



Florida House of Representatives

Representative Anna V. Eskamani

District 42

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November 28, 2022

Debra Haaland, Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240
exsec@ios.doi.gov

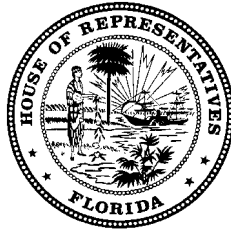
Martha Williams, Director
U.S Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240
martha_williams@fws.gov

Dear Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and FWS Director Williams,

I am writing to express my support of a recent petition filed by The Center for Biological Diversity, Harvard Animal Law & Policy Clinic, Miami Waterkeeper, Save the Manatee Club and community leader Frank S. Garcia to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requesting to reclassify the West Indian manatee and subspecies — including the Florida manatee — as endangered.

As you likely already know, manatees were listed as endangered in 1973. In 2012, the Pacific Legal Foundation, a nationwide anti-regulation law firm, filed a legal petition and threatened a lawsuit on behalf of a group of local property owners called Save Crystal River to downlist the manatee. This campaign was eventually successful, and the Florida manatee was downlisted from endangered to threatened on March 30, 2017 -- a decision that most environmental groups vehemently opposed.

Since this decision, we have seen Florida's manatee population decline dramatically. Pollution-fueled algae blooms have sparked an ongoing mortality event that has killed more than 1,110 Florida manatees in 2021 alone. This equates to 19 percent of the Atlantic population and 13 percent of all manatees in Florida. As the petition explains, deaths have continued with 726 manatees dying through October.



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Habitat loss, boat strikes, pollution, climate change and toxic algae blooms are all threatening the Florida manatee, and the restoration of full Endangered Species Act protections is an essential first step for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to take.

Finally: I want to stress that this letter of support is not only motivated by my love for and commitment to Florida's precious ecosystems. It is also driven by an understanding that our state's natural resources are a major economic driver and attraction for visitors. The suffering of manatees and the degradation of their environment is not isolated, it has statewide impact and deserves your immediate attention.

I am available if you have any questions at all.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna". The letters are cursive and fluid.

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