

FLORIDA FISH & WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION:

Notwithstanding multiple valid reasons not to accept the Save the Manatee Club settlement agreement advanced by the FMCA president and Executive Director, the Commission accepted the agreement on April 19th at the meeting in Orlando. Scores of other organizations and individuals spoke against acceptance of the agreement. The official minutes of the meeting delineate the Marine Industry Association of Florida as “not for or against the settlement agreement.” This was a great disappointment, as MIAF chaired the Joint Manatee Strategy Committee organized at the insistence of the FMCA to develop a uniform and disciplined strategy. It was a case of divide and conquer.

We joined others in successfully getting the Commission to direct its staff to reevaluate the Manatee Recovery Plan. The Plan now calls for manatee growth to infinity and completely discounts numerical population growth. FMCA is following implementation of this directive and recommended that Dr. Tom Fraser be included on the review task force. Tom has done a very erudite study proving that the manatee is not, and never has been, endangered and has never faced extinction. Regrettably, Dr. Allan Egbert, FF&WCC Executive Director, placed the review in the hands of his appointed Manatee Technical Advisory Committee. This group of nine is largely composed of directors or members of the plaintiff groups, including the Save the Manatee Club. Tom Fraser has only been permitted to address the Committee. A set up, you bet.

In another development, the Executive Office of the Governor entered into a verbal agreement with the FMCA and others that if the state agreement were accepted the Governor would be able to get the egregious Manatee Interim Guidance Document scrubbed. We are following this matter with great interest. In six weeks there has been no announcement. This could spell some real relief from the federal and state bureaucratic attack on our industry and past cowering to the Save the Manatee Club.