

Weekly Update: April 5, 2023

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 overarching, multifaceted UME investigation is ongoing and informed by multiple response, research and monitoring efforts. The total number of manatee deaths and mortality from starvation were much lower this winter compared to previous years. However, FWC researchers expect findings of chronic malnutrition in manatees to persist along the Atlantic coast so long as there remains a seagrass shortage in the Indian River Lagoon.

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 [Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership](#), who assisted with this season's UME Response. The UC is also grateful to the [Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida](#) and the 1,273 individuals from around the world who donated almost \$135,000 for the UME response, including the purchase of Florida grown produce used in the supplemental feeding trial.

As of April 5, 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.

Updates

The Temporary Field Response Station and UC Command Center for the 2022-2023 winter season is now demobilized as the supplemental feeding trial was ended on March 17.

Because manatees can be challenging to detect when they are underwater, operators of boats and personal watercraft need to be extra vigilant. This is especially important during seasonal periods when manatees are on the move to warm-water sites in winter. People can help protect manatees by following these simple guidelines:

- Wear polarized sunglasses to help spot manatees.
- Avoid boating in shallow areas where manatees graze on seagrass.
- Look for a snout sticking out of the water or large circles on the water, also known as manatee footprints, indicating the presence of a manatee below.
- Observe posted manatee zones while boating.

We encourage people to [report sick, injured or dead manatees](#) to the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at [888-404-3922](tel:888-404-3922) so trained experts can respond and assess the situation. People should never push a stranded marine mammal back into the water.