



## Biscayne National Park Fishery Management Plan: Summary of Recommendations

### **Biscayne's reef fisheries are in clear decline:**

- Decades of intensive fishing, prey reduction, habitat degradation, and pollution have taken their toll on Biscayne, with many reef fish populations severely overfished. Some species have less than 5% of their historical spawning biomass, literally on the verge of collapse.
- All 12 species identified in the Fishery Management Plan Science Plan are currently overfished in Biscayne National Park. Black grouper, for instance, are at less than 1% of their historical abundance. Fishing pressure far exceeds sustainable levels.
- Most reef fish species in Biscayne barely reach the minimum size of sexual maturity before they are subjected to intensive fishing, meaning they have little or no chance to spawn in their lifetime. This factor is a major driver in declining fish populations.

### **FWC's initial proposals are focused on size limits. On their own, they will not produce sustainable fish populations in Biscayne. NPCA's science-based recommendations for Biscayne National Park's Fishery Management Plan include:**

- **The goal of the Fishery Management Plan should be sustainable fish populations in Biscayne National Park** – i.e. fishing at a level that can be continued indefinitely and fish populations that are productive and healthy – rather than an arbitrarily-defined 20% increase in fish populations. For some species, a 20% increase is nowhere near the level required for sustainability.
- Implement **spatial closures (i.e. no-fishing marine reserve areas)** that are based on science to help reduce intensity of fishing pressure.
- Implement scientifically based **minimum size limits and recreational bag limits** that will lead to sustainability for each fish species under consideration.
- Create habitat protection areas, **including no-trawl zones**, coral reef protection areas, and trap free zones.
- **Increase investments in education and enforcement**, which are critical to the successful implementation of regulations.
- Use **adaptive management** to periodically assess fishery regulations. Regulations should be reassessed every few years, rather than every seven years as currently proposed.

### **For more information, please contact:**

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