

Monthly Manatee UME Update

July 2022

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) continue to collaborate on the response to the manatee unusual mortality event occurring along the Atlantic Coast. The Service and FWC Unified Command priorities focus on manatee rescue and rehabilitation, carcass recovery and necropsy, the UME investigation, the Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership, and enhancing external communications.

An overarching, multifaceted investigation of the declared UME is ongoing and informed by multiple response, research and monitoring efforts. Similar to last year, carcass numbers decreased in spring as manatees are no longer experiencing the additional stressor of cold and have been able to move to areas where forage is more available. The FWC continues to document findings of chronic malnutrition in manatees and that is expected to persist as long as there is a seagrass shortage in the Indian River Lagoon. Other health threats like watercraft-related injuries remain a concern.

FWC biologists continue to respond to manatees in need of rescue and FWC law enforcement officers are continuing enhanced patrols and response to the areas with the highest concentrations of manatees.

As of July 19, 2022, there are 87 manatees in rehabilitation at 14 critical care or rehabilitation/holding facilities. Of these, there are 71 in Florida, 2 in Georgia, 12 in Ohio, 1 in Texas and 1 in Puerto Rico. All but 15 of these animals are considered releasable and are slated for return to the wild following rehabilitation.

We encourage 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.