

Annual Report 2009



Volunteers plant the new vegetable and fruit garden with rain barrels and composter along the river's publicly-accessible south bank near the Miami River Commission's offices at 1407 NW 7th St. Volunteers are eligible to harvest and eat the fresh, healthy and free produce when it matures.



Volunteers painting mural along the Miami River Greenway

In 2009, the Miami River Commission (MRC) turned its attention to making South Florida's mixed-use river into a place where the community can live, work and play.

The work ahead is considerable: Completing the remaining two-thirds of the river's greenways; dredging and cleaning the Wagner Creek and Seybold Canal tributary, the most polluted body of water in Florida; and finishing an environmentally

continued next page

The challenges are clear

responsible stormwater system are just the most prominent challenges.

Fortunately, community spirit remains alive. That spirit, fortified by hard work, led to the successful completion of the river's Maintenance Dredging and Environmental Cleanup against long odds. We believe that people and entities will continue to step forward on behalf of our working river.

Gradually, the community is beginning to take ownership of its river. Along the Miami River Greenway, schools, volunteers and environmental groups

spent weekends planting vegetable and fruit gardens, painting murals, pulling weeds, cleaning debris and making the area more livable for businesses and the people moving into the 7,000 new homes near the river.

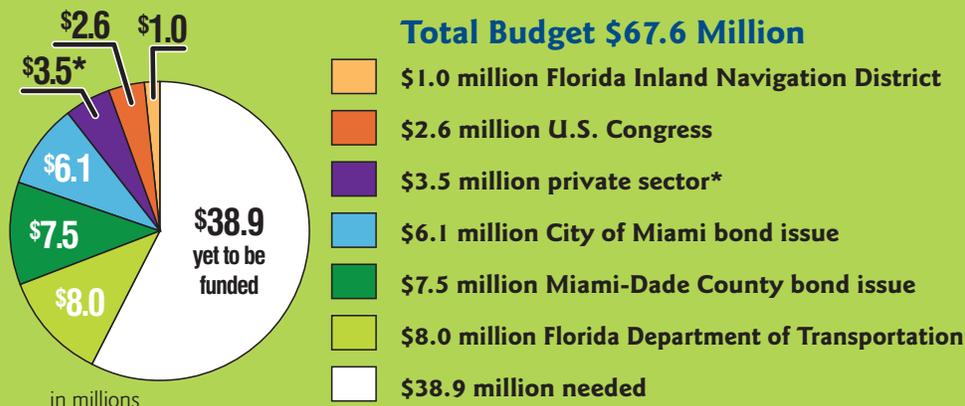
The priorities and challenges of 2009 and 2010 are clear:

- Complete the publicly-accessible Miami River Greenway;
- Dredge and clean all Miami River tributaries, starting with Wagner Creek and the Seybold Canal followed by Tamiami Canal, North Fork, South Fork and the Lawrence Canal;

- Maintain the mixed-use river including marine-industrial businesses, historic neighborhoods, parks, and other uses.

While there is no question that economic times are challenging, there is no better time to prepare a bright future for the Miami River. We thank all those who have brought us this far and those who will help us get to the next stage.

Miami River Greenway and Stormwater System Improvement Funding as of December 2009



* Private developers along the river have built publicly-accessible riverwalks on their properties.

Testimonials

“As the newly elected Mayor of the City of Miami, I'm pleased to serve as a volunteer board member per the Miami River Commission's enabling legislation. For the past decade, the Miami River Commission has been a successful advocate for a mixed-use river, including but not limited to: marine-industrial businesses, historic low-density neighborhoods, the Miami River Greenway and downtown riverfront developments. I look forward to continuing my strong support of the Miami River Commission's noble initiatives, which improve South Florida's quality of life.”

– Tomás P. Regalado,
Mayor of the City of Miami

“Florida International University (FIU) sincerely appreciates the Miami River Commission's significant efforts and sponsorship to provide landscaping, paint, tools and supplies for FIU's annual volunteer day of service. This year, the FIU volunteers enjoyed painting the artistic mural on the First Street Bridge, and planting landscaping along the adjacent Miami River Greenway.”

– Patricia Lopez-Guerrero,
Florida International University

“The Miami River Commission has been generous and effective in coordinating, preparing and sponsoring numerous Miami River Greenway beautification events for University of Miami volunteers. We are extremely grateful for the excellent volunteer opportunities provided by the Miami River Commission's dependable and professional staff, including the community vegetable and fruit garden, planting trees, painting murals, and much more.”

