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RUBIO, CASSIDY INTRODUCE BILL TO PRESERVE ACCESS TO BISCAYNE NATIONAL PARK AND OTHER PUBLIC WATERS

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Bill Cassidy (R-LA) today introduced the [Preserving Public Access To Public Waters Act](#) (S. 2807) in the Senate. The legislation is a modified version of [H.R. 3310](#), sponsored by Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL-27), and prevents the federal government from restricting public access to marine waters, including Biscayne National Park, without state consent.

If passed, the act will require federal and state agencies to collaborate in the development of plans that restrict access or impose closures in areas where state marine waters and national park boundaries overlap. It will also require the National Park Service to revisit the management plan it proposed for Biscayne National Park in 2015, which ignored state input and included a marine reserve that would prohibit fishing and restrict boating activities.

“Florida’s waters play a key role in the state’s economy. From tourism to commercial fishing to recreational interests, these industries sustain our communities and should be managed by those who know them best. State agencies have specialized knowledge of these waters and should have a seat at the table when major management plans or closures are considered,” **said Rubio**. “We need this legislation in order to ensure that access to Biscayne National Park is not decided solely by Washington, but instead by both federal and state agencies that are able to carefully consider all invested interests and parties.”

“It’s crazy that state and federal agencies don’t already work together when making decisions that affect our waters,” **said Cassidy**. “Louisianans know our waters better than the federal government does—our knowledge is an asset in making decisions that impact our fisherman, our boaters, our tourism industry and our economy.”

Senator Rubio has long advocated for the state’s involvement in these decisions, and called for the least amount of restrictive management actions necessary for Biscayne National Park in a [2012 letter](#) to the Secretary of the Interior.

The Preserving Public Access To Public Waters Act is supported by several organizations, including the American Sportfishing Association, Center for Coastal Conservation, Coastal Conservation Association, Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation, Florida Keys Commercial Fisherman’s Association, National Marine Manufacturers Association, Organized Fishermen of Florida, Southeastern Fisheries Association, Inc., and Wild Ocean Seafood Market.

A PDF of the legislation is available [here](#).