

# 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 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 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.

## 2017 Highlights of Activities and Accomplishments

### Conservation and Advocacy

***With the help of our supporters and diverse grassroots network, we work in virtually every area of manatee conservation. In 2017, SMC:***

- Objected to the unwarranted removal of crucial manatee protections afforded by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). SMC provided comprehensive science-based advocacy efforts and legal analysis of numerous federal laws, rules, and statutes.
- Advised supporters on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's action to downlist manatees. We expressed our opposition through press releases, and interviews. We also produced a video explaining why the downlisting was premature and outlined actions citizens could take.
- Continued to advocate for stronger manatee protections in Kings Bay/Crystal River via enhancement and expansion of



*Dr. Katie Tripp, speaking with a journalist concerning the recent harmful algae blooms in Florida*

- sanctuary protections, a strict "hands-off" policy, comprehensive bay-wide management improvements, and water supply and water quality improvements.
- Collaborated with the Manatee Eco Tourism Association of Citrus County to launch the pilot program, Guardian Guides, a set of guidelines developed to protect manatees from human harassment during tourism activities.
- Rallied national, state, and local supporters to act on numerous issues supporting the ESA and opposing cuts in funding for imperiled species.
- Submitted science-based comments regarding water quality and water supply that could affect manatee habitat, including extensive involvement with the creation of a Reasonable Assurance Plan for the Mosquito Lagoon and development of the Volusia Blue Spring Basin Management Action Plan.
- Provided comments on the Ichetucknee State Park Unit Management Plan, Three Sisters Upland Environmental Assessment, and Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan.
- Authored bi-monthly articles for the *Chiefland Citizen* on topical conservation issues.
- Served as a representative of the Springs Education Committee on the Florida Springs Council.

- Worked with partner organizations on the Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Partnership website and the online petition and website for the Floridians' Clean Water Declaration.
- Successfully advocated for the development of a Collier County speed zone review, which will help reduce manatee injuries and fatalities in these busy waterways.
- Presented as invited speakers at several conferences, symposiums, and educational meetings.
- Initiated the Rose Bay Living Shoreline Project in east Volusia County. The project endeavors to create the first community-wide living shoreline and create a model for community-driven habitat management.



*Volunteers help plant mangrove seeds as part of the living shorelines project*

### International and Interstate Conservation

***We have helped to conserve manatee populations around the globe by supporting local education and conservation efforts to improve the lives of manatees and local residents. In 2017, SMC:***

- Continued collaboration with Dauphin Island Sea Lab's Manatee Sighting Network in Alabama and produced a short video about manatees in Alabama.
- Continued collaboration and funding throughout the West African manatee's habitat in Nigeria, including the growth of an alternative livelihoods program, providing manatee poachers with a sustainable and legal alternative to taking manatees.
- Continued collaborative efforts with Wildtracks, Belize's only manatee rehabilitation facility. Sent funds, supplies, and essential equipment to assist their rescue and rehabilitation needs.
- Assisted the Puerto Rico Manatee Conservation Center in raising critical funds needed to repair damage sustained by Hurricane Maria.
- Continued work in Brazil, Cameroon, Cuba, and other areas where manatees reside.



*Villagers in Nigeria proudly participating in the alternative livelihoods program*

## Rescue, Rehabilitation, and Release

**SMC appreciates all its partners' efforts on the manatees' behalf. Our goal is to ensure that each manatee has the best chance of surviving an injury or illness, and returning to the wild. In 2017, SMC:**

- Continued efforts to protect the 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 post-release monitoring.
- Continued to actively support the work of the Manatee Rescue and Rehabilitation Partnership, whose goal is to rescue and treat sick or injured manatees and release them back into the wild.
- Continued growing the Blue Spring Manatee Observer Volunteer Group to prevent manatee harassment.



SMC, along with other agencies, participates in manatee health assessments at Crystal River

- Provided feedback to authors of manatee publications.
- Created and distributed public service announcements (PSAs) for the national print media, magazines, newspapers, blogs, websites, and radio and TV stations.
- Coordinated multiple events and educational presentations with dedicated SMC volunteers.
- Published and distributed a wide variety of free educational materials to teachers, students, parks, environmental groups, libraries, government agencies, and others.
- Continued our distribution of free public awareness materials such as signs for shoreline property owners, and banners, tips cards, and decals for boaters, featuring a number to report sick or injured manatees.



SMC volunteer, Trinket Mason, interacts with the public at one of many outreach events

## Research

**Over the years, SMC has supported numerous cooperative research projects. Accurate and current data are essential tools that help when advocating for new or continued protections for manatees and their aquatic habitat. In 2017, SMC:**

## Education and Public Awareness

**Our extensive education and outreach efforts have grown impressively over the years with help from our supporters and volunteers. In 2017, SMC:**

- Launched our newly-designed website. The new site is secure, mobile friendly, and easier to navigate, which will help to educate more people about manatees.
- Increased public awareness about manatees through our Blue Spring State Park Manatee Webcams, along with reports by Manatee Specialist Wayne Hartley.
- Produced over 40 educational videos that can be viewed on our growing YouTube channel.
- Hosted several online manatee educational programs for school classrooms through Skype.
- Educated the public through the *Paddle Tales* eNewsletter, which features current manatee news, educational features, photos, video, activities, and manatee Q & A.
- Answered questions from students and educators, including robotics groups participating in the *FIRST LEGO League's* STEM competition to design manatee protection devices.
- Responded to numerous footage and interview requests from the media.



Students enjoy one of SMC's many Skype in the Classroom sessions

- Continued decades-long observations on the Blue Spring manatees, and shared data such as scar sheets and genealogies with manatee researchers and scientists.
- Received WKMG's "Getting Results Award." The television station created a video on SMC's Wayne Hartley that was aired in the Central Florida area and featured on their website.
- Participated in the statewide synoptic and abundance survey, held annually to obtain a minimum count of manatees in Florida.
- Utilized webcams and on-site observations for manatee research and health checks in Blue Spring State Park.



SMC Manatee Specialist Wayne Hartley and Manatee Research Specialist Cora Berchem during a morning roll call at Blue Spring

## Membership and Development

**As we continue to grow as an organization, we work diligently to ensure operations run as efficiently and cost effectively as possible. In 2017, SMC:**

- Made possible by caring legacy benefactors, continued the integration of our membership and accounting programs and advancements in our online technologies.
- Added thousands of new donors, manatee adopters, volunteers, and online supporters and advocates to our growing manatee community.



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