

ONE VOICE for the river

Fall
2001
Report

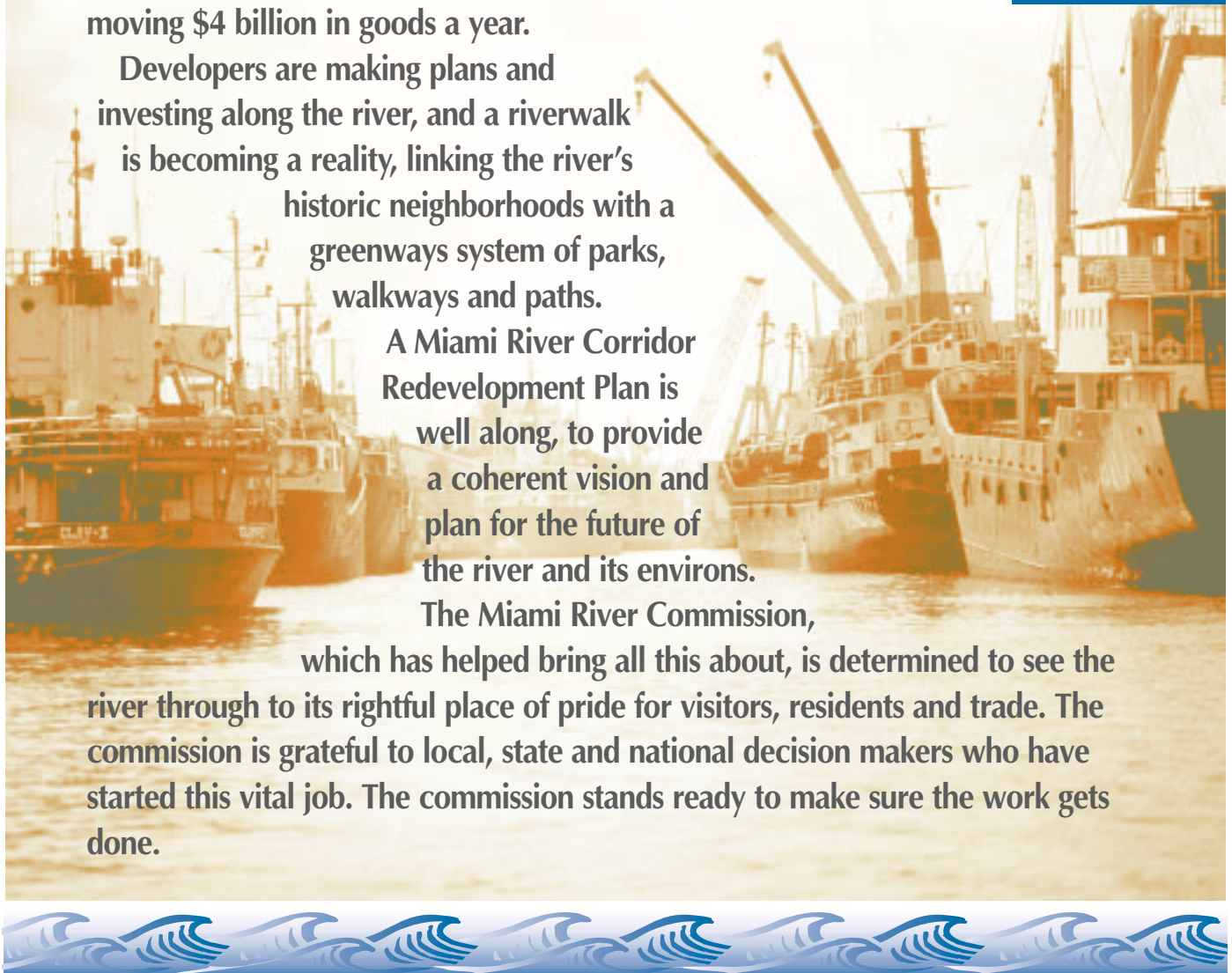
The Miami River is finally reviving and shaking off decades of neglect.

Its long-awaited dredging is set to begin. This is critical both for the river's fragile environment and for trade. Not only is the Miami River Biscayne Bay's largest tributary; it is also Florida's – and America's – most important shallow draft port to the Caribbean, moving \$4 billion in goods a year.

