

Issue: Manatee deaths 9 in approximately one year.

Goal: Reduce casualties.

Cause: Primary- Gut shock/food poisoning. Secondary – boat strikes/ blunt force trauma.

Gut shock cause:

Gut shock is the result of increased waterway activity, nitrogen runoff from lawn care and possible residual runoff from the decommissioned water treatment plant on Cofer road. The plant discharged the non-potable wastewater over the property grounds with sprinkler head discharge nozzles during the life of the plant. According to long term local fisherman the water quality began to degrade soon after the plant came online and in turn began to improve soon after the plant was decommissioned.

Gut Shock possible solution:

Solutions for Gut shock are currently being tried. Increased awareness campaign by the county to discourage fertilizer use. Replanting of EEL grass in the Weeki Wachee river, and Hernando beach. Is the Mud River/ Salt Spring in consideration for Eel grass replanting?

Decommissioned water treatment plant. Is the county aware of the issue and is the county willing to mitigate the property to address the issue?

Boat strikes cause:

Boat strikes are the result of increased waterway activity. Air B&B, rental boats, rental jet skis, Airboat tours, multiple charter fishing operations and possible increased use from residents.

Historically this county has enjoyed significantly lower manatee deaths than the rest of the state. In one year, we had 9 Manatee die within county waters. Two by boat strikes and 7 by gut shock. It is important to note all had internal damage from boat strikes.

The question becomes what changed in a year?

The county waterways are becoming more active. Regarding the Mud River and Bay Port boat rental companies began renting jet skis and an Airboat charter- tour guide service began operating multiple boats averaging departures from port every 90 minutes in the busy season. On the Weeki Wachee boat rental companies are seeing increased rental

reservations. The Weeki Wachee now has an Airboat tour and fishing charter operation and all the public boat ramps on the west side of the county are being used for unpermitted jet ski rentals.

Possible solutions: Boat strikes

Possible solutions for boat strikes. Reduce boat traffic and boat speed to allow more reaction time for the vessel captain and Manatees.

This issue is a little trickier to address. The easy solution is to reduce all traffic to an idle, but this solution causes water access issues particularly on the Mud River.

Reviewing the Manatee Necropsy reports it is important to note that most Manatees with internal injuries showed no significant external injuries. This indicates the Manatee were struck most likely by vessels without conventional propeller propulsion and more likely struck by high-speed jet skis and airboats.

This leads me to believe slowing down the traffic is a viable solution but slowing down to an idle speed is perhaps overreaching. Boats can currently traverse the Mud River at any desired speed. Speeds of 50 MPH and higher are common. This creates a dangerous situation for boaters and Manatee.

I think the county should enact a manatee protection zone just not in its current form. If the speed is reduced to 25 MPH in the proposed manatee protection zone this would allow the Manatee and the captain's time to react as well as creating a safer boating environment. By reducing speed to 25 MPH, you create a safer environment for the Manatees and still allow the residents of Mud River to have year-round access. Furthermore, we should isolate known Manatee congregation locations delineated with buoys and signage year-round. Creating an MPZ no powered vessel isolation area for the Manatees allows for areas that can be used to promote eco-tourism as well as awareness of the issues surrounding the Manatee. If you look at Citrus County this established approach has had success and is considered equitable by the residents.

We can't bubble wrap the planet we can only look for equitable solutions.

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Port Park Pier

(25 MPH. Manatee protection zone.)
Attached to existing signs.

(25 MPH. Manatee protection zone.)
Attached to existing signs.

Manatee protection zone no motorized vessels.

