

- **Boat Tours, Paddle-craft Rentals and Select Conveniences Temporarily Unavailable**

Glass-bottom, snorkel, diving and island boat tours, and rentals for canoes and other paddle-craft, are temporarily unavailable. The park is working to resolve the issue as soon as possible and regrets the inconvenience. Limited snack items are available.

## Fishery Management Plan



A young woman fishes off of Elliott Key in Biscayne National Park.

*Photo Credit: Arend Thibodeau*

Updated November 2014

### BACKGROUND

Biscayne National Park, the largest marine park in the National Park system, features a spectacular array of mangrove, coastal hammocks, seagrass, hardbottom, and coral reef habitats. The Park hosts both commercial and recreational fishers. Increases in South Florida's boating and fishing

population combined with improved fishing and boating technology pose a threat to the long-term sustainability of fishery-related resources of BISC. Within the last decade, a variety of scientific studies completed by different institutions and agencies have all indicated that Biscayne National Park's fisheries resources have declined from previous levels, and all studies indicate concern about the long-term sustainability of the Park's fisheries resources. Many fishery-targeted species (particularly snapper and grouper species) that once were plentiful in Biscayne National Park have declined in abundance and/or size so substantially that legal-sized individuals of these species are now only rarely, if ever, observed in or harvested from park waters. In order to protect and restore Biscayne National Park's diminishing fisheries resources, ensure that fishing activities in the park are conducted in a sustainable manner, and comply with the National Park Service mandate to provide inspiration, education and enjoyment to this and future generations, the National Park Service has developed a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to guide fishery management decisions in Biscayne National Park for the next five to ten years.

## THE FMP FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

In May of 2014, the National Park Service (NPS) announced the availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Biscayne National Park's Fishery Management Plan (FMP). Click [here \(http://www.nps.gov/bisc/parkmgmt/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=586604\)](http://www.nps.gov/bisc/parkmgmt/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=586604) to access the plan. Five alternatives addressing concerns about the status and long-term conservation of the park's fisheries resources are described in the final EIS. The development of the alternatives and the identification of the preferred alternative were based on a combination of public input (derived from two public comment periods and two series of public meetings, and the input of the FMP Working Group), inter-agency meetings, and environmental and socioeconomic analyses. The alternatives are as follows:

Alternative Name	Description
Maintain Status Quo	This no-action alternative serves as a basis of comparison with the other alternatives. No regulatory changes would be triggered by the establishment of the FMP
Maintain At Or Above Current Levels	This alternative seeks to maintain Biscayne National Park's fisheries resources at or above currently existing levels. As needed, management actions would be implemented (in conjunction with the FWC) and could include moderate increases in minimum harvest sizes, moderate decreases in bag limits, and seasonal and/or spatial closures.
Improve Over Current Levels	This alternative aims to increase the abundance and average size of fishery-targeted species within the Park by at least 10% over existing conditions. A range of management actions to achieve the desired resource

	<p>status would be considered, and include moderate increases in minimum harvest sizes, moderate decreases in bag limits, and seasonal and/or spatial closures. Under this alternative, lobster mini-season would be eliminated in the Park and regulations would be enacted to prohibit the use of an air supply or gear with a trigger mechanism while spearfishing. Numbers of commercial fishers would remain at current levels or decrease over time, and fishing-related habitat impacts would be reduced.</p>
Rebuild and Conserve Park Fisheries Resources (SELECTED ALTERNATIVE)	<p>This alternative is the NPS's preferred alternative and proposes to increase the abundance and average size of fishery-targeted species within the Park by at least 20% over existing conditions, as well as reduce fishing-related habitat impacts. Possible management actions to achieve substantial improvement of fisheries resources could include considerable increases in minimum size limits, designation of slot limits, substantial decreases in bag limits, and seasonal and/or spatial closures. Under Alternative 4, lobster mini-season would be eliminated in the Park and regulations would be enacted to prohibit the use of an air supply or gear with a trigger mechanism while spearfishing. Numbers of commercial fishers would decrease over time via establishment of a non-transferable permit system.</p>
Restore Park Fisheries Resources	<p>This alternative seeks to return the sizes and abundance of targeted species within 20% of their estimated, historic (pre-exploitation) levels and to prevent further decline in fishing-related habitat impacts. Possible management actions to achieve the desired conditions would be enacted in conjunction with the FWC and could include substantial increases in minimum size limits, designation of slot limits, substantial decreases in bag limits, seasonal and/or spatial closures, prohibition of extractive fishing (i.e. only allowing catch-and-release fishing), and a temporary moratorium on all fishing activity within the Park. Under this alternative, lobster mini-season would be eliminated in the Park and regulations would be enacted to prohibit spearfishing within the Park. Numbers of commercial fishers would decrease over time via establishment of a</p>

	non-transferable permit system.
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In October of 2014, the NPS issued a **[Record of Decision \(http://www.nps.gov/bisc/parkmgmt/upload/BISC-FMP-Record-of-Decision.pdf\)](http://www.nps.gov/bisc/parkmgmt/upload/BISC-FMP-Record-of-Decision.pdf)** identifying "Rebuild and Protect Park Fisheries Resources" as the Selected Alternative.

This plan is the result of a long history of consultation and coordination with cooperating agency, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. A detailed list of consultation and coordination efforts is available **[here \(http://www.nps.gov/bisc/parkmgmt/upload/FMP-History-of-coordination-and-consultation-with-FWC.pdf\)](http://www.nps.gov/bisc/parkmgmt/upload/FMP-History-of-coordination-and-consultation-with-FWC.pdf)**.

Public input from 2002 to the present has been essential to the development and refinement of this plan. The FMP draft EIS was open for public comment during a 60-day public comment period in August through October of 2009. The NPS received numerous comments, all of which were evaluated and many of which were incorporated into the final EIS. There will be further opportunities for public comment as the cooperating agencies develop specific regulations for implementation. Regulations implemented by the National Park Service will be open for comment through the Federal Register; those implemented by the FWC will be open for public comment through the state's rulemaking process. The National Park Service values the public's interest in Biscayne National Park, and we look forward to implementing this plan with your support and collaboration.

For further information on the FMP developmental process or on specific information pertaining to the final EIS, contact the Park's Resource Management Division by phone at 305-230-1144.

**[\(http://www.doi.gov/\)](http://www.doi.gov/)**

Last Updated: 11/25/2014