



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Zoo Working to Save Critically Sick Manatee**

March 21, 2018-- *Jacksonville, FL* – Jacksonville Zoo and Garden's Animal Health staff are working around the clock to save the life of a manatee in the Zoo's Manatee Critical Care Center. The adult male manatee was brought to the Zoo Sunday afternoon showing signs of severe cold stress, dehydration, and a possible blunt-force injury.

Beachgoers reported a beached manatee at Vilano Beach in St. Johns County. Florida Fish and Wildlife (FWC) responded to the call and with the help of FWC's right whale team and St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, loaded the manatee for transport to the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens.

Zoo keepers and hospital staff are closely monitoring the manatee and giving treatments such as fluids, pain medications and antibiotics. The 9'2" adult male is moderately underweight and lethargic. Additionally, the effects of cold stress can further develop over time including skin sloughing and swelling.

Manatee care staff was incredibly worried when he first arrived as he did not appear to submerge and was not eating. As of Wednesday morning, the manatee has begun eating and while he is not out of the woods, Zoo staff is feeling confident the manatee is stable.

"Upon arrival, the manatee was minimally responsive and had some concerning blood work results," said Zoo Veterinarian Meredith Persky. "FWC's quick response time, coupled with the immediate care provided by the Jacksonville Zoo and Garden's Animal Health and manatee husbandry teams, were crucial to his survival during such a critical period. The manatee has started eating on his own and his blood work values are improving, so we are cautiously optimistic that he is heading in the right direction."

The Manatee Critical Care Center currently has two females in residence: Percy, a young female, who was rescued in Jacksonville on December 16, and MJ, who was transferred from SeaWorld on March 8. The juvenile females will stay at the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens for about another year to grow, but the hope is to release the male as soon as he is healthy.

Zoo guests can view the manatees from the Wild Florida loop.

If you see an injured marine animal, you can help by calling the FWC hotline at 1-888-404-3922 or by dialing \*FWC on a cellular device.

B-roll and still photos [Dropbox link](#)

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**About Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens**

For over 100 years, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens has aimed to inspire the discovery and appreciation of wildlife through innovative experiences in a caring environment. Starting in 1914 with an animal collection of one red deer fawn, the Zoo now has more than 2,000 rare and exotic animals and 1,000 species of plants, boasting the largest botanical garden in Northeast Florida. **The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is a nonprofit organization and a portion of every ticket sold goes to the over 45 conservation initiatives Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens supports around the world, and here in NE Florida.** JZG is proud to be an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For more information, visit [jacksonvillezoo.org](http://jacksonvillezoo.org).

### **Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership**

The MRP is a cooperative group of non-profit, private, state, and federal entities who work together to monitor the health and survival of rehabilitated and released manatees. Information about manatees currently being tracked is available at [www.manateerescue.org](http://www.manateerescue.org). The Florida manatee was recently reclassified from endangered to threatened, but is still at risk from both natural and human causes of injury and mortality. Exposure to red tide, cold stress and disease are all natural problems that can affect manatees. Human-caused threats include boat strikes, crushing by floodgates or locks, and entanglement in or ingestion of fishing gear.