Developers are making plans and investing along the river, and a riverwalk is becoming a reality, linking the river's historic neighborhoods with a greenways system of parks, walkways and paths.

A Miami River Corridor Redevelopment Plan is well along, to provide a coherent vision and plan for the future of the river and its environs.

The Miami River Commission, which has helped bring all this about, is determined to see the river through to its rightful place of pride for visitors, residents and trade. The commission is grateful to local, state and national decision makers who have started this vital job. The commission stands ready to make sure the work gets done.



The river and our mission

The Miami River's 5.5-mile journey through the heart of Miami is unlike any other in America. In its western third, it is the nation's closest, and most important, shallow draft port to the Caribbean. Moving \$4 billion in goods a year, it is the equivalent of Florida's fourth largest port. It is the source of more than 90 percent of Florida's marine trade to that region, serving 100 ports of call. In the middle section, the river flows past tree-shaded parks and historic neighborhoods. In the eastern third toward the mouth, it passes by restaurants, hotels, and the skyscrapers of downtown Miami into Biscayne Bay.

Yet for years, the river was much studied, but little understood and often ignored. Efforts to clean up the river started as far back as the 1940s, but were hampered by intensifying urban development and lack of a central authority with power to make improvements or even forge consensus. In early 1998, the Miami River Study Commission reported that, to improve the river, it was essential to marshal political and civic leadership to act with one goal in mind.

The Florida Legislature responded by establishing the Miami River Commission in 1998 to act as "the official coordinating clearinghouse for all public

policy and projects related to the Miami River." The commission is charged with building consensus among government agencies, businesses and residents to speak with one voice on river issues; developing projects to improve the river; securing funding for those projects, and ensuring that all projects in the area are completed with the river's interest in mind. The commission's 18 members include politicians, business representatives and neighborhood and civic leaders involved with and knowledgeable about river issues.

In 2000, the Legislature passed the Miami River Improvement Act, charging the commission with coordinating the redevelopment and enhancement of the river corridor. Planning has begun.

With dredging scheduled to start in summer 2002, the commission is focusing its efforts on the Greenways/Riverwalk project and overall Miami River Corridor Redevelopment Plan to address the challenges along the river in a comprehensive way.

The commission performs its tasks with a total operating budget of \$150,000 for a managing director, an assistant director, benefits, insurance and office. That is one of the lowest such budgets of any governmental body in Florida, and one that has already produced a great return for taxpayers.

Here are some comments about the river's prospects today from those who know it well:

JACKIE HUTTOE
Real estate broker, CCIM,
Arvida Realty Services:

“ Developers want to put restaurants and walkways that look onto the river, with pleasure boat slips and water taxis. We're getting calls every day from them. That didn't happen three years ago. They now want to gear developments along the river for public use, with retail, apartments and condos. They want to make the river more user friendly as it gets cleaned up, which is what the Miami River Commission has been working very hard to do. ”

SARA C. BABUN
President, Antillean Marine
Shipping Co.

“ The Miami River Commission has earned the shipping industry's respect. Thanks in large part to the commission, things are getting done along the river. Improving our working river and the area around it benefits all of us – shippers, marine-related businesses, visitors and residents. The commission has brought us together in common cause and is helping make the river all it should be – for the people, for the environment, and for trade. ”

CLEVE JONES, JR.
Owner
Jones Boat Yard

“ Mega yacht owners are giving the Miami River a much closer look. They are finding that the old image of a crime-ridden river and an uncaring government no longer holds true. The Miami River Commission is not only putting different people together to accomplish goals. It IS accomplishing its goals. And I find when I want a straight answer to a question, I call Dave or Brett at the commission and I get it. ”

BILL BORGES
Little Havana Neighborhood
Enhancement Team

“ In the four years I have been here, crime has dropped drastically and the quality of life has improved tremendously. Now we are beautifying the river, and establishing parks and gardens where the homeless camped out. The Miami River Commission has helped us make this happen in many, many ways. ”

SALLYE JUDE
Owner,
Miami River Inn

“ People living and working in our neighborhood have developed pride in our community. That had been lacking until the last few years, and now we have joined forces and created a park. People and organizations cannot operate as islands, but, by coming together to reach a common goal we can accomplish a lot. ”





**ROBERT
PARKS**

Chair's Report

By nearly any standards, 2000-2001 was a success for the Miami River and the Miami River Commission. We cleared the way for dredging to begin. The city and county approved The Miami River Greenway Action Plan. The Greenways will link parks, neighborhoods and businesses through walkways and blueways to make the river a great destination for all the people we serve. We began the Miami River Corridor planning process for housing, transportation, crime prevention, education, commerce, and environmental improvements.