Weeki Wachee Gardens

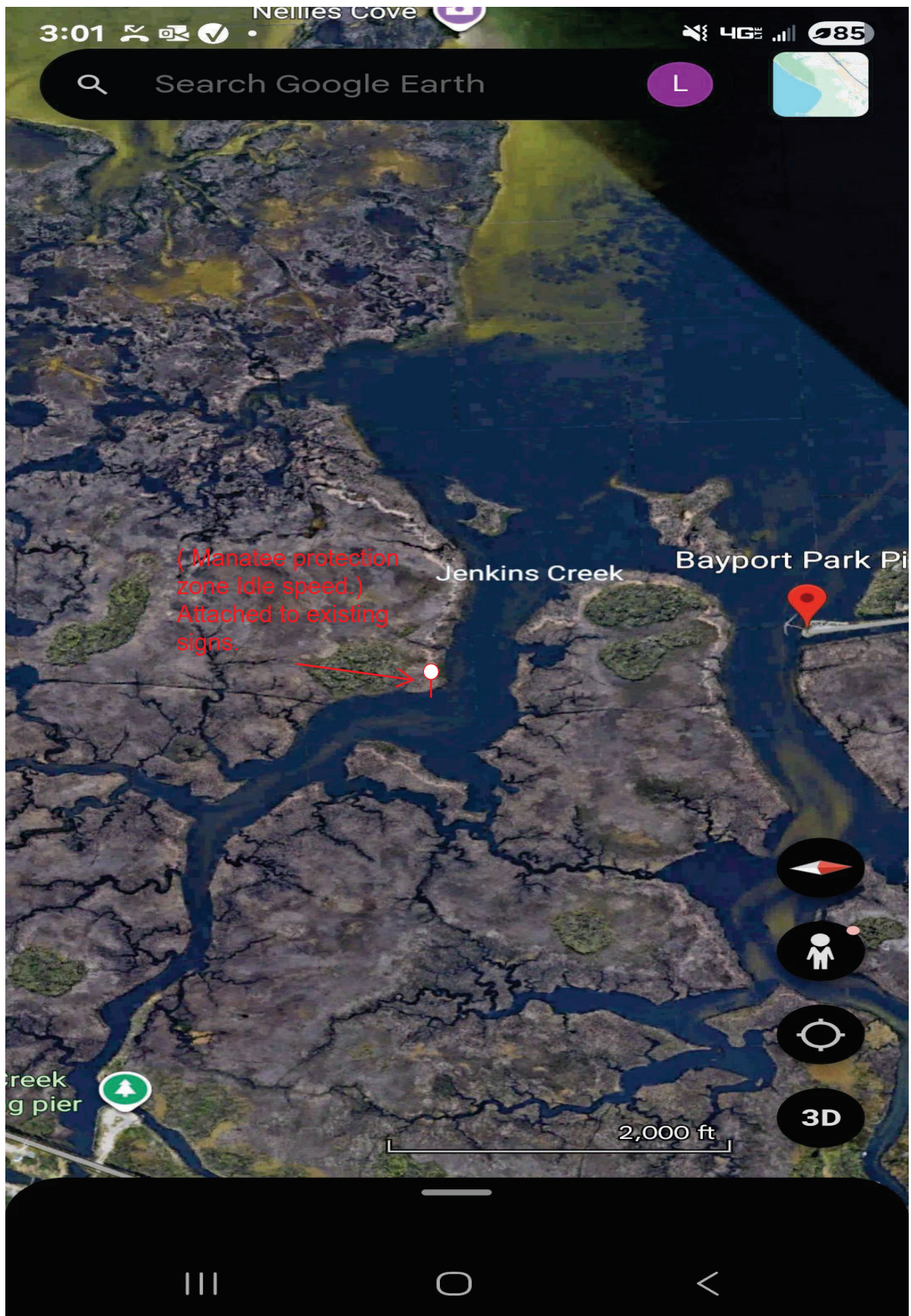
(25 MPH. Manatee protection zone.)
Attached to existing signs.

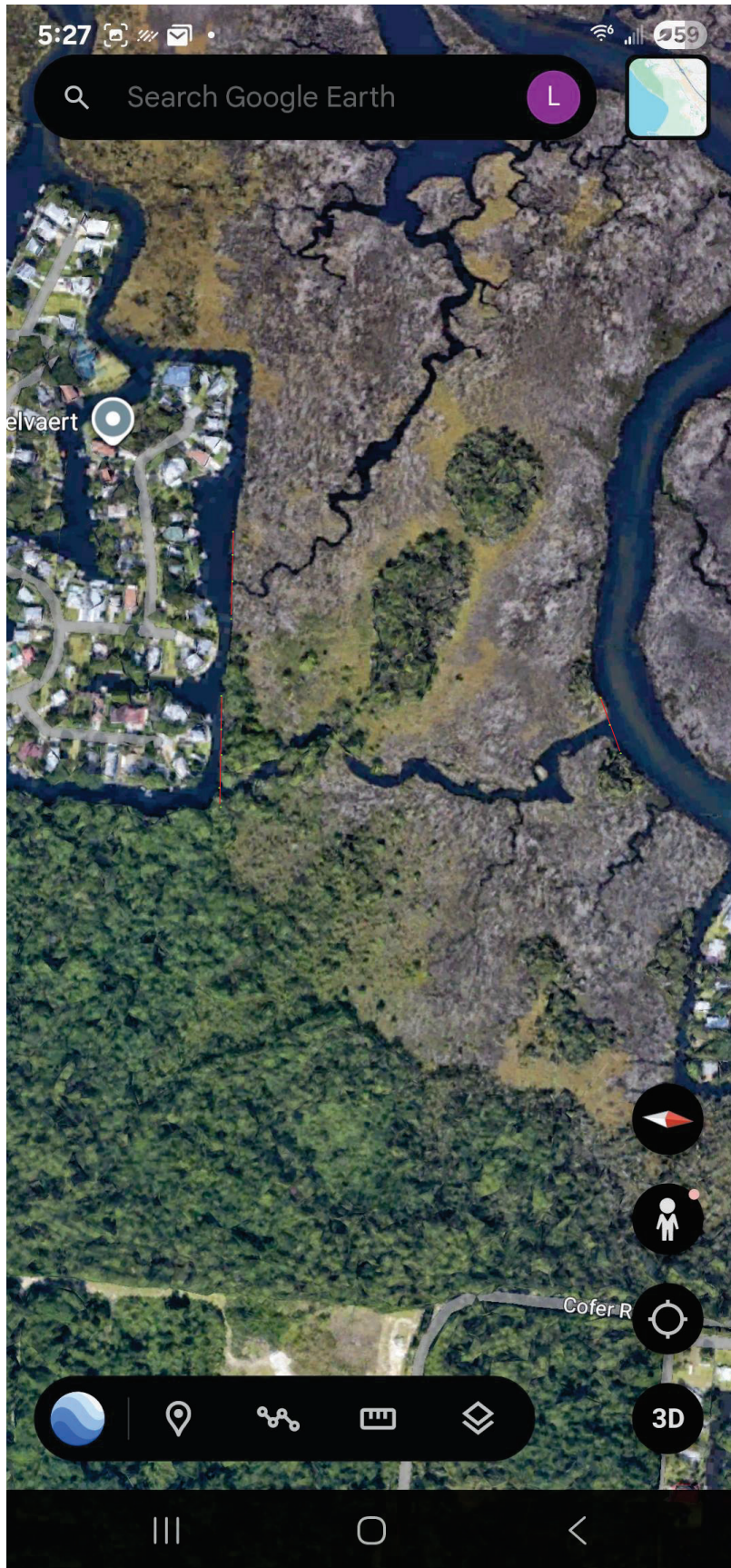
Manatee protection zone no motorized vessels

