

# USACE Natural Resource Management

## Mammals



### West Indian Manatee

### FAST FACTS

**REASONS FOR CURRENT STATUS:** The West Indian Manatee includes two distinct subspecies, the Florida manatee and the Antillean manatee. The species is protected under both the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which prohibits take of all marine mammals.

The Florida manatee was listed as endangered in 1967 under the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966. The Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969 added the Antillean manatee. Both species were grandfathered into the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. In April of 2007, the USFWS completed a 5-year review which included a recommendation to reclassify the West Indian manatee from endangered to threatened. In 2017, the final rule was published in the Federal Register to complete the reclassification.

A serious threat to this species was—and continues to be—the indirect and cumulative injury and mortality caused by watercraft operating from water access facilities. Habitat loss, fragmentation, and natural threats such as harmful algal blooms, cold weather, tropical storms, and disease form the remaining primary conservation challenges.

**MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION:** USACE's role in management and protection of the species includes authorization of permits for construction activities through the regulatory program, dredging operations through the navigation program, and boating operations on waters associated with USACE projects. Signs to regulate vessel operation in areas inhabited by manatees include requirements to operate at idle speed, shutting down if manatees are within a certain distance of the vessel, and reporting any injured manatees to appropriate jurisdictional agencies.

**HABITAT NEEDS:** As noted by the USFWS, the manatee's principal stronghold in the US is Florida; however, the species is considered a seasonal inhabitant of several other states.

- Manatees are commonly found in fresh, brackish, or marine water habitats such as shallow coastal bays, lagoons, estuaries, and inland rivers of varying salinity.
- They feed along grass bed margins with access to deep water channels; they cannot tolerate temperatures below 68°F for extended periods of time.

**Appearance:** Adult manatees average 9-10 feet in length and weigh about 1,000 pounds. Some individuals have been recorded at lengths greater than 13 feet and weighing as much as 3,500 pounds. (USFWS) Typically greyish brown in color, they have sparse hairs spread across their bodies, with bristles about the muzzle. (USFWS)

*Photos: USFWS, National Wildlife Foundation*

*Natural Resource Management (NRM)*

*This fact sheet has been prepared as an unofficial publication of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). This online publication is produced to provide its readers information about best management practices related to special status species. Editorial views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Mention of specific vendors does not constitute endorsement by the Department of the Army or any element thereof.*



**USACE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ROLE:** According to the Engineering Research and Development Center's Threatened and Endangered Species Team Cost Estimates, the USACE has expended over \$13 million since 2006 on efforts related to the West Indian manatee which include over \$3 million in the Environmental Stewardship Business Line alone. Additionally, costs associated with this species have been incurred by the Regulatory, Planning and Program Management, Flood Risk Management, and Navigation Business Lines.

**WHAT IS USACE NRM DOING:** With a geographic range that spreads along the Gulf and southern portions of the Atlantic Coast, three projects that support an NRM mission reported the occurrence of the West Indian Manatee as part of the FY20 NRM Assessment.

The West Indian Manatee has common occurrences in South Atlantic Division's Central and Southern Florida Project and the Okeechobee Waterway. Additionally, Mississippi Valley Division's Bonnet Carre' Spillway has the potential for species occurrence.

USACE consults with the Service on actions that may impact the species. For example, in the Jacksonville District, USACE has engaged with the service on permitted actions for watercraft access facilities (e.g., docks, boat ramps, and marinas) in areas that are inhabited by the Florida manatee.

