



February 20, 2019

Chair Bo Rivard
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Farris Bryant Building
620 S. Meridian St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600

Dear Commissioner Rivard:

Having read the proposed rules for “Marine Life Harvest at the Blue Heron Bridge,” I am writing to express the gratitude of the diving industry for your leadership in helping to maintain a popular dive site in Palm Beach that attracts hundreds of divers each year.

The Diving Equipment and Marketing Association (DEMA) is in general agreement with the proposed rules for restricting marine life collections from Phil Foster Park and the Blue Heron Bridge diving area described in the FWC Staff memo dated February 20, 2019. In addition, we strongly suggest that FWC make the Blue Heron Bridge area completely non-consumptive by placing restrictions on hook and line and other forms of fishing in the designated area. Doing so will make this area truly a “marine sanctuary,” as suggested in the FWC Memo.

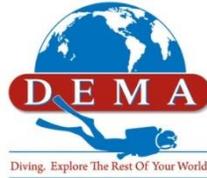
Thank you for taking these steps and for accepting this additional recommendation. The Blue Heron Bridge and Phil Foster Park are great diving destinations and we greatly appreciate the steps being taken to continue permitting divers to use these facilities in a non-consumptive manner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Ingram', is written over a white background.

Tom Ingram
President and CEO

cc: Eric Sutton, Executive Director, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
Bob L. Harris, Esq., Tallahassee
DEMA Board of Directors



December 11, 2018

Chair Bo Rivard
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Farris Bryant Building
620 S. Meridian St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600

Dear Commissioner Rivard:

Having read the proposed rules for “Marine Life Harvest at the Blue Heron Bridge,” I am writing to express the gratitude of the diving industry for your leadership in helping to maintain a popular dive site in Palm Beach that attracts hundreds of divers each year.

As you are aware, the Diving Equipment and Marketing Association (DEMA) is the international trade association for the recreational scuba diving and snorkeling industry. DEMA has more than 1,400 business members worldwide, more than 300 of which are located in Florida. DEMA represents the interests of diving manufacturers, diver training organizations, the diving-related magazines and media, diving retailers and dive travel and dive charter operators, as well as diving consumers. We are very proud that Florida is home to thousands of certified scuba divers, with thousands more traveling to Florida each year to enjoy its coastal resources. DEMA also produces the annual DEMA trade show which is held in Orlando every other year. DEMA Show brings more than 10,000 diving professionals to the state to conduct business, and many stay after the four-day event to dive in Florida’s ocean, gulf and fresh water springs. DEMA’s mission is to bring businesses together to grow the diving industry worldwide, and our goals include promoting recreational scuba diving and snorkeling, while at the same time protecting the underwater environment and its countless marine species.

DEMA is in general agreement with the proposed rules for restricting marine life collections from Phil Foster Park and the Blue Heron Bridge diving area described in the FWC Staff memo dated December 12, 2018. However, as the rules are finalized, we offer the following two (2) suggestions.

The first suggestion applies to sections **68B 42.0036 Closed Areas, Section 3 (c)** (in red):

(c) Tropical ornamental marine life species and tropical ornamental marine plants lawfully harvested outside of the Blue Heron Bridge Special Marine Life Area may be landed within the described area only by motorized vessel at the public boat ramp or public docks located at Phil Foster County Park or at a private residence within the described area. Any tropical ornamental marine life species or tropical ornamental marine plant possessed within Phil Foster County Park pursuant to this paragraph must be maintained alive **using an appropriate container to maintain the marine life, which could include but is not limited to a continuously circulating live well or**

container of adequate size and capacity with aeration or oxygenation to maintain such harvested marine organisms in a healthy condition.

Please note that these suggested changes account for most of the methods in use by divers for transporting marine life in the area of concern, such as the use of 100% oxygen in sealed containers to maintain the health of marine life.

The second suggestion is that FWC make the Blue Heron Bridge area completely non-consumptive by placing restrictions on hook and line and other forms of fishing in the designated area. Doing so will make this area truly a “marine sanctuary,” as suggested in the FWC Memo.

Thank you for taking these steps and for accepting these recommendations. The Blue Heron Bridge and Phil Foster Park are great diving destinations and we greatly appreciate the steps being taken to continue permitting divers to use these facilities in a non-consumptive manner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Ingram", written in a cursive style.

Tom Ingram
President and CEO

cc: Eric Sutton, Executive Director, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission
Bob L. Harris, Esq., Tallahassee
DEMA Board of Directors