Results are already visible. Crime is down sharply. Neighborhood pride is coming back. River dredging is about to start, with funding in place and logistics nearing completion. More projects than ever are planned or proposed along the river. Developers are including the 50-foot setback and 20-foot riverwalk in their plans; they understand that walkways and greenways draw people into their businesses and neighborhoods and increase their return on investment.

Most important, the City of Miami and Miami-Dade County have also worked hard with the State of Florida and the federal government to summon the collective will to revive the river. That support cuts across lines of party and interest.

Thanks to friends of the river such as Gov. Jeb Bush, Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Carrie Meek, and Sen. Bob Graham, our voice is getting heard in Tallahassee and Washington. On Nov. 2, 2001, the U.S. House and Senate both approved a \$4 million allocation to start dredging. That was a big feat in this austere time. The Florida Legislature voted earlier this year to allot \$2.25 million to match the federal contribution.

Once again, Rep. Ros-Lehtinen organized the annual Miami River Cleanup on June 23. Volunteers on land and boat picked up trash and got to know the river first hand.

Recent achievements for the river:

- We helped secure \$4.5 million in grants to develop a Greenways system of walkways and parks through the eastern sections of the river near the Little Havana, Overtown, Allapattah, Downtown, and Brickell areas.

This will form the underpinnings of a marine-oriented riverfront friendly to pedestrians, diners, boaters, and all who want to take in the best of what Miami has to offer.

- We secured money to start dredging in summer 2002. We are determined to guide this project in the most economic way possible and bring it in below the \$80 million estimated. Removing the contaminated sediments will improve the environment of the Miami River and Biscayne Bay, while restoring the federal navigable channel to its proper depth and width. This stands to improve the county's economy by increasing cargo capacity for ships, which for the first time in decades will be able to traverse at low tide.
- We solidified support in the political, civic and economic arenas. We launched a vigorous, results-oriented community outreach with civic leaders and neighborhoods. We released an Economic Report, produced a seven-minute video, a comprehensive map, and a website at www.miamirivercommission.org. The city and county commissions unanimously adopted the Miami River Commission's recommendations on nearly every one of the dozens of river-related issues brought before them in the last year.
- We hired Brett Bibeau as Assistant Managing Director to work with Managing Director Capt. David Miller. Their hard work paid off many times over in helping the commission realize its objectives.
- We helped dedicate the East Little Havana Riverside Garden beneath the Flagler Street Bridge, turning a former eyesore into a public park.

Every commission member and our many friends of the river helped us accomplish our goals in a spirit of teamwork that would do any community proud. Two groups were particularly valuable: The Miami River Marine Group and its executive director, Dr. Frances Bohnsack, and the Trust for Public Land and its project managers Brenda Marshall and Lavinia Freeman. Their efforts helped build a strong foundation for the challenging and important work ahead.

Robert L. Parks, Esq.
Chair

Miami River Commission's Accomplishments 2000-2001

- Secured funding for dredging
- Completed Greenways plan and helped secure grants to develop riverwalks
- Initiated Miami River Corridor/Urban Infill Plan, with completion due in March 2002
- Secured grants for improving river
- Solidified political consensus for river
- Helped coordinate appropriate development, anticrime efforts and enhancement throughout the river area

DREDGING GROUP



RICHARD BUNNELL AND SCOTT MITCHELL

CO-CHAIRS

Group Reports

Working Group Reports: The Miami River Commission's working groups all act to substantially improve the river. They include Dredging, Quality of Life, Public Safety, and Economic Development groups.

The \$80 million dredging project is central to the river's revival for both environmental and economic reasons. The Miami River is one of the most polluted bodies of water in Florida, the result of generations of storm water drainage from the river's 69-square-mile basin, untreated sewage flowing into the river in earlier decades, and a broader lack of environmental stewardship. While fewer pollutants are entering the river today, dredging is the only way to rid the river's bottom of 70 years' worth of pollutants.

