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BREVARD COUNTY MAN SENTENCED AND HIS BOAT FORFEITED IN DEATH OF MANATEE

Orlando, FL - U.S. Attorney Robert E. O'Neill announces that U.S. Magistrate Judge David A. Baker today sentenced Joseph E. Miata, Jr. (62, of Merritt Island) to one year of federal probation for hitting a manatee while Miata operated his boat at an excessive speed in a Manatee Zone. The court also ordered Miata to forfeit the boat he was operating when he struck and killed the manatee, and ordered Miata to make contributions to a wildlife-related charitable organization in the amount of \$50 per month for the year he is on probation. Miata had pleaded guilty on November 15, 2010.

According to court documents, on July 11, 2010, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) received a report that a manatee had been struck by a vessel in the Sykes Creek area of Brevard County, Florida. An investigation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the FWC resulted in Miata being identified as the person operating the boat at an excessive speed when it struck the manatee, causing it to later die as a result of that boat strike. The investigation also identified the boat that Miata operated when he struck and killed the manatee. That boat was seized and forfeited pursuant to federal law.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Daniel C. Irick.