



THE MANATEE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

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Crystal River is a coastal city in Florida, home to natural springs that welcome an influx of manatees during the winter months to swim, feed, and nurse. Tourists come from all over the world to experience this manatee paradise.

INTRODUCTION

Crystal River’s economy benefits from the tourism brought in by the abundant presence of manatees in the springs, though not without challenges and opposing viewpoints regarding protection regulations and commercial tourism. The community morale towards conservation and restoration efforts benefits the ecological wellbeing of the area.

MANATEE TOURISM

- The busy season for manatee tourism is November to March, when the manatees come into the warm springs from the Gulf of Mexico
- There were 4,660 tourism related jobs in 2018
- Tourism is essential to supporting Crystal River economy
- There are many tour companies in Crystal River that take tourists out on a boat to view and swim with manatees
- Crystal River is the only place in the United States where it is legal to swim with manatees
- Wildlife agencies and conservationists, are concerned that tourism is putting manatees at risk to harassment from humans
- “Now they're telling us what we're doing is wrong here; the manatees like us, they keep coming back and bringing their friends” -Jerry Hogan

CONCLUSION

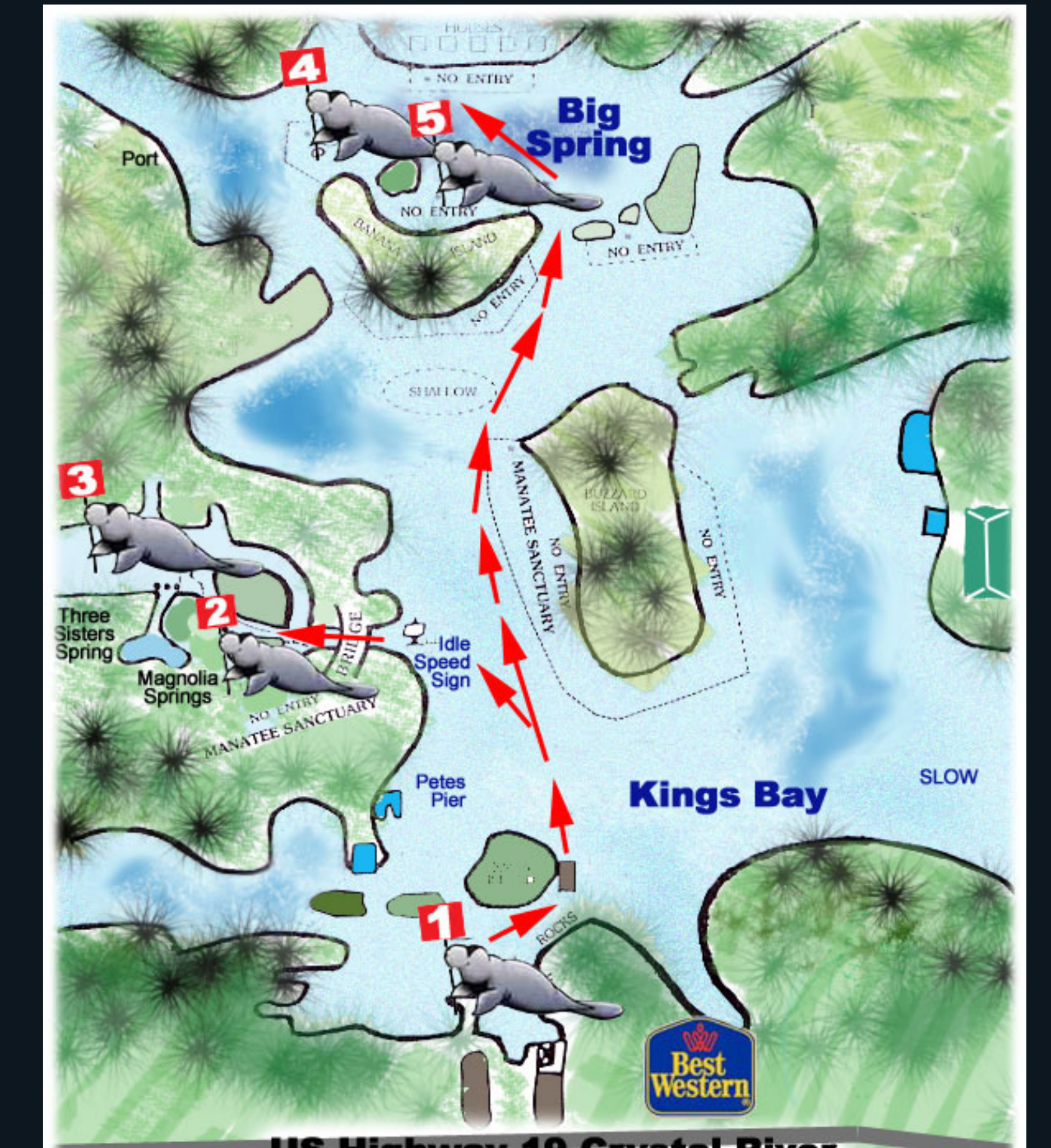
The factors represented in this display, result in the local community of Crystal River having a sense of responsibility towards manatee conservation and ecological rehabilitation, and a dependence on the economic benefits of tourism.

RULES & REGULATIONS PROTECTING MANATEES

- Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972
- Endangered Species Act of 1973
- Florida Manatee Sanctuary Act of 1978

There are many laws in place in King's Bay National Wildlife Refuge to protect manatees. Due to their status as threatened, and once endangered they are protected under many federal regulations. It is illegal to disturb or harass a manatee in any way. Breaking these laws can result in large fines or jail time.

Many Crystal River locals feel that the rules and regulations enforced are hindering their freedom, "For 30 years, I've watched them take one bite at a time out of our community. And whether that's rules, regulations - whatever it is, we decided enough was enough”-Steve Lamb



CONSERVATION

- The Manatee Eco Tourism Association- a nonprofit organization in Citrus County that ensures human interaction with manatees is conducted in a safe manner
- King’s Bay Restoration Project & Save Crystal River- Fighting the aquatic weed problem in King's Bay
- Save the Manatee Club- a nonprofit organization, the club promotes public education, awareness, and actions towards manatee protection

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