

The Case for Personal Watercraft Use at Biscayne National Park

Personal watercraft have been banned without cause at Biscayne National Park since 2000. This discriminatory ban is based on unproven allegations that personal watercraft (PWC) present a negative impact on the local environment. Recent studies however indicate the opposite—that modern personal watercraft are among the most environmentally friendly motorized vessels on the water. Moreover, no other boats are restricted from the waters of Biscayne National Park; PWC are the only vessels singled-out by this unfair ban. This blatant discrepancy between scientific fact and current regulations calls for immediate action to bring justice to boaters throughout Florida and allow PWC back on the waters of Biscayne National Park.

As a result of remarkable technological advancements made by manufacturers, all PWC sold since 1998 have incorporated emissions controls that make them 75% cleaner and 70% quieter. In addition, PWC operate by water propulsion and have no exposed propeller, which allows these vessels to navigate in shallow waters without adversely affecting sea grasses or coral reefs. Moreover, their excellent maneuverability makes personal watercraft an invaluable tool for law enforcement, search and rescue, and marine mammal research organizations.

In the case of Biscayne Park the ban of PWC is not only unfounded, but also difficult to implement because the park has no physical boundaries that “wall it off” from waters of the Atlantic Ocean. Boaters cannot clearly determine when they travel from waters of the Atlantic Ocean to those of the park. Traversing the park is currently a popular route that is permitted for many other boats: fisherman, pleasure boats, and commercial shipping alike. A simple boat ride through the park, which encompasses 173,000 gross acres of land and water, underscores the irrationality of the PWC ban. Today it is time for the park superintendent and the National Park Service to take a fresh look at personal watercraft use in Biscayne National Park.



The Scientific Process – an Environmental Assessment

The National Park Service requires any park that does not allow personal watercraft to conduct a study called an *Environmental Assessment* to determine the impact of the vessels on the local environment before they can be allowed back on the park's waters. These detailed, objective assessments are commissioned by the National Park Service.

Fifteen national park units have completed the lengthy and thorough environmental assessment process in the past several years and all have found that personal watercraft pose no significant threat to the environment. The results of these studies have led to reauthorization of PWC use in many parks. Objective studies and sound science confirm that there is no scientific reason to discriminate against personal watercraft on waters that allow other types of motorized boating.



We are not asking the new park superintendent, Mark Lewis, to simply welcome PWC back Biscayne National Park. Rather, we ask him to begin an environmental assessment to let sound science decide.

There are nearly 20,000 registered personal watercraft in Dade, Monroe and Broward counties. Thousands of boating families and dozens of dealerships and small businesses are unfairly and adversely impacted by the Biscayne National Park ban.

The Personal Watercraft Industry Association (PWIA – represents manufacturers), the American Watercraft Association (AWA – Association of PWC users and dealers), and the BlueRibbon Coalition (national recreational access group) are original members of the coalition that is advocating for a PWC environmental assessment at Biscayne National Park.

For more information please visit our website at www.boatbiscayne.com. For media inquiries, please call Brian Berry at 202-777-3524.