

Capt. Mark Ward

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May 18, 2016

Mr. James Kalvin, Chairman
Collier County Local Rule Review Committee

Dear Mr. Kalvin and LRRC Committee Members,

I've recently learned the LRRC is evaluating the use of permits for professional fishing guides and commercial fisherman in certain areas allowing them to run 20 mph through certain manatee slow speed zones.

I've been a USCG licensed captain since the mid 80's and have been guiding in SW Florida since then. These permits are critical for us to access certain areas for us to fish. Many times the weather, tides and target species dictate that we fish specific areas. Without those permits these areas would simply be too far to go.

It is vital that the FWC continue the use if these permits for the fishing guides in the waters around Isle of Capri, Johnson Bay, Addison Bay and waters around Marco Island.

The service that the fishing guides in SW Florida provide to locals and visitors is economically important and I believe is not recognized. For example just this week and last I had two different groups of anglers fly down specifically to fish with me. They stay at local hotels, dine at local restaurants, shop etc. We want to do everything we can to make there trip as successful as possible.

The guides in this area are extremely hard working, knowledgeable and conscientious. We know where the manatees like to frequent, which bays and what areas of those bays. We avoid these areas or adjust our speed accordingly. In addition 20 mph avoids all incidents.

I implore you to continue the use of these permits.

Sincerely yours,

Capt. Mark Ward

CC: Mr. Scott Calleson, FWC, Mrs. Donna Fiala, Chairwomen, Collier County Board of County Commissioners