– Franklin McCune,
University of Miami



To paraphrase Sir Winston Churchill, the Miami River maintenance dredging and environmental cleanup completed in 2008 is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is the end of the beginning.



ERIC BUERMANN

Chair's Report

Although the river is a far better place than it was a decade ago, much work lies ahead. Dioxins and other contaminants still infest the river's tributaries. The stormwater system that drains into the river from the 69-square-mile river basin, while vastly improved, remains a source of pollution. And too many people still use the river as a dumping ground.

More people are coming to the river, and more surely will come. Amid the deepest recession in 70 years, the new homes along the river are slowly filling with renters, many of them younger. This is creating a vibrant nightlife around downtown Miami and particularly the Brickell area just south of the river.

Community involvement in the river's welfare is one bright spot. It is worth emphasizing the MRC's new Voluntary Improvement Program (VIP) and singling out the dedication of new commission member Jay Carmichael, an attorney and retired Coast Guard Rear Admiral. He has met with members of the river community who have voluntarily removed derelict vessels and other eyesores and repaired seawalls, earning the MRC's public praise every time.

AS 2009 ENDS, HERE IS where we stand on realizing our three priorities:

A "PEOPLE-FRIENDLY" RIVER. With 3.25 miles of the 10-mile Greenway project completed, we remain a long way from realizing the river's full potential as a destination to live, work and play. The project altogether costs \$67.6 million, with \$28.7 million allocated and almost \$38.9 million needed. What many people do not know is that much of that work and expense lies under the walkways, in stormwater system retrofitting and seawalls, building a final line of defense against pollution into our working river.

SMART GROWTH. We are excited that the American Institute of Architects has chosen the Miami River corridor as its "Catalyst Plan" for creating a long-term vision at its upcoming annual convention in Miami in June 2010. The Florida Legislature in 2000 tasked the MRC with creating an Urban Infill Plan for the Miami River corridor, and it is good to find in 2009 that the MRC and the City of Miami are joining together as "One Voice For the River."

STORMWATER AND DREDGING: Wagner Creek and Seybold Canal, the most polluted bodies of water in Florida, are in urgent need of dredging. This is a \$20 million job as of late 2009. The City of Miami has \$2 million in place and dredging permits should be ready in early 2010. The city is seeking \$1 million from the Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND), \$1 million from the South Florida Water Management District and the balance from Federal Economic Stimulus funding, in addition to the city's stormwater utility fees, rather than ad valorem taxes.

The sooner these and other tributaries are dredged and cleaned, the better. Any comprehensive cleanup of the river and Biscayne Bay requires it. Big thanks are due to a charter member of the MRC, Sallye Jude, our Storm Water Subcommittee Chair, and Task Force Chair Horacio Stuart Aguirre. Together, they are shepherding the MRC's tributary dredging efforts with hard work and dedication.

So much has been done, and a great deal remains. Everyone knows we all still face sharp economic headwinds that require our perseverance.

OUR "THANK YOU" LIST HAS GROWN so much that it is impossible to list the individual names here. But we can start by thanking our Congress and federal agencies; the State of Florida; Miami-Dade County; the City of Miami; the South Florida Water Management District; the Florida Inland Navigation District; and helpful representatives from the private sector. Special thanks go to Vice Chair Phil Everingham and the remaining subcommittee chairs, Dr. Ernest Martin, County Commissioner Bruno Barreiro and Jim Murley, all of whom have been dedicated to the river as volunteers since the MRC's formation in 1998.

We have depended on them to get us this far and they have never let us down. Thanks are in order, finally, to the people from so many walks of life who volunteered, made their voices heard and contributed time, talent and treasure on behalf of the community's working river. This is the only way to build a great river, a great city and a great community.

