biscayne National Park should preserve this tradition, as well as re-affirm President Bill Clinton's executive order on recreational fishing (#12962), as amended by President Bush via E.O. 13474 which requires that recreational fishing be managed as a sustainable activity in federal waters. We believe the marine reserve concept proposed in three of the five alternatives in the fishery management plan, including the park's preferred alternative, runs counter to this executive order, especially when other less restrictive management strategies could be considered.

Given the draconian nature of marine reserves, they should be considered only after conventional ocean resource management measures have failed. While we fully support the goal of boosting fish stocks in the park, marine reserves are just one tool among the suite of resources available for effective fisheries management. Other management strategies (e.g., size limits, bag limits, quotas, gear restrictions) could address overfishing while still allowing for public access to public resources via recreational fishing. Marine reserves, in other words, should be a tool of last resort. We do not believe the National Park Service has sufficient basis for implementing reserves at this time given a range of appropriate and effective alternatives that can be employed. Given the widespread distribution of recreational fishing and boating that occurs throughout the park, any marine reserve of significant size would inevitably and unduly shut anglers out of favorite fishing areas, keeping anglers and boaters off the water, out of the park, and diminishing the economic benefit of recreational fishing and boating to the local economy.

Alternatives 3, 4, and 5 each include marine reserves as a possible management action, yet no information is given as to how it will be determined if marine reserves are necessary, where they would be placed, how long they would be implemented, or what level of monitoring and enforcement would be placed on the reserves. These alternatives also include the implementation of recreational use permits and fees, which we believe will present a significant management

problem, both for the park and the park user. There is inadequate detail in the working draft to determine whether the use permits would exist primarily to further limit access to the park overall. Additionally, the park is accessible from multiple points of entry, including the open ocean. It is inherently inequitable to require registration and fees from users entering from shore-based access points while not having any practical mechanism in place to ensure that entry registration and fees are universal for park visitors. Our organizations believe there is insufficient detail on permit fees and registrations requirements outlined in the proposal, and without clear guidance on the marine reserve and recreational permit initiatives, we oppose all of these three alternatives.

NMMA and ASA would also suggest that the National Park Service has misidentified the problem, and is therefore offering the wrong solutions. The most significant concern facing Biscayne National Park's natural resources is not the allowance of typical recreational fishing and boating uses, but inadequate enforcement of current regulations. It is not realistic that the park will have the financial resources necessary to ensure that marine reserves will have effective enforcement, public outreach and scientific monitoring. Management of marine reserves must require continued monitoring and enforcement, and they should be subject to adaptive management techniques that allow adjustment at such time that conservation goals are met. In other words, marine reserves should be measurable and temporary if they are deployed as conservation management strategies. We believe the park lacks the ability to adequately enforce, monitor, measure and adapt a marine reserve strategy. Park officials do not and will not have the data to analyze the success (or failure) of a marine reserve towards achieving its stated purpose. Without such knowledge, the implementation of marine reserves will blindly result in the permanent placement of zones that either unnecessarily restrict recreational angling and boating or prohibit it entirely. This would arbitrarily and unnecessarily create economic hardship on local businesses, block law-abiding citizens from enjoying the park which is held in their trust, while providing little- to no protection against illegal harvest and use.

In addition, park officials need to closely analyze how the current lack of resources is affecting park resources. If adequate resource management measures are currently in place, but not being enforced, recreational anglers and boaters should not be penalized because park managers view marine reserves as a "quick fix." Our organizations stand ready to facilitate the National Park Service in an effort to identify and acquire sufficient resources to manage the park appropriately, while ensuring public access.

While we encourage you to address the problem of overfishing in Biscayne National Park, we urge you to evaluate more conventional, equally effective and less restrictive fisheries management strategies before considering the implementation of marine reserves. In the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding between Biscayne National Park and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), the FWC states their belief that marine reserves are overly restrictive and that less-restrictive management measures should be implemented in the park. Our organizations strongly concur. We urge you to uphold the guidance provided by the FWC and the long-standing policy of the federal government to allow sportsmen public access to public lands and waters for recreational purposes consistent with sound conservation. We believe other equally effective options are available that will boost fish stocks in the park, enhance

conservation goals and ensure that the tradition of fishing and boating can continue for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gordon C. Robertson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Gordon Robertson
Vice President, American Sportfishing Association

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Dammrich". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name being the most prominent.

Thomas J. Dammrich
President, National Marine Manufacturers Association