

Questions for the Record
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
Oversight Hearing on FY 2022 Budget
July 21, 2021

Question from Rep. Soto

Question. Mr. Guertin, Florida’s manatee population has seen record breaking deaths this year. Your agency declared an Unusual Mortality Event (UME) to investigate the cause of these deaths. Is your agency also willing to commit to the reclassification of manatee’s from “threatened” to “endangered”?

Response: The Service issued a notice of its intent to initiate an in-depth status assessment on the West Indian manatee. As a part of that notice, the Service requested comments and information from the public and scientific experts to help with that review. This review will inform our next steps on recovery and other actions for the manatee, with due consideration given to the ongoing Unusual Mortality Event and the potential for it to recur. While the West Indian manatee is listed as a threatened species, it does not receive any diminished federal protections compared to those species listed as endangered. Threatened manatees are afforded all protections of the ESA and MMPA, including protected areas and conservation activities.