



October 5, 2009

National Park Service
Biscayne National Park
9700 SW 328th Street
Homestead, FL 33033

The Personal Water Industry Association (PWIA) respectfully submits this letter in support of continued recreational fishing access throughout Biscayne National Park. By way of background, PWIA's member companies, American Honda Motor Co., Inc., BRP US, Kawasaki Motors Corp., U.S.A., and Yamaha Motor Corporation, U.S.A. (collectively, the "PWC companies") manufacture and distribute personal watercraft (PWC). PWIA was founded in order to promote safe and responsible operation of personal watercraft and work with federal, state and local agencies which have regulatory responsibilities for recreational boating. PWIA supports and actively advocates for reasonable regulations, strong enforcement of boating and navigation laws, and mandatory boating safety education for all PWC operators, while respecting the aquatic environment in which the vessels operate. Therefore, our comments will focus on ensuring that a fair and nondiscriminatory approach, for all boaters, is included in the final management plan.

PWIA supports efforts by the NPS to preserve and sustain Biscayne National Park (BNP), and recognizes that vibrant natural ecosystems greatly enhance the public's enjoyment of the Park's numerous pristine vistas. BNP's beauty makes it the premier recreational boating and fishing destination in the nation and fishing its waters is a pastime interwoven into the fabric of the South Florida lifestyle.

We strongly suggest the National Park Service avoid closing any portion of the park to fishing or boating under the new Fisheries Management Plan (FMP). While we support the goal of boosting fish stocks in the park, there are other measures that can be as effective, if not more so, than marine reserves while still maintaining public access to public resources.

Rather than implementing closures, the park's resources should continue to be available to the recreational fisherman and boater. Resources can be protected and fisheries increased through better management practices, many of which have not yet been tapped. For example, there are many less onerous conservation measures, such as gear restrictions, possession limits, size restriction, quotas, or closed seasons that may adequately achieve the targeted rejuvenation of fish populations.

In addition, it is of concern that option 4 is being promoted as the preferred alternative since it includes many draconian options. While BNP officials state that closures to fishing will be a last resort, the options do not include guidelines to determine when it is time to limit recreational use of the park. Therefore, the public has been asked to analyze and comment on a

regulatory scheme that does not include any of the criteria that would be used to enact such measures.

Recreational use permits will also present a significant management problem, both for the park and its users, and it is unclear how they will benefit the park. Because of inadequate detail in the working draft, it is impossible to determine whether the permit system exists only to penalize recreational boaters and fishermen and further limit access to the park overall.

Ultimately, regulations are only as successful as the level of enforcement they are under. The biggest problem facing resource management in BNP is, by the Park's own admission, lack of enforcement of current regulations. Without first addressing this problem, additional regulations will only further restrict law-abiding citizens from enjoying the park while doing little to address those that truly breach the park's regulations.

Finally, The University of Miami's Center for Sustainable Fisheries was contracted by the NPS to do a fisheries survey of BNP which led to the creation of the multi-stakeholder Task Force, formed by the Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission and BNP itself, in addition to many other environmental groups. We recommend that the NPS incorporate the recommendations of this Task Force, which did not include closures as an option.

In light of these stated policies and procedures, PWIA recommends that NPS reconsider any management alternative that prohibits or severely restricts an established activity, particularly recreational boating and fishing. Park policies should be shaped by the Congressional directive that Biscayne NP is for the "benefit and enjoyment of the people," and the NPS should not implement any policy that limits such enjoyment without sight specific and a sound scientific basis. The reliance on anecdotal information to restrict public use fundamentally contradicts the purpose and charter of Biscayne NP.

If we can provide any additional comments or supporting documentation, please feel free to contact me at 202-737-9778.

Sincerely,

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

Maureen A. Healey
Executive Director
Personal Watercraft Industry Association