– Eric Buermann

Chair, Miami River Commission

Awards

"BEST OF MIAMI – BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE" was awarded to Eric Buermann and Brett Bibeau – Miami Today, 2008

"AWARD OF MERIT" was awarded to the MRC for its Multimodal Transportation Plan – American Planning Association, 2007

"THE NEWSMAKER" was awarded to MRC Chair Eric Buermann – Miami Today, 2007

"BEST BACKSTAGE LEADER" was awarded to MRC Managing Director Brett Bibeau who was then included in the "Book of Leaders" – Miami Today, 2007

MIAMI IMAGE AWARD OF 2006 was awarded to MRC Managing Director Brett Bibeau – Realtor Association of Greater Miami and the Beaches

"BEST OF MIAMI – IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE" was awarded to former MRC Chair Irela Bagué – Miami Today, 2006

"THE ACHIEVER – MIAMI RIVER'S RENAISSANCE MAN" was awarded to MRC Managing Director Brett Bibeau – Miami Today, 2006

"COMMUNITY STEWARD AWARD" was awarded to MRC – 1,000 Friends of Florida, 2005

"BEST NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION" was awarded to MRC – Miami Today, 2004

"MOST POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT" for the Miami River Greenway – Urban Environment League, 2004

EXCELLENCE AWARD for the Miami River Corridor Urban Infill Plan – American Landscape Architects, 2003

Subcommittee Reports

MIAMI RIVER GREENWAY

Dr. Ernest Martin, Chair

GREENWAYS CAME TO THE FOREFRONT as never before in 2009. In September, the City of Miami submitted an application – with the MRC’s technical assistance – for a \$38.9 million transportation grant from federal economic stimulus funds to complete the 10-mile publicly-accessible pathway featuring trees, parks, benches, decorative lighting, historic markers, way-finding signage and art in public places.

The City and MRC expect to hear the outcome of the application in February 2010. That outcome could determine if the greenways are substantially completed in two or 20 years. The TIGER grant (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, with the objectives of preserving and creating jobs, promoting economic recovery and investing in transportation.

Competition is stiff. Roughly 1,400 applicants from all 50 states have requested a total of \$57 billion, and only \$1.5 billion is available. Failing that, the MRC can work with the City of Miami in seeking \$2 million in grants a year.

Completion of the greenways construction will only be the beginning. Once completed, they will require maintenance, security and special events for residents and visitors.

As of late 2009, 3.25 miles of the Greenways – or roughly a third – have either been completed or are under construction, some through the help of local government, some through private developers. The Miami River Greenway has fully funded and nearly completed construction documents for .87 miles of new Greenway sections scheduled for construction in 2010, and an additional 1.01 miles slated for 2011. That will leave an estimated 4.87 miles of Greenway needing funding, design and construction.

HERE IS AN UPDATE OF THE GREENWAY WORK IN 2009:

PUBLIC SECTOR:

- North shore under the 12th Avenue Bridge, constructed by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)
- North and south shore under construction by the new NW Fifth Street Bridge (FDOT)

In 2009, Miami-Dade County began design of the fully-funded, publicly-accessible riverwalk at the following sites:

- North and south shore beneath MetroRail
- North shore beneath South Miami Avenue Bridge
- South shore beneath MetroMover
- South shore beneath SW Second Avenue Bridge
- North shore between NW Third and NW Fourth Streets

The City of Miami has full funding and is designing the publicly-accessible riverwalk at the following sites:

- North River Drive from NW 7th to 12th Avenues will be constructed in 2010
- South River Drive from NW 1st Street to the NW 5th Street Bridge will be constructed in 2010
- South River Drive from the NW 5th Street Bridge to the NW 12th Avenue Bridge will be constructed in 2011

PRIVATE SECTOR:

- “Epic” (old Dupont Plaza site) Phase I riverwalk completed
- “Mint” riverwalk under construction
- “Terrazas Riverpark Village” riverwalk under construction
- “River Oaks Marina and Condominium” riverwalk under construction



New mural in Lummus Park

The collapsed seawall adjacent to the ancient

Miami Circle site was replaced in 2009, and funding was appropriated for the publicly-accessible riverwalk, with cost shares from the State of Florida, Florida Inland Navigation District, South Florida Water Management District, City of Miami and the Miami Downtown Development Authority. Construction documents have been completed and the riverwalk is scheduled for construction in 2010, providing public access to this site purchased by the taxpayers in 1998 for \$26 million. The Miami Circle was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2009. The MRC thanks State Rep. Luis Garcia, City Commissioner Marc Sarnoff and Spencer Crowley, FIND, for their strong support in bringing the long-awaited and widely-supported Miami Circle improvements to fruition.

In keeping with its commitment to Greenways and alternative means of transportation, the MRC has embraced the City of Miami’s Bicycle Master Plan, which includes completing the Miami River Greenway.

The MRC continues to coordinate and cosponsor volunteer cleanup and beautification of the river. For a partial list of participants and to learn how you can participate, see the “Get Involved!” section elsewhere in this report.