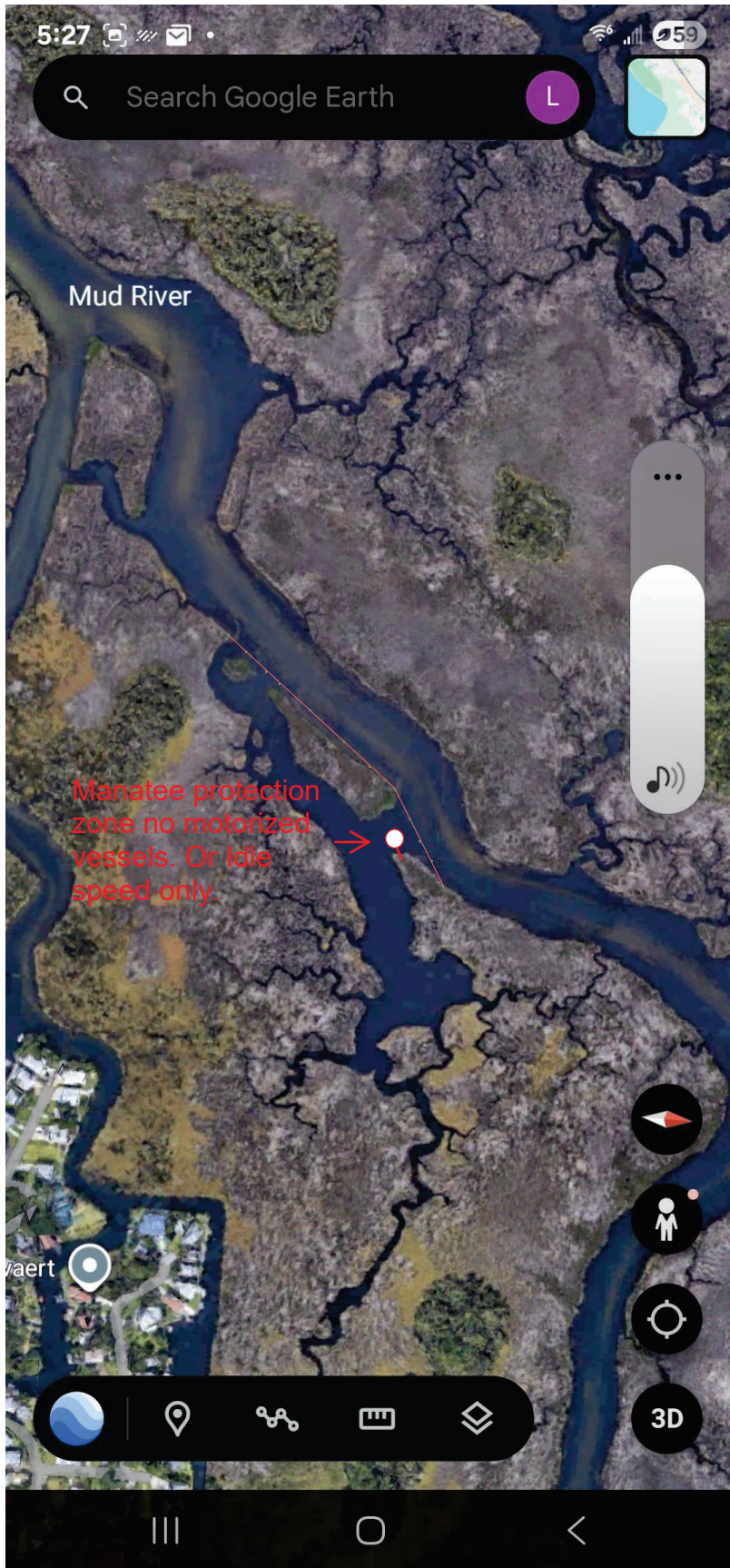
Manatee protection zone no motorized vessels or idle speed only.

Shoal Line Blvd









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Mud River
Spring

Manatee protection
zone Idle speed
only or No
motorized vessels.



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