# CAUTION MANATEE HABITAT

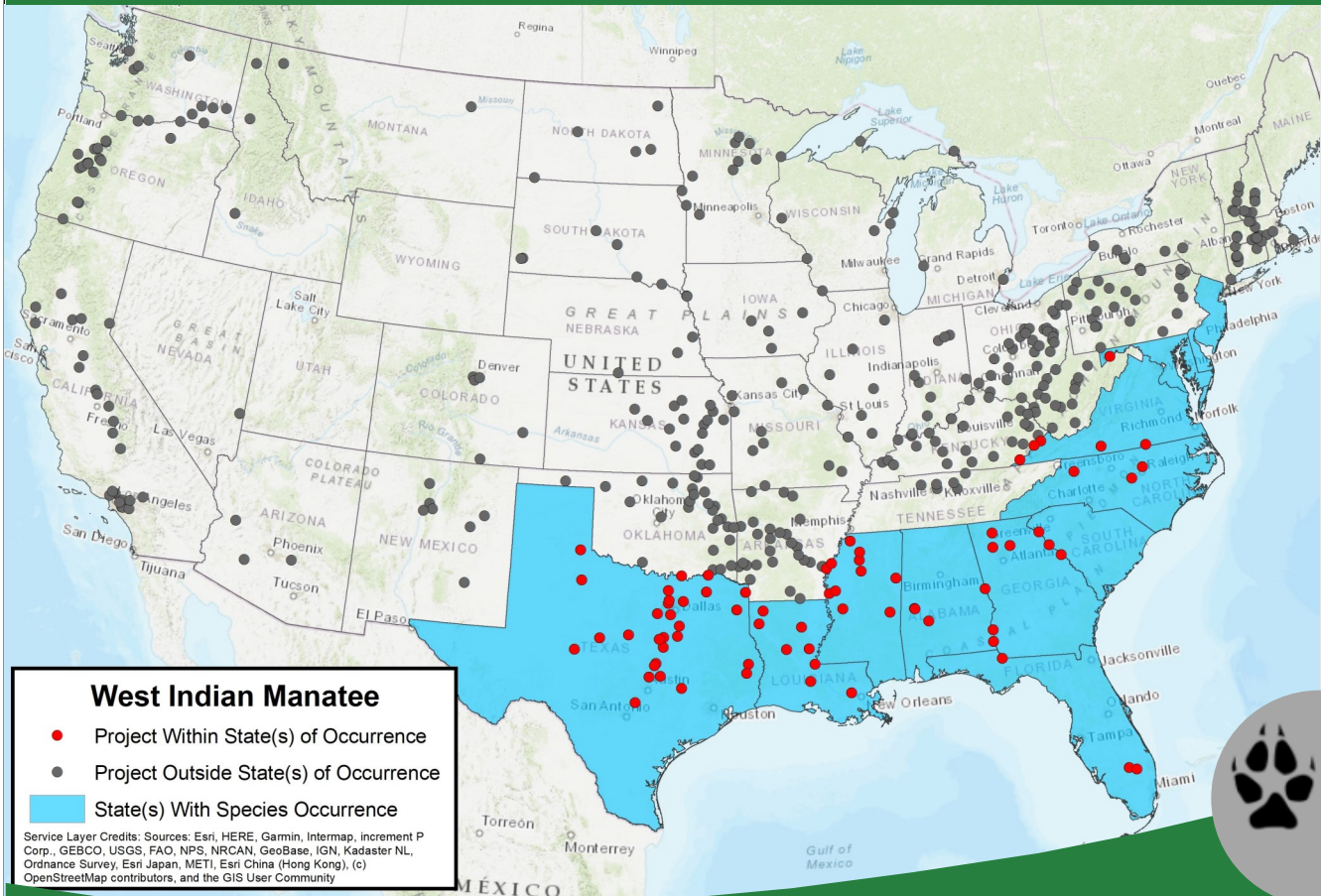


**IDLE SPEED IS REQUIRED IF OPERATING A VESSEL IN THE CONSTRUCTION AREA.**

**ALL EQUIPMENT MUST BE SHUTDOWN IF A MANATEE COMES WITHIN 50 FEET OF OPERATION.**

**ANY COLLISION WITH AND/OR INJURY TO A MANATEE SHALL BE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY TO THE FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION AT 1-888-404-FWCC (3922)**

*Image Above: An example sign posted in manatee occupied waters regarding vessel operation.*



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 Source: Map provided by Ashleigh Boss, ORISE Fellow, Institute for Water Resources