Sediment buildup has also restricted navigation to high tide and thereby restricted trade. Removing those sediments will free ships to navigate at all times, ease coordination of river traffic, and nearly double cargo tonnage larger ships can safely transport.



The Army Corps is proceeding with necessary permits for dredging. After receiving requisite approvals, the Corps will advertise for contracts in March 2002, select a contractor in late spring or early summer, and start work in late summer, if plans proceed as indicated. This maintenance dredging project will restore the channel to its federally authorized depth of 15 feet at low tide, and its width to 90 feet in the western section to 150 feet toward the mouth.

Dredging will begin on the western end of the navigable river and proceed east towards the mouth. It will take from 18 months to three years, depending on the disposal method for the 500,000 cubic yards of sediment. The commission is working to develop the most economical method with the lowest impact on the community.

OUTREACH

In 2000-2001, the Miami River Commission conducted the most aggressive community outreach in the long history of river improvement efforts.

The commission published reports, launched a comprehensive web site, developed a seven-minute video, sponsored community meetings to encourage participation among the river's stakeholders, and dramatically increased its visibility at the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce and other centers of community decision-making.

The commission secured \$12,512 in grants for, and helped sponsor, Miami Riverday on April 7, 2001. The event attracted thousands of visitors to historic Lummus Park and the riverfront, and showcased the river's revival.

The commission is also working with Miami-Dade public schools to develop and teach a curriculum, including river boat tours, focusing on the river and its environment.



Community leaders dedicate the East Little Havana River Garden, the Miami River's newest public park.



Attendees at the Sixth Annual Miami Riverday Festival board the popular river boat tours.



QUALITY OF LIFE GROUP



JAMES MURLEY AND BRENDA MARSHALL
CO-CHAIRS

The Quality of Life Group is responsible for urban planning and environmental issues on the river. Its top three priorities are: **Greenways; Miami River Corridor Urban Infill Plan**, and **Stormwater**.

GREENWAYS

The Miami River Commission and the Trust for Public Land contracted with Greenways Inc. to design the Miami River Greenway. The City and County Commissions this year unanimously approved the Miami River Greenway Action Plan in principle. Miami city ordinance requires a 50-foot setback and 20-foot riverwalk for new



developments between Biscayne Bay and the Fifth Street Bridge. The Greenway will connect the multicultural neighborhoods within the Miami River corridor to the river, and to eight public parks. The downtown riverwalk is designed as a destination landscape with entertainment attractions such as riverside cafes, fresh fish markets, restaurants, nightclubs, retail shops, and more. The Trust for Public Land and the City of Miami have already been awarded \$4.5 million for Phase One Miami River Greenway development.

MIAMI RIVER CORRIDOR PLAN:

An Urban Infill Planning Initiative

The Miami River Commission is working in partnership with the city, county, regional planners and universities to develop action plans to improve the quality of life for residents and businesses along the river corridor. The goal is to improve the river corridor so that people will enjoy living, working and playing along the river. The plan will address such issues as: housing, commerce, education, crime prevention, transportation, parks, public access to the river and environmental improvements. The planning group has started to hold numerous public hearings to

solicit and receive community input and recommendations.

STORMWATER

Stormwater drainage from the river basin has been among the greatest single environmental threats to the Miami River and Biscayne Bay. And Wagner Creek – a major river tributary – is perhaps Florida’s single most polluted body of water. The City of Miami is about to dredge this shallow creek, which will accelerate the already dramatic improvements there.

The city plans to develop a system of walkways and small parks along the historic, tree-lined, residential neighborhoods along the creek’s banks.

Stormwater Subcommittee members will soon release the Miami River Basin Water Quality Improvement Report, which will document improvements in water quality since the subcommittee started its work in 1994 and include a road map for future action.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMERCE GROUP



MEGAN KELLY
CLEVE JONES
PATTI ALLEN
CO-CHAIRS

In Spring 2001, the Economic Development and Commerce Group completed its Miami River Economic Study, prepared by J. Kenneth Lipner, Ph.D., of Florida International University. The study documented the river’s often overlooked economic importance. It calculated assessed river-area properties at \$1.3 billion, generating \$20 million a year in local property taxes. The report concluded that the river’s trade activity reaches nearly 100 ports in 28 countries and territories, more than double the destinations of a decade earlier. It reported that visitors in hotels along the river generated \$100 million for South Florida. An abstract of the report is on the commission website

at www.miamirivercommission.org.



