

**Collier County Local Review Committee**  
**Chairman's Opening Report**  
**April 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting**

It is with a lot of humility and a little bit of fear that I accepted the nomination to Chair this committee. Having been involved in manatee issues since the mid 80's, I am familiar with most of the types of data sets that we will be working with, and the size of our task. I also know the time and effort that it will take to see this endeavor through. The information load is daunting, and we have one chance to get it right.

I also know the penchant the press has to look for confrontational dialogue, and am familiar with their record for "picking sides" in any environmental issue. Hopefully, we will disappoint them. Everyone in this room is here because they care about the environment, and I know we can make proactive educated decisions. This may bring some of us out of our comfort zones from time to time. But hopefully, we can do this without a lot of theatrics.

For those not familiar with this type of regulatory process, it has ramifications that reach farther than the canal in your backyard, or in your region. Decisions that we make will impact the livelihoods of fishing guides, commercial fishermen, their families, and the folks that they do business with. Decisions we make will have impacts on waterfront businesses in some areas of the County. And, decisions we make will have impacts on recreational opportunities for many boaters that may or may not even know the waterways in your region.

That being said however, it is your duty to get to know *their* regions well, and be able to make informed decisions – even if you don't plan to ever visit these areas.

***Our reason for being here is to protect manatees.*** And in doing so - represent Collier County residents in the review of our current Manatee Protection Plan. The ability to participate is a gift given to us by the State of Florida under legislation introduced by former Representative Lindsay Harrington and then Senator, now Congressman, Bill Posey. Governor Jeb Bush signed the bill into law.

The intent of the legislation was to give local waterway users an opportunity to participate proactively in the process of waterway regulation. Their local knowledge and "Feet on the Ground" experience is an invaluable tool that should be utilized by regulatory Staff to develop meaningful and lasting rules that will work, and breed understanding and compliance from the public.

There are problems on the waterways in Collier County. But when we discuss those problems, the first question that we will ask ourselves is, "is this a manatee issue?" We are not here to discuss HOA desires for specific boating regulations that are not manatee related. We are not here to discuss boating safety issues that are not manatee related. We do not have that authority, nor do we have the time to go there.

As well, we are neither a "growth-control" nor a "social engineering" committee. We are not here to favor paddlers over fishermen, or to favor fishermen over property owners. We are here to discuss and attempt to minimize watercraft collisions with manatees, and balance that protection with the statutory right of boaters to access their waterways in a legal and environmentally safe manner.

Collier County's waters are vast, and include multi-jurisdictional oversight with the Department of Environmental Protection / Florida Parks, the National Park Service, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. We also will be working with Collier County Staff, and the Cities of Naples, Marco Island, Goodland, and Everglades City.

The good going into this process includes some of the information in your packets that we received last week, and the presentation that Mr. Calleson gave at the beginning of our first meeting. On the disc that we reviewed, there is a document called "**Collier County Manatee Protection Plan Rule Review: Preliminary Identification of areas for LRRC Review**".

This document contains the information that shows that manatee mortality as a result of boat collisions has declined in Collier County. Over the past 6 years, FWRI data shows that manatee mortality as related to boat collisions dropped significantly from the previous decade. With the human population having more than doubled, and vessel registrations having increased by more than 7,700 during the same time period, that says a lot about our current Manatee Protection Plan, and the current zones that are in place.

During that same time period, the State-wide manatee population synoptic survey count has increased from 2,223 to 6,250 – a jump of 280%.

This says that the folks who drafted this plan did their homework, and they got it right. It works. The good news here is that we do not have to re-invent the wheel, and start from scratch.


On the other hand, non-human related manatee deaths have accounted for 83.7% of the total mortality over the past 6 years. Though, as a Committee we are not empowered to visit those issues, it is worthy of note none-the-less.

If we are unsuccessful as a Committee, FFWCC can develop their own regulation without our input, and we will have to take what we are given. My wish is that we can proceed from the North end of the County to the 10,000 islands reviewing zones as we go, and come to realistic and necessary changes only if and where needed.

With a declining boat-related manatee mortality number currently, we could very easily change that trend with errant or abrupt changes to the current plan. Or, we could negate a decade and a half's worth of public buy-in and cooperation by placing un-necessary zones where they are not needed.

As a former marine contractor, marina manager, and a current licensed U.S. Coast Guard Master, I follow the manatee mortality statistics on a regular basis. I knew that mortalities due to boat collisions were on the decline in Collier County, and I'd hoped that this review Committee may not be necessary. But, here we are. I will make a pledge, and I would ask each of you to do the same, to put science and the environment above political, social, or regional bias, and come up with a reasonable plan to submit without too much for the press to get excited about.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Kalvin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Capt. James Kalvin