STORM WATER

Sallye Jude, Chair

THE SUBCOMMITTEE'S most urgent task remains the dredging and environmental cleanup of Wagner Creek and Seybold Canal, deemed the most polluted bodies of water in the State of Florida. Permits should be completed in 2010, as design was finished in 2009. The City of Miami has \$2 million available and is seeking an additional \$18 million from federal economic stimulus funds, FIND and the South Florida Water Management District. Work can only begin when full funding is secured.

This project is a component of the new *Miami River Tributary and Canal Maintenance Dredging and Environmental Cleanup Action Plan*, under the leadership of Horacio Stuart Aguirre's task force.

Retrofitting the storm water system



that serves the 69-square-mile Miami River Basin remains a major priority. The City of Miami has already retrofitted and repaired several of the old storm water systems and installed new solid waste interceptor baskets to prevent debris from entering the Miami River and Wagner Creek. New Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) water quality goals were established for Wagner Creek in

Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

These water-quality renovations are recommended in the MRC's *Miami River Basin Water Quality Improvement Plan*, available at www.miamirivercommission.org, along with quarterly agency implementation progress reports.

2007. Yet the water quality, while vastly improved, remains in need of further help. Responsible agencies include the City of Miami, Miami-Dade Department of Environmental Resources Management and the Water and Sewer Department, South Florida Water Management District and the

UPPER RIVER

Shipping and Marine Industrial Zone: Center of the river's trade and industry. The Miami Intermodal Center will link rail, air, freight, transit, pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Residential / Mixed Use marine-industrial



MIAMI RIVER GREENWAY'S TIMELINE

1897

Railroad magnate Henry Flagler opens six-story Royal Palm Hotel, including first greenway

1910

Lummas Park created on Miami River

1972

Parks For People bond issue passed by voters, funds portions of the Miami River Greenway

1980s

Miami River Greenway section constructed along north shore from Biscayne Bay to NW 2 Avenue

1998

Florida Legislature creates Miami River Commission as a watchdog, advocate and clearinghouse for the river. Miami Circle site discovered

2000

Florida Legislature passes Miami River Improvement Act

200

In partnership with the Trust for Public Land, the MRC, City of Miami and Miami-Dade County unanimously passed the Miami River Action

URBAN INFILL

James Murley, Chair

THE MIAMI RIVER COMMISSION is excited to work with the American Institute of Architects to create the *Miami River Catalyst Plan*, during their national convention in June 2010.

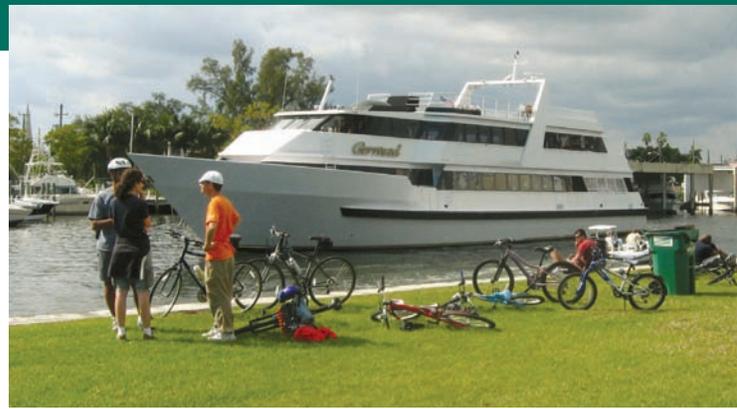
The MRC is working with Miami-Dade County to prepare their Evaluation Appraisal Report (EAR). Upon its completion, the EAR will lead to amending the *Miami-Dade County Neighborhood Comprehensive Plan*.

The working river is critical to the river's planning. The upper river zone, mostly in unincorporated Miami-Dade County west of NW 27th Avenue, is the source of most of the working river's trade with the Caribbean, and the freight passes through the 5.5-mile-long river corridor to Biscayne Bay.

The MRC is implementing the award-winning *Miami River Corridor Multimodal Transportation Plan*, which in part includes short-sea shipping,

which would load sea-port freight on a barge for offloading in the industrial district, thus removing cargo traffic from downtown streets. In addition, the plan recommends a centralized freight forwarding center connecting to the existing rail lines and Miami International Airport.