**PUBLIC
SAFETY
GROUP**



**CAPT.
JIM
WATSON,
U.S.C.G.**

**AND
GARY
WINSTON,
STATE
ATTORNEY'S
OFFICE**

CO-CHAIRS

C rime along the river areas of Little Havana and Allapattah dropped more than 25 percent in the last three years. Local police work and unprecedented interagency cooperation have made the river and its environs far safer in just a few years. The Miami River Commission's Public Safety Group has worked closely with law enforcement agencies and the U.S. Coast Guard to coordinate efforts.

The most dramatic effort this year was Operation Riverwalk, the four-phase program unveiled by Gov. Jeb Bush in February 2001. This comprehensive interagency program will address river area issues, particularly drug trafficking; preventive programs; regulatory enforcement; and economic development. This

unprecedented, two-year effort was an immediate success. In the first three

months, law enforcement officers searched 100 vessels and seized 3,400 pounds of cocaine.

Seized drug smuggling and derelict vessels, 90-180 ft. in length, have found a new purpose. Four were sunk this summer to form artificial reefs, and five more are scheduled to be sunk by the end of this year.

The Public Safety Working Group was merged into the Miami River Quality Action Team to maximize the effectiveness of both groups and minimize duplication of efforts.

We said a fond farewell to Capt. Larry Bowling, USCG, and welcomed Capt. Jim Watson to his new command and to the Miami River Commission.



D redging, greenways and the Miami River Corridor Plan will command the commission's attention over the next few years.

Challenges remain in the broader cleanup and improvement of neighborhoods and stormwater runoff from the river basin. In the immediate future:

- The Miami River Commission is working to bring a river cleanup vessel into operation to remove trash, oil and other unwanted products in the river, and to provide an extra eye to complement river environmental enforcement agencies.
- After completion of the Miami River Corridor/Urban Infill Plan, the commission is preparing to work to bring about a tax increment finance district (TIF) to provide a cohesive framework for appropriate development along the river corridor as part of a consistent, broader vision for its future.
- The SW Second Avenue Bridge is being replaced with a \$26 million bridge with a higher span, and no structures in the river to block its natural flow.
- The 10 opening bridges along the Miami River are a continuing challenge to both vehicular and shipping traffic. The worst case is the Fifth Street Bridge, which was declared an illegal bridge by

**THE
FUTURE**

the Army Corps of Engineers in 1929, shortly after it was built. This single bridge is as harmful to shipping commerce as the sediment clogging the channel. Recently, a freighter struck the bridge, causing severe damage and knocking the bridge out of service for eight months, requiring \$2 million in repairs. It is the most restrictive bridge on the river, throttling water flow and eliminating navigation for 6-8 hours every day. The bridge has been struck 12 times in 13 years, causing it to be out of service for nearly 40 percent of the time. The Miami River Commission urges that the Coast Guard and the Florida Department of Transportation, immediately rectify this unacceptable navigational hazard.

- The commission is closely monitoring the planned Miami Intermodal Center (MIC), near the terminus of the river navigation and near the Miami International Airport. The MIC would include a system of bridges to support rail, bus and automobile use. The commission is researching options which benefit access to the MIC without adversely affecting Miami's vital shipping and trade business to the Caribbean, and the jobs it brings to the community.

