

Save the Manatee® Club

The Voice for Manatees Since 1981

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. SMC's mission is to protect endangered 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 grass roots 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.

2015 Highlights of Activities & Accomplishments

Conservation and Advocacy

With the help of our supporters and diverse grass roots network, we work in virtually every area of manatee conservation.

In 2015, SMC:



*Dr. Katie Tripp gives a public presentation on the importance of protecting Florida's waterways.
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- Continued multifaceted scientific and advocacy efforts to resist efforts to remove protections for manatees and their habitat afforded by the Endangered Species Act.
- Obtained widespread media coverage on the outstanding problems facing manatees and their habitat that the U.S. Fish &

Wildlife Service must solve before reclassifying the species.

- Led the fight for stronger manatee protections in Kings Bay/Crystal River, including to: make Three Sisters Springs a true winter sanctuary; create more winter sanctuaries for resting manatees; implement a no-touch policy to curb harassment; improve water quality.
- Intervened on the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's behalf in the Pacific Legal Foundation's rule challenge against boat speed zones in Western Pinellas County.
- Advocated for stronger protection measures within the Flagler County Manatee Protection Plan.
- Worked on the Florida Springs Council's 2016 Springs Conference. Dr. Katie Tripp, Director of Science and Conservation, is Chair of the Education and Communications Committee and a member of the Legal and Legislative Committees.
- Pressed for additional safeguards related to coastal development and consumptive use permit applications within important manatee habitat.
- Engaged our grassroots network to take timely action on critical initiatives affecting manatees and their habitat.
- Advocated for the Florida Legislature to honor 2014's Water and Land Conservation Amendment by funding Florida Forever, a land-buying initiative, protecting natural springs, and restoring the Everglades.
- Urged the Florida Department of Environmental Protection

(FDEP) to include stronger protective measures in their Silver Springs Basin Management Action Plan.

- Participated in the Southwest Florida Water Management District's Technical Working Group to develop a Surface Water Improvement Management Plan for Kings Bay in Citrus County, and advocated for improved water quality standards within the Plan.
- Provided technical comments on the Central Florida Water Initiative urging water planning agencies to place conservation at the forefront of their plans.
- Submitted technical comments to the federal Surface Transportation Board on cargo shipping from Port Canaveral that could negatively affect the already stressed Indian River Lagoon.
- Provided technical input on the FDEP's proposed updates to state Surface Water Quality Standards during the triennial review process.
- Worked to eliminate placement of the National Marine Manufacturer's Miami Boat Show in sensitive manatee habitat in Biscayne Bay.

Education and Public Awareness

SMC's extensive education and outreach efforts have grown tremendously over the years with the help of our supporters and volunteers.

In 2015, SMC:

- Distributed free public awareness materials such as banners and dock signs to shoreline residents throughout Florida; waterproof manatee protection tip cards to boaters; boat decals featuring Florida's hotline number for reporting manatees in trouble; and other educational materials.
- Developed the Blue Spring Adventurers Program bringing two hundred 3rd through 5th graders within the springshed to Blue Spring State Park for educational field trips, and creating new stewards for the spring.
- Raised global awareness about manatees and springs habitat through our very popular webcams at Blue Spring State Park, accumulating more than 15.1 million viewer minutes since the webcams were installed in



*SMC volunteers table at the annual Blue Spring Manatee Festival.
© Save the Manatee Club*

2011, and over 1.7 million viewer minutes in 2015.

- Created, produced, and distributed 3 new radio and television public service announcements to educate the public about threats to the manatee's survival, including cold weather, entanglement, and boat collisions.
- Distributed a wide variety of educational materials to the public and information to the media, including public service messages, press releases, radio spots, OpEds, and press advisories.
- Coordinated 68 events and 13 educational presentations with SMC volunteers. Our Corps of Volunteers has grown to over 2,277 people, many from out-of-state and from other countries.
- Worked with the BBC, Oxford Scientific Films, and others on educational programming, and gave interviews to numerous newspapers and magazines including Reuters, the Washington Post, AAA Journey Magazine, and Mother Jones that educated people worldwide.
- Produced 46 videos that we uploaded to YouTube where we had over 161,000 video views. The videos covered a variety of conservation issues, and included Meet the Manatees of Blue Spring and Manatees and Alligators.
- Developed live-streaming educational events, which will start in 2016, for school classes and civic groups, introducing participants to aquifers, springs, and spring-sheds, and emphasizing building community advocacy for these priceless resources.

International Conservation

SMC has helped to conserve manatee populations in Central and South America, in West Africa, and beyond, by supporting local education and conservation efforts. This support is dedicated to helping improve the lives of manatees, and of the local residents. In 2015, SMC:

- Provided monetary support as well as supplies such as baby formula for the care of orphaned manatees at Wildtracks, the only manatee rehabilitation facility in Belize.
- Provided satellite tracking equipment to monitor the whereabouts and status of the orphan manatee, known as Rameses, after his release from the rehabilitation facility.
- Helped empower women in Sarteneja, Belize by purchasing handmade crafts, created with sustainable materials, for our gift catalog. Proceeds from SMC's sales of these crafts fund local conservation work in Belize.
- Collaborated with the Tropical Research and Conservation Center in Nigeria to train villagers in manatee conservation and stewardship, sustainable watershed practices, environmental monitoring, and cooperative snail farming to end manatee poaching.



*An orphaned manatee calf is bottle-fed after his rescue.
Photo Courtesy of Wildtracks*

Research

Over the years, SMC has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in cooperative research projects. Armed with scientific data, SMC has won new protections for manatees and their aquatic habitat. In 2015, SMC:



*Manatee Specialist Wayne Hartley completes his rounds at BSSP.
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- Continued decades-long research on the manatees at Blue Spring during the winter months, recording births, new scars, behaviors, duration of manatee visits, and manatee interactions.
- Utilized Blue Spring webcams to identify and record visiting manatees and aspects of their health.
- Participated in the annual statewide synoptic survey by counting manatees at Blue Spring.
- Recorded 479 individual manatees, including 49 calves at Blue Spring during the 2014/2015 winter season. Both of these were the second highest numbers ever recorded.
- Provided peer review for academic articles and reports related to manatee health, biology, and conservation.

Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Release

As a charter member of the Manatee Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP), SMC was instrumental in establishing MRP and appreciates all its partners' efforts on the manatees' behalf. SMC has a long history of participating in and supporting manatee rescue, rehabilitation, and release efforts, including donations of equipment, such as boats, nets, and tracking devices. Our goal is to ensure that each manatee has the best chance of surviving an injury or illness, and every orphan has the best chance of being rescued, cared for, and returned to the wild.

In 2015, SMC:

- Spearheaded efforts that led to increased funding of Florida's Critical Care Program so that sick, injured, and orphaned manatees could be rescued, rehabilitated, and returned to the wild.
- Assisted with the documentation, evaluation, and tagging of manatees who might be injured or orphaned for possible rescue efforts at Blue Spring.
- Continued leadership roles in the Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership with our Director of Science & Conservation completing her term as the group's Chair, and transitioning into a role as the Chair of the Monitoring Committee. Additionally, our Executive Director serves as the Finance Chair and our Director of Online Communications helps to maintain a portion of MRP's website.
- Provided critical funding and supplies donated by SMC supporters to partner rehabilitation facilities to ensure they have the tools necessary to care for manatees in need.