Construction has been completed on 7,078 units, the last of them finished in 2009. As of December 2009, 9,688 residential units have preliminary approval, but none are under construction. The recession and tightened credit make construction unlikely in 2010. In the meantime, renters and some owners are starting to fill vacant units, and the residential population in the downtown corridor is growing quickly, particularly among younger people who work in or near Miami's center.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & COMMERCE

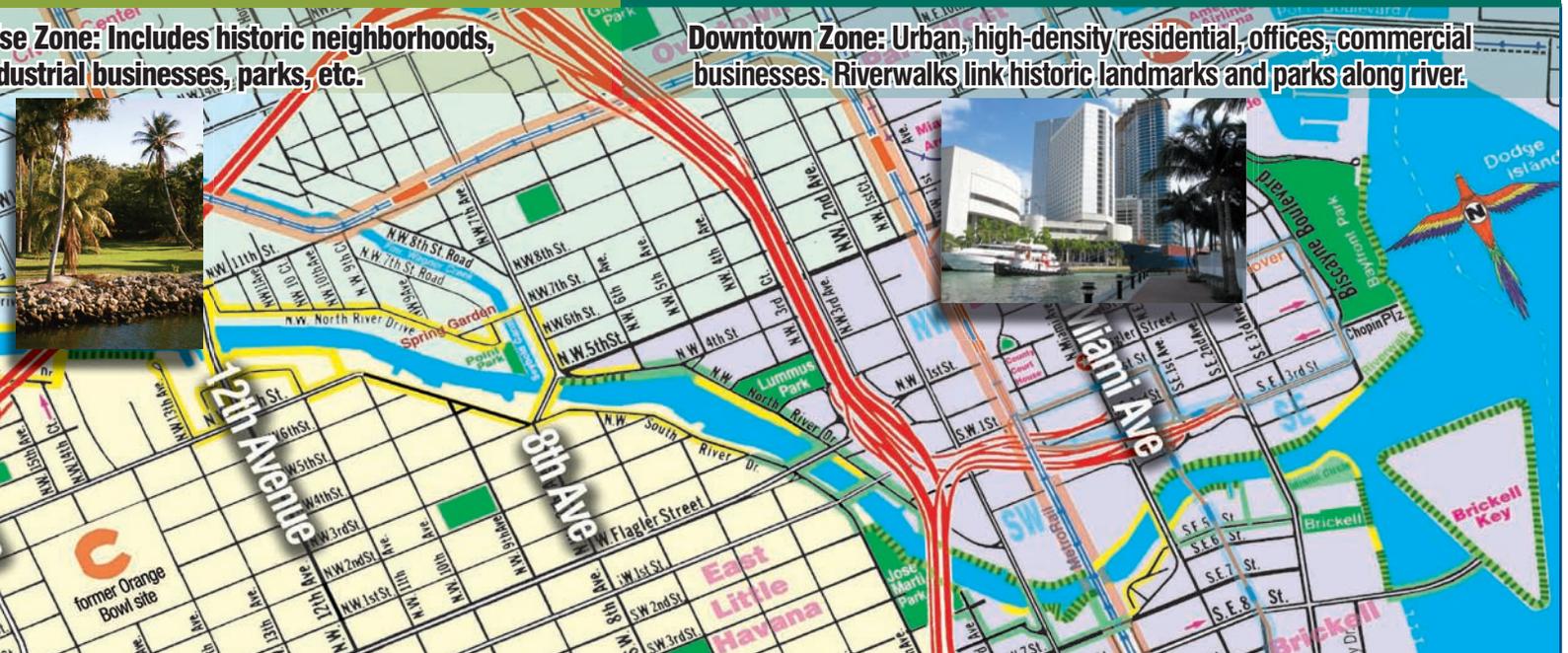
Bruno Barreiro, Chair

THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC slowdown has diminished the pace of development, but does not lessen the river's importance as a shallow-draft port for 100 ports of call in the Caribbean. The river's vital role will only increase with the likely freeing of Cuba's economy in the coming years and decades.

In 2009 Miami-Dade County commenced a public planning process for the area bounded by the Miami River on

MIDDLE RIVER

Upper Zone: Includes historic neighborhoods, industrial businesses, parks, etc.



Downtown Zone: Urban, high-density residential, offices, commercial businesses. Riverwalks link historic landmarks and parks along river.



Map © 2001 Richard Troutner. All rights reserved.