MIAMI RIVER FUND, INC. CONSOLIDATED BUDGET

Fiscal Year July 1, 2000 – June 30, 2001

SOURCES OF FUNDS	South Florida Water Management District SFWMD	Florida Department of Environmental Protection		MRCC and SURPLUS FUNDS (1)	MIAMI-DADE CBO GRANT	CITY OF MIAMI STORMWATER FUNDS	TOTAL
		FDEP ADMIN	FDEP DREDGING				
Carryover from 1999-2000		\$24,993	\$195,000	\$37,816			\$257,809
New Appropriations	\$25,000	\$150,000			\$22,993	\$25,000	\$222,993
Amount of funds	\$25,000	\$174,993	\$195,000	\$37,816	\$22,993	\$25,000	\$480,802
USES OF FUNDS:							
Office space		\$3,600					\$3,600
Administration	\$7,000	\$9,973	\$3,000			\$2,500	\$22,473
Printing	\$2,000	\$7,300				\$2,000	\$11,300
Office Equipment		\$4,500					\$4,500
Transportation		\$5,620	\$10,000				\$15,620
Payroll		\$112,000					\$112,000
Environmental education	\$11,000	\$7,500			\$16,993	\$2,000	\$37,493
Informational brochures	\$5,000	\$7,000	\$3,000				\$15,000
Land Lease/purchase			\$60,000				\$60,000
Audit fees		\$2,500	\$2,500			\$250	\$5,250
Engineering Consultant			\$85,000				\$85,000
Governmental Affairs			\$31,500				\$31,500
Urban Infill Plan		\$10,000					\$10,000
Stormwater improvement and education					\$6,000	\$18,250	\$24,250
Greenways Project		\$5,000					\$5,000
Misc. reserve funds				\$37,816			\$37,816
T O T A L S	\$25,000	\$174,993	\$195,000	\$37,816	\$22,993	\$25,000	\$480,802

(1) Carryover funds from 1998 appropriations for Miami River Study Commission and funds provided by Miami River Coordinating Committee.

PROJECT SPECIFIC FUNDING:

Miami River Corridor Urban Infill Plan

Environmental Protection Agency Grant	\$20,000
Empowerment Zone Grant	\$25,000
Miami-Dade County Grant	\$50,000
State of Florida-Dept. of Community Affairs	\$50,000
Miami River Commission Contribution	\$10,000
	\$155,000

Miami Riverday

Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs Grants	\$12,512
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Miami River Design Center

Miami-Dade County Grant	\$50,000
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Miami River Map Project	\$11,300
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(Note: Funds collected from advertising fees)

Miami River Commission Members



Chair: ROBERT L. PARKS, ESQ.
Member at Large Appointed by Governor

Vice Chair: Mr. PHIL EVERINGHAM
Chair of Marine Council
Designee: Mr. James Wellington

FLORIDA GOV. JEB BUSH
Designee: Dr. Pamela J. Dana

Rep. GUSTAVO BARREIRO
Chair, Miami-Dade Delegation
Designee: Sen. Rodolfo Garcia

Mr. ALEX PENELAS
Miami-Dade County Mayor
Designee: Ms. Sandy O'Neil

Mr. JOE CAROLLO
Mayor of Miami
Designee: Ms. Olga Zamora

Mr. JOE SANCHEZ
City of Miami Commissioner
Designee: Ms. Eileen Damaso

Mr. BRUNO BARREIRO
Miami-Dade County Commissioner
Designee: Mr. Alfredo Gonzalez

MR. MICHAEL COLLINS
Chair of Governing Board of South Florida Water Management District
Designee: Mr. Gerardo B. "Jerry" Fernandez

KATHERINE FERNANDEZ RUNDLE, Esq.
Miami-Dade State Attorney
Designee: Gary Winston, Esq.

Mr. JIM BROWN
Chair, Miami River Marine Group
Designee: Mr. Richard Bunnell

Ms. PATTI ALLEN
Executive Director, Downtown Development Authority
Designee: Mr. Alonso Menendez

Mr. WILLIAM O. CULLOM
President
Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce
Designee: Ms. Megan Kelly

DR. ERNEST MARTIN
Neighborhood Representative, appointed by City of Miami Commission
Designee: Ms. Virginia Newell, PhD.

MS. SALLYE JUDE
Neighborhood Representative, appointed by Miami-Dade Commission

Designee: Ms. Jane Caporelli
MS. JANET MCALILEY
Representative from Environmental or Civic Organization appointed by the Governor
Designee: Ms. Theo Long

MS. SARA C. BABUN
Member at Large Appointed by Miami-Dade Commission
Designee: Tom Parker, Esq.

MR. CLEVE JONES, Jr.
Member at Large Appointed by City of Miami Commission
Designee: Capt. Beau Payne

Managing Director
Capt. DAVID MILLER

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Mr. BRETT BIBEAU

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