



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



May 7, 2018

Transmitted via email

Dear Save our Key Deer and other Concerned Citizens:

While we understand your concerns about the current status of Key deer, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is continuously monitoring the health and well-being of the herd and does not believe current conditions amount to or are likely to create a crisis situation for the herd that could threaten its continued existence.

Without question, recent events such as drought and wildfires have made environmental conditions challenging for Key deer management. As you are aware, the Service is continuing to monitor salinity levels on the National Key Deer Refuge Complex (Refuge) to evaluate the health of the habitat on the Refuge. In addition, since Hurricane Irma, 59 surveys by Texas A&M University estimate the Key deer population at approximately 573 individuals on Big Pine and No Name Keys, and more index surveys are scheduled in May. The current estimate of deer in the core population indicates the resilience of the herd and gives us reasonable assuredness the population is stable, not in a crisis or in need of human intervention. Therefore, although the Service provided supplemental resources to Key deer in the past and asked for the community's assistance in the same, we will not be providing additional water or food on Service-administered lands. However, we will keep a close eye on the situation and act proactively when and if the situation warrants. Due to concerns about potentially increasing dependence on humans and possible disease transmissions at watering stations, we do not encourage feeding or providing water to Key deer or any wild animals by private citizens.

As a precautionary measure, the Service is scheduling a veterinarian to visit the area to further evaluate Key deer. We will share details of this visit with you once the date is established. The Service and Save our Key Deer have some common goals such as protecting suitable habitats for Key deer, reducing deer/vehicle collisions, and working to ensure the current drought conditions do not seriously impact the herd. We are committed to continuing recovery efforts for Key deer and other endangered species on the Refuge and the lower Keys and will continue to monitor the species and habitat conditions with trusted partners such as Florida International University, the Institute for Regional Conservation, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden and Texas A&M University.

Thank you for your commitment to recovering Key deer.

Respectfully,

Daniel Clark, Refuge Manager
Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges Complex

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