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# 77%

OF 35 FISH STOCKS STUDIED WITHIN THE PARK ARE OVERFISHED, MOST CAPTURED BEFORE THEY HAD A CHANCE TO SPAWN.<sup>1</sup>

# 95%

DECLINE IN REEF FISH CATCHES IN BISCAYNE SINCE THE 1960s.<sup>2</sup>



**NATIONAL  
PARKS  
CONSERVATION  
ASSOCIATION**

## 100 YEARS

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July 2019

## Biscayne National Park's Fishery Management Plan

Biscayne National Park is a national treasure and home to part of the third largest barrier reef ecosystem in the world. 95% water, Biscayne is the largest marine park in the National Park System, created to protect, “a rare combination of terrestrial, marine, and amphibious life in a tropical setting of great natural beauty” for present and future generations.<sup>3</sup> In addition to its ecological value, the park is a significant economic driver, supporting a variety of economic and recreation activities, such as fishing, diving, snorkeling, and boating. According to a National Park Service report, in 2018 over 450,000 visitors to Biscayne spent more than \$30 million, supporting 398 local jobs and generating more than \$42 million for the local economy.<sup>4</sup>

### Status of Fisheries in Biscayne

In addition to its colorful coral reefs and palm-fringed islands, Biscayne National Park protects an abundance of fish species, often at different points in their life cycles. Species such as mutton snapper, hogfish, and black grouper are ecologically *and* economically important, part of Biscayne's coral reef ecosystem that supports a vibrant recreational boating and fishing industry. Unfortunately, decades of overfishing, overuse, water pollution, and climate change have taken their toll and many of these species are severely threat-

ened, some on the verge of collapse.<sup>5</sup> If action isn't taken and fish populations and habitat health continue to decline, the Park Service will have failed at its fundamental mission to protect Biscayne National Park in perpetuity for all Americans. Implementing a marine reserve and science-based fisheries management policies are key to protecting and restoring Biscayne's marine resources.

### Biscayne's Fishery Management Plan

Biscayne National Park's Fishery Management Plan (FMP), finalized back in 2014, aims to increase the average size and abundance of target fish species in the park by 20% by creating park-specific fisheries management regulations and reducing fishing-related habitat degradation.

The FMP lays out a menu of options to achieve these goals, including:

- Modifying size limits and bag limits
- Seasonal or spatial closures
- Limiting spearfishing
- Eliminating lobster mini-season
- Creating Coral Reef Protection Areas and no-trap areas
- Creating no-trawl zones
- Commercial fishing permitting system





The National Park Service and Florida's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) are set to begin a public process that will determine the specific regulations to be implemented in Biscayne National Park. This process includes a public comment period, public workshops, and final approval by Florida's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. **Your voice is needed throughout this process to ensure that the agencies prioritize the conservation of critical marine wildlife in Biscayne National Park!**

**Unfortunately, initial proposals by FWC to increase size limits are not strong enough to lead to sustainable fish populations. We are urging the FWC to consider a combination of increased size limits AND no-take marine reserve areas to help restore fish populations while also continuing to allow for fishing opportunities in Biscayne National Park.** The ultimate goal of this process should be regulations based on sound science that will lead to sustainable fish populations and healthy habitat. Conserving Biscayne's marine wildlife and habitat will help protect biodiversity, provide recreational and economic opportunities, build ecosystem resiliency, and strengthen connections between our communities and maritime heritage. We must work together to protect Biscayne before it's too late.

Please join us in fighting for Biscayne at an upcoming public meeting or workshop:

- **July 18 FWC Commission Meeting, 8:30am**  
Marrriott Resort Hutchinson Island, 555 NE Ocean Blvd, Stuart, FL 34996
- **August 6 Public Workshop, 6-9pm**  
Newman Alumni Center, University of Miami, 6200 San Amaro Dr, Coral Gables, FL 33146
- **August 7 Public Workshop, 6-9pm**  
Florida City City Hall, 404 W. Palm Dr, Florida City, FL 33034
- **August 8 Public Workshop, 6-9pm**  
Murray Nelson Government Center, 102050 Overseas Hwy, Key Largo, FL 33037

*"For every 20 fish caught back in 1960, only one fish is caught today. Scientists warn that the status of some reef fish indicates imminent resource collapse."<sup>6</sup>*



Credit: iStock.com/stockphotos52

Footnotes

- 1 Ault, J. S., Ault, J. S., Smith, S. G., Meester, G. A., Luo, J., & Bohnsack, J. A. Site characterization for Biscayne National Park: Assessment of fisheries resources and habitats. NOAA Technical Memorandum 2001 NMFS-SEFSC-468 (as cited in U.S. DOI, NPS, Final GMP/EIS, Vol 1, 174).
- 2 United States. Cong. House. Committees on Natural Resources & Small Business. *Joint Oversight Hearing: Restricted Access at Biscayne National Park and Implications for Fishermen, Small Businesses, the Local Economy and Environment. Aug. 3, 2005* (Testimony of Jerald S. Ault, Ph.D., Professor of Marine Biology & Fisheries, University of Miami).
- 3 16 U.S.C. 410gg
- 4 Cullinane Thomas, C., Koontz, L., & Egan Cornachione, E. 2018. *Visitor Spending Effects*. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>
- 5 United States. Cong. House. Committees on Natural Resources & Small Business. *Joint Oversight Hearing: Restricted Access at Biscayne National Park and Implications for Fishermen, Small Businesses, the Local Economy and Environment. Aug. 3, 2005* (Testimony of Jerald S. Ault, Ph.D., Professor of Marine Biology & Fisheries, University of Miami).
- 6 Ibid.

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