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*Managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people.*

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Danielle Sattelberger

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Subject: Watson Island Mooring Field, File No. 13-0367937-001, Miami-Dade County

Ms. Sattelberger:

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has reviewed the proposed project to develop a managed mooring field in an area where up to 103 boats have been anchoring unregulated over and in submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) for the past 70 years. The project site is located between Watson, Hibiscus and Palm Islands. The mooring field will be over submerged land owned by the City and, also over sovereign submerged land owned by the State of Florida. The FWC has been informed that the mooring field will be operated and managed by the City of Miami as a public marine facility for up to 100 sail boats that will preempt approximately 69 acres in Biscayne Bay. The associated upland support facilities, including a pump out station, are already constructed and located on City-owned property along the east side of Watson Island (including facilities at the Miami Yacht Club and/or the Watson Island Park boat ramp). A harbor master's office for the mooring field will be constructed on this City owned property. Vessels will be assigned to areas of the Mooring Field based on size and length. Generally, larger vessels will use the northern half of the Mooring Field where water depths are deeper.

The proposed anchoring technology is designed to avoid adverse impacts to the bay-bottom, which will help reduce negative effects to submerged aquatic vegetation. The proposed moorings consist of floating buoys anchored to the bay-bottom with a single chain that is attached to a single embedded steel rod. The system also allows vessels to swing freely based on tidal flow reducing shading associated with immobilized/stationary vessels. The boundaries of the proposed mooring field have been located to make anchoring just outside the boundaries of the regulated area impracticable.

Florida manatee (*Trichechus manatus latirostris*) use of this area is documented by aerial survey, mortality and satellite telemetry data. The mooring field is not in, or immediately adjacent to an area with warm water where manatees aggregate. The proposed mooring field is within a FWC Manatee Protection "Slow Speed All Year" zone. Vessels traversing to and from the project site have access to Government Cut or a 30 MPH All Year zone for access to open waters. Miami-Dade County was one of the counties specified in Florida Statute as required to develop a Manatee Protection Plan (MPP), and it received local, state and federal approval for its plan in 1995. The MPP does not provide specific siting guidance for the proposed sail boat only mooring field. The MPP is a planning document with boat facility siting recommendations for power boats and the plan doesn't specifically address mooring fields. FWC has assessed how the mooring field may impact manatees. The factors of consideration during this evaluation included manatee use of the area, potential changes in boat traffic, potential impacts to submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) on site and possibly

elsewhere in the bay as vessels now anchoring there are potentially displaced, and also that the facility is consistent with the MPP recommendations (special use marinas or transitory docks) at the location of City of Miami's mooring field support facilities on the east side of Watson Island.

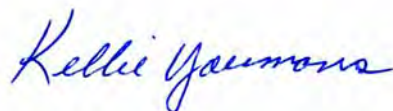
The FWC recommends that the City of Miami take whatever action available to prevent people that may chose not to remain in the regulated area from relocating into SAV or coral habitat, or to direct those boaters to locations not colonized with SAV or corals. FWC is available to provide technical assistance in determining where unregulated anchoring would create the most adverse impact to SAV or corals that should be avoided by any displaced boaters.

It is our recommendation that the following measures, if they are made conditions to the permit, will satisfy the requirements of 379.2431(2) and 373.414(1)(a)2 Florida Statutes:

1. The [Standard Manatee Construction Conditions for In-water Work](#) (2011) must be followed for all in-water activity.
2. The Permittee shall implement a manatee educational plan, which shall be maintained for the life of the facility, no later than 60 days after construction commencement. This educational plan must be approved by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the Miami-Dade County Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources (RER). FWC can be contacted at [ImperiledSpecies@myfwc.com](mailto:ImperiledSpecies@myfwc.com) and RER can be contacted at: Miami-Dade County Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources, 701 N.W. 1st Court, 6th floor, Miami, FL 33136. The plan shall include, but not limited to, permanent manatee educational signs and educational brochures which must be available to patrons within a centralized location. A proposal for an educational plan shall be submitted in accordance with information provided at FWC's website: <http://www.myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/managed/manatee/education-for-marinas/>. Signs, brochures or other materials shall be replaced in accordance with FWC guidance by the Permittee if outdated, damaged or faded.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this project. Please contact me at (850) 922-4330 or via email if you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



Kellie Youmans  
Fisheries and Wildlife Biological Scientist  
Imperiled Species Management Section

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