

## UME Weekly Update: 4/7/2022

The Joint Unified Command (UC) is scaling down operations to a spring and summer response mode. However, a core group of staff will remain active for future planning and contingency response. This Atlantic Coast Manatee Unusual Mortality Event (UME) is an ongoing event, and all agencies and partners remain committed to our collective response.

The supplemental feeding trial at the Temporary Field Response Station ended on March 31. With warmer water temperatures most of the manatees have naturally dispersed from their warm water refuges. The number of manatees visiting the site continues to decrease since feeding stopped last week; for example, on Saturday, April 2, staff observed 40 manatees, but by Tuesday, April 6, they only saw six animals. Staff will continue to monitor manatees at the site to watch for distressed animals.

Even though the UC winter enhanced support operations are scaling down, agency staff, volunteers, and our many partners within the Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP) will continue to work tirelessly to rescue and care for manatees needing help.

With limited space at critical care facilities this winter, the MRP partners, the FWC, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service worked to strategically move animals among the partner facilities to keep valuable space available and two new facilities joined the partnership. As of this week, there are 87 manatees in rehabilitation (19 of these have been identified as UME-related rescues) at 14 critical care or rehabilitation/holding facilities: 71 in Florida, 2 in Georgia, 12 in Ohio, 1 in Texas and 1 in Puerto Rico. Of this total, 14 animals are considered non-releasable, and the remainder should be able to be returned to the wild following rehabilitation.

The UC encourages people to continue reporting sick, injured or dead manatees to the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-3922 so trained experts can respond and assess the situation. People should never push a stranded marine mammal back into the water.

The FWC and partners will continue to work on habitat related projects to help support manatees and other wildlife. [Learn more.](#)

The UC thanks the many partners, including the MRP, who assisted with this season's UME Response. The UC is also grateful to the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida and the 1,387 individuals from around the world who donated \$168,160 for the UME response including the purchase of Florida grown produce used in the manatee temporary feeding trial.

As of April 7, updates to this page will shift from weekly to monthly throughout the summer and early fall season. Rescue and mortality data will continue to be updated weekly.

### Statewide Rescues:

4/5 - A female manatee calf, who was rescued in Fort Lauderdale in February 2020 and was rehabilitated at Miami Seaquarium, was released near Port Everglades a few months ago. After observations of poor

adaptation to the wild and continued weight loss, FWC and Clearwater Marine Aquarium staff rescued her on April 5 and transported her to SeaWorld for additional care.

**Statewide Releases:**

Numerous releases are planned for the near future. This week a single animal from SeaWorld will be released in the North Palm Beach area. Next week two animals are scheduled for release: one from ZooTampa will be released in the Fort Myers area, and another from Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens will be released in the Big Pine Key area. Additional releases are expected in subsequent weeks as animals are cleared by the veterinarians.