

American Sportfishing Association
Center for Coastal Conservation
Coastal Conservation Association
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
National Marine Manufacturers Association

September 27, 2012

The Honorable Kenneth Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Rick Scott
Governor
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Secretary Salazar and Governor Scott,

We are appreciative that earlier this summer the National Park Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission agreed to reengage in cooperative development of the General Management Plan (GMP) for Biscayne National Park. As representatives of America's leading recreational fishing and boating organizations, we are highly interested in the management of Biscayne National Park, one of the country's largest urban recreational fishing and boating areas. Biscayne National Park is a jewel in the national park system and helps support Florida's \$19 billion recreational fishing and boating economy and the associated 250,000 jobs.

We have previously expressed our strong concerns with the November 2011, draft GMP, which the National Park Service developed without collaboration with the State of Florida and which proposes onerous fishing and boating closures. While we are hopeful that the recent and continuing discussions between the National Park Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will result in a final management plan that better balances resource conservation with public access, we remain concerned about the potential implementation of large scale fishing closures in the park. The September 21, 2012, Joint Statement on Biscayne National Park's General Management Plan indicates that a marine reserve zone remains in consideration as a possible management activity.

We remind you that the marine reserve zones proposed in the draft GMP are inherently fisheries management tools, and should only be considered as a last resort and only after other, less restrictive options have failed. Other management options, such as more restrictive fishing regulations for certain species, species-specific spawning closures and a mechanism to pay for improved enforcement and education of park regulations could be equally or more effective than a marine reserve in rebuilding the park's fisheries resources. We understand the desire of park managers to provide a different user experience for other activities, but we believe this can be accomplished without closing large areas of the park to fishing and boating.

Once finalized, the GMP will remain in place for a decade or more. As such, we ask that you be mindful of the importance of crafting a GMP that conserves the Park's valuable natural resources while maintaining public access for anglers, boaters and other users of the Park. We understand the high importance you both place on maintaining strong federal-state agency relationships, and your appreciation for the role that sustainable natural resources management plays in supporting local economies and social wellbeing. We will continue to follow this process closely and stand ready to help achieve a final plan that recognizes the goals of all those who benefit from and enjoy the spectacular public resources in Biscayne National Park.

Sincerely,

Mike Nussman, President and CEO
American Sportfishing Association

Jeff Angers, President
Center for Coastal Conservation

Pat Murray, President
Coastal Conservation Association

Jeff Crane, President
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Thom Dammrich, President
National Marine Manufacturers Association

cc: Jonathan Jarvis, Director, National Park Service
Nick Wiley, Executive Director, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission