



# EVERGLADES COALITION

## **Resolution Urging Federal and State Officials to Increase Protections for West Indian Manatees and Their Habitat**

**WHEREAS**, the Florida manatee is an iconic aquatic subspecies of the West Indian manatee living along Florida's Atlantic and Gulf coasts, including in the Greater Everglades Ecosystem;

**WHEREAS**, the availability of clean water, warm water refugia, and seagrass habitat is necessary for the manatee's survival and recovery;

**WHEREAS**, water pollution and the resulting loss in food sources such as seagrasses are among the greatest recent threats to manatees;

**WHEREAS**, manatees have recently sustained alarming declines, with more than 1,100 manatee deaths in 2021, representing 13% of Florida's manatees;

**WHEREAS**, manatee declines continued in 2022, with a reported 800 manatee deaths;

**WHEREAS**, unchecked pollution from wastewater treatment discharges, leaking septic systems, fertilizer runoff and other sources fueled the collapse of several estuaries across the Greater Everglades system, driving manatee deaths and ailments;

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service downlisted the West Indian manatee from endangered to threatened in 2017, even though the manatee's habitat was and remains far from secure, and is currently considering whether to uplist the species to endangered again;

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has also committed to revising critical habitat for the Florida manatee by September 2024;

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission cooperates with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conserve the manatee; and

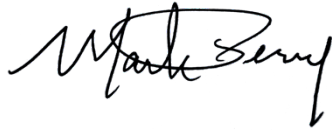
**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services are responsible for protecting and ensuring water quality in Florida.

*The Everglades Coalition is a 501(c)3 alliance of local, state, and national conservation organizations dedicated to the full protection and restoration of America's Everglades.*

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED ON JANUARY 26<sup>TH</sup>, 2023**

The Everglades Coalition strongly urges the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to increase protections for the West Indian manatee and its coastal seagrass habitats.

The Everglades Coalition further urges the Environmental Protection Agency, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to increase water quality protections that will support the regrowth of seagrass and the survival of manatees along Florida's coasts.



Mark Perry  
Co-Chair



Kelly Cox  
Co-Chair

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