



CHARLIE CRIST
GOVERNOR

September 10, 2007

Chairman Rodney Barreto
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
620 South Meridian Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600

Dear Chairman Barreto:

On September 12, 2007, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is scheduled to consider whether to change the status of the Florida Manatee from Endangered to Threatened based on a Biological Status Review which was conducted in adherence to the 2005 changes to the imperiled species classification rule. Also, proposed for adoption is a Manatee Management Plan, which includes as one of its main objectives the implementation of a peer-reviewed and statistically sound method to estimate the manatee population and to monitor its trends.

I applaud the Commission's efforts to implement a strong, thorough management plan for the Florida Manatee. However, given the need for a better method to estimate the population of the Florida Manatee, and the record 417 manatee deaths in 2006, I believe a more prudent course of action at this time would be to postpone consideration of the proposed change in the status of this species.

Postponing this critical decision will also allow the new members of the Commission more time to evaluate this complex issue and ensure that they, along with the rest of the Commission, are fully prepared to vote on an item of such gravity.

The Florida Manatee is one of our state's beloved natural resources. You and your staff have worked diligently for several years to resolve the controversy over the imperiled status of this gentle giant. I am confident that by postponing this action you will help the new Commission better ensure the long-term survival and recovery of the Florida Manatee.

Sincerely,

Charlie Crist

CC: Commissioner Richard Corbett
Commissioner Brian Yablonski
Commissioner Dwight Stephenson
Commissioner Ronald Bergeron
Commissioner Kenneth Wright
Commissioner Kathy Barco Jossim