



Save the
Manatee®
Club

2022 Highlights & Accomplishments

Save the Manatee® Club (SMC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit conservation organization established in 1981 by singer/songwriter Jimmy Buffett and former Florida Governor and U.S. Senator Bob Graham. Our mission is to protect imperiled manatees and their aquatic habitat for future generations. To accomplish its mission, SMC works closely with federal, state, and local governments, as well as with the public at the grassroots level, and supports policies that are based on the best scientific data available. SMC raises public awareness; educates; conducts research; sponsors rescue, rehabilitation, and release efforts; supports land acquisition; promotes aquatic habitat protection; advocates for improved protection measures; and assists education and conservation efforts in other countries.

Conservation & Advocacy

- Created and strengthened partnerships with agencies, universities, and non-profits along the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) to support restoration and conservation of critical manatee habitat.
- Committed funding to Marine Resource Council's (MRC) IRL Report Card, the Seagrass Symposium, the Florida Oceanographic Society for expansion of their Citizen Science Seagrass Network, and for a Seagrass Assembly to gather practitioners and scientists working to restore seagrasses in the IRL.
- With partners, defended the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act. Filed suit against the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for failing to consult with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on water quality standards that negatively impact manatees. Petitioned FWS to relist the manatee as endangered.
- With partners, negotiated with FWS to ensure that Manatee Critical Habitat will be properly defined to account for biological suitability by 2024.
- Certified three new operators under the Guardian Guides Program, a manatee stewardship certification and education program offered to Florida ecotourism providers who commit to not touch or disturb manatees.
- Partnered with the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension Program and Get Up & Go Weeki Wachee to create a volunteer program to reduce manatee harassment on the Weeki Wachee River. A similar program is under development for the Ocala National Forest.
- Partnered with the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to develop and install new signage to discourage harassment and to create manatee-safe boating materials for Florida Boating Safety Course providers.
- Worked in close cooperation with federal, state, and local governments to ensure that Manatee Protection Plans and rules were followed and improved.
- Expanded Manatee Sighting Network by partnering with Alachua County, FL and residents living along the Weeki Wachee River, and promoting the effort at outreach events. Provided sighting data to FWC, FWS, and others to support manatee rescue and conservation efforts. SMC's sighting form received over 300 sighting submissions in 2022.
- Worked as a principal partner in the coalition to restore the Great Florida Riverway, which includes the Ocklawaha



SMC's Manatee Biologist, Tiare Fridrich, participates in a seagrass planting effort organized by the Florida Oceanographic Society.

River, the Silver River, and over 20 springs impounded by the Rodman Dam.

- Collaborated with conservation partners to support fight against poorly-planned toll road expansions in Florida.
- Tracked legislation and rule development and engaged with law makers to ensure that new regulations do not further harm manatees and their habitat.
- Continued reviews of and comments on a variety of marina development projects in important manatee habitat; held applicants and agencies accountable under manatee- and habitat protection laws.

International & Interstate Conservation

- Collaborated with Wildtracks, Belize's only manatee rehabilitation facility. Sent funds, supplies, and essential equipment, much of it donated by SMC supporters, to assist their rescue and rehabilitation efforts.
- Provided funding to the Fundación Internacional para la Naturaleza y la Sustentabilidad (FINS) in Quintana Roo, Mexico to support the rehabilitation and release of rescued manatees and a local education initiative.
- Provided funding to the Rainforest Awareness and Education Center of Peru for expansion of their manatee rehabilitation facility and the 2023 releases of rescued manatees.
- Supplied donated goods and materials to manatee rescue and rehabilitation centers in Florida, and funding from the Adopt-A-Manatee® program to Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL) to support protection of manatees in Alabama and around the Gulf Coast.
- Provided data on manatees sighted out of state to FWS to help with coordination of rescues, and data occurring west of the Florida Panhandle to DISL.



SMC's Director of Multimedia & Manatee Research Associate Cora Berchem assists at a manatee release.

Rescue, Rehabilitation, & Release

- Worked to ensure continued funding for Florida's Critical Care Program so that sick, injured, and orphaned manatees could be rescued, rehabilitated, and returned to the wild.
- Assisted with, and documented, several manatee rescues and releases and participated in various committees of the Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP).
- Continued our pro-bono role of Fiduciary Agent for the MRP to manage all finances and contracts, and committed to provide emergency matching funds for critically-needed manatee rescue activities.
- Supported drone work and aerial surveys in the IRL to identify manatees in need of rescue and assist with seagrass surveys and manatee distribution surveys.

Research

- Continued decades-long genealogy research on manatees wintering at Blue Spring State Park and shared data with other manatee researchers and scientists. Recorded a record number of manatees for a single day (721).
- Continued summer manatee sighting research at Blue Spring State Park.
- Participated in the Blue Spring Interagency Working Group and participated in several aquatic vegetation surveys along the St. Johns River.
- Utilized webcams at Blue Spring and Homosassa to contribute to state-wide scar ID research and to monitor manatees of concern.

Education & Outreach

- Increased public awareness about manatees via webcams at Blue Spring State Park and Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park, in partnership with [explore.org](https://www.explore.org/).
- Produced 11 new educational videos, including translating and re-recording five existing videos into Spanish.
- Hosted free webinars on Manatee Research, Manatees and Florida's Springs, and Manatees and Seagrass.
- Distributed free public awareness materials to shoreline

property owners, boaters, parks, marinas, tour operators, and nature centers. Coordinated marina outreach day in collaboration with Volusia County.

- Provided on-demand information to the public via our website, social media, e-newsletter *Paddle Tales* and member newsletter *The Manatee Zone*.
- Created and distributed public service announcements for print and online media, radio and TV outlets, and billboards.
- Wrote and distributed press releases on manatee issues. Served as expert sources for local, national, and international journalists, including providing on-camera interviews and information, data, photos, and video to news outlets.
- Conducted dozens of in-person and virtual presentations for community organizations, schools, and other groups.
- Conducted outreach at festivals and events throughout the State of Florida, including major events like the Florida Manatee Festival, Blue Spring Manatee Festival, and ManateeFest at Manatee Lagoon.
- SMC volunteers logged thousands of hours at festivals and events, cleanups, presentations, and more.
- Continued to co-lead the Manatee Observer Volunteer Program at Blue Spring State Park to prevent manatee harassment during the summer months.

Membership & Development

- Introduced a new manatee, Zelda, into our Adopt-A-Manatee program
- Continued the integration and advancement of our online technologies, improving efficiencies and providing our members a more personal and interactive experience.
- Added thousands of new donors, manatee adopters, volunteers, and online supporters and advocates to our growing manatee community.
- Worked with dozens of caring individuals, students, and small businesses to host peer-to-peer fundraisers through their various creative endeavors.
- Provided funding to several partners and groups for various conferences, research efforts, and conservation projects.
- Hosted several successful fundraisers throughout the year.

SMC volunteer Tatiana speaks with attendees at SpringsFest at Silver Springs State Park.