2001

Up with the public Land, City of Miami Dade County approve Greenway Plan

2002

Sections of the Miami River Greenway constructed

2003

Sections of the Miami River Greenway constructed

2004

Sections of the Miami River Greenway constructed

2005

Sections of the Miami River Greenway constructed

2006

City of Miami adopts "A Vision for Miami's 21st Century Parks & Public Spaces" recommending completion of the Miami River Greenway • MRC hosts Greenways summit • Sections of the Miami River Greenway constructed

2007

Miami River Corridor Multimodal Transportation Plan created by Metropolitan Planning Organization and MRC recommending completion of the Miami River Greenway • Greenway construction continues

2008

Sections of the Miami River Greenway constructed

2009

City Bicycle Master Plan adopted recommending completion of the Miami River Greenway • Sections of the Miami River Greenway constructed and additional sections funded and designed for construction in 2010-2011

the east, Tamiami Canal on the south, NW 36th Street on the north and 42nd Avenue on the west. The Miami River Commission serves on the steering committee, where the public and area business owners are encouraged to participate.

The *Miami River Corridor Multimodal Transportation Plan* includes a major recommendation to alleviate downtown truck traffic by implementing “short-sea shipping” operations linking the Port of Miami with the Upper River. There, they would link with other modes of transportation: rail, road and air, thereby reducing downtown truck traffic.

Near the river corridor’s western terminus next to the Miami International Airport (MIA), the Miami Intermodal Center is moving toward completion in three stages, with a rental car facility scheduled for an opening in April 2010, the MIA Mover in September 2011 and the Miami Central Station in spring 2012.

DREDGING

Eric Buermann, Chair

THE MAINTENANCE DREDGING and Environmental Cleanup of the Miami River, successfully completed in November 2008, took 36 years of vision, 10 years of hard work and \$89 million.

Just as it did a year ago, the MRC is still seeking non-guaranteed reimbursements from the federal government for \$21 million of dredging funding advanced in 2007-2008 by the Florida Legislature (\$15 million), South Florida Water Management District (\$3 million) and the Florida Inland Navigation District (\$3 million).

That money was predicated on dredging the river to 17 feet rather than its authorized depth of 15 feet. The dredging was limited to that depth when crews hit rock at 15 feet, precluding deeper dredging. The MRC hopes that the federal government will reimburse the money soon.

Get Involved!

The Miami River Commission invites groups and individuals from the community to get involved in improving our river. To learn more about what you can do, check out our website at www.miamirivercommission.org for updates. You can also call us at 305-644-0544, or email us at miamiriver@bellsouth.net. We’re at 1407 NW 7th Street, Suite D.

Throughout 2009, the Miami River Commission coordinated volunteers of all ages and walks of life to create parks and greenways along the river through a series of events. The MRC is thankful to our growing list of sponsors, partially listed below, who contributed volunteers, supplies and funding for the “greening” of the river.

The 14th annual free Miami Riverday Festival is scheduled on April 10, 2010, at Lummus Park at 250 NW North River Drive, from 11 am-4 pm. The 13th annual festival on April 4, 2009, featured river boat tours, live music, environmental education, marine expo, historic re-enactors, children’s activities and much more.

All MRC and subcommittee meetings are publicly noticed. Public participation is encouraged. The full MRC meets on the first Monday of every month at noon, usually at the meeting room to the right of the MRC headquarters.



Volunteers beautifying the Miami River Greenway

MRC thanks volunteer event sponsors:

Miami-Dade County	South Florida Water Management District
City of Miami	Hands On Miami
City Year Miami	Vila and Son Landscaping Corp.
Florida Drawbridge	University of Miami Butler Service Center
Florida Department of Transportation	University of Miami School of Law
Community Image Advisory Board	UM H.O.P.E. (Helping Others Through Pro Bono Efforts)
EDAW/AECOM	Florida International University
Budget Rent-A-Car	Babson College
Disney	Florida Wood Recycling
TREEmendous Miami, Inc.	

Bridges

The Miami River Commission thanks the Florida Department of Transportation for its recent work on improving the roads and bridges along the Miami River. The current, five-year phase of bridge construction is winding down as traffic patterns return to normal.

REPLACEMENT OF THE NW FIFTH STREET BRIDGE, once a hazard to navigation since it was first built in 1929, is nearing completion in spring 2010 at an estimated cost of \$54 million.

THE NW 12TH AVENUE BRIDGE was completed on schedule in spring 2009, with an expansion from four to six lanes at a cost of \$64 million.

THE TAMIAMI BRIDGE, over the

Tamiami Canal just west of 27th Avenue, still awaits full funding, although the Project Development and Engineering (PD&E) study was completed in 2009. Miami-Dade County