

1990

## Ocklawaha River Restoration: Manatees

Florida Defenders of the Environment

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/envir\\_publications](https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/envir_publications)

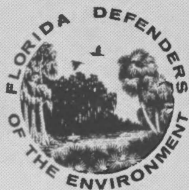
---

### Recommended Citation

Florida Defenders of the Environment, "Ocklawaha River Restoration: Manatees" (1990). *Environment and Natural History Publications*. 24.

[https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/envir\\_publications/24](https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/envir_publications/24)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Environment and Natural History at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Environment and Natural History Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@usf.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@usf.edu).



# OCKLAWAHA RIVER RESTORATION

## MANATEES

### ENDANGERED FLORIDA MANATEES WILL BENEFIT FROM OCKLAWAHA RESTORATION

- Rodman Dam and Buckman Lock are barriers to the movement of manatees into the Ocklawaha River system, including Silver Springs.

- The dam and lock are the main causes of manatee deaths in the area.

- The restored Ocklawaha will provide ideal manatee habitat, contributing to the survival of this endangered species.

After Rodman Dam is removed, the endangered Florida Manatee will once again be allowed to follow its historical migratory pathway up the Ocklawaha River and tributaries. The restored Ocklawaha will provide important habitat for this endangered species.

Since 1968, Rodman Dam and Buckman Lock have blocked passage of manatees into the upper reaches of the Ocklawaha River. The river had been a source of food and shelter for manatees as evidenced by actual sightings and manatee skeletal remains. These manatees traveled from the St. Johns River, which is noted for its use by east coast and resident manatees.

To restore the Ocklawaha River, Rodman Dam will be breached and the barge canal and Buckman Lock closed. Manatees, as well as migratory fish, will again be able to move unhindered into the upper reaches of the river where they feed on native aquatic vegetation and find shelter in the waters of the many springs that line the river. According to a 1997 report by the Florida Bureau of Protected Species Management, "access to the upper Ocklawaha will be granted to manatees only as a result of planned restoration efforts."

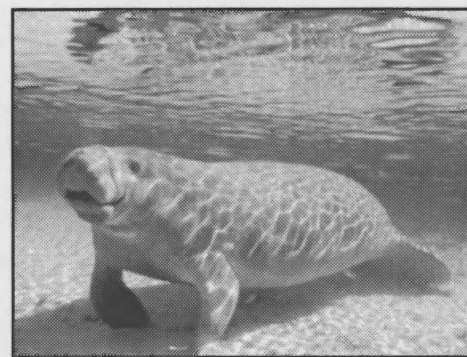


Photo by Alicia Windham-Reid

The dam and lock are more than just barriers to manatees; since 1974, they have crushed or drowned at least nine manatees that tried to pass through these water control mechanisms. Restoration will eliminate use of these structures, removing the leading cause of manatee deaths in the area.

Twenty natural artesian springs were covered by the waters of Rodman Reservoir when the Ocklawaha was impounded. After Rodman is drained and the natural flow of the river restored, these springs will again flow freely back into the Ocklawaha, providing additional habitat for manatees.

Predictions of future manatee use of the river can best be determined by considering surveys of manatees in the area. In 1997, 104 manatees were counted at nearby Blue Springs State Park, quadrupling the 18-25 found between 1971 and 1978. In addition, groups of 4 to 5 manatees frequently have been seen trying to enter Buckman Lock with as many as 28 counted in a single month.

Protecting and restoring the diminishing habitat of the endangered Florida Manatee is vital to the survival of the species. The restored Ocklawaha River should provide ideal manatee habitat. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, restoration "will have a positive effect on the conservation of the manatee."

#### References:

- Lefebvre, Ph.D., Lynn W., "Possible Significance of the Ocklawaha River to the Florida Manatee," U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service .  
Smith, Kent. *The Effects of Restoration of the Ocklawaha River in the Vicinity of the Rodman Basin on Manatees and Manatee Habitat.* Bureau of Protected Species Management, Florida Department of Environmental Protection. July 1997.  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. *FWS Log No. 96-513C: Biological Opinion.* January 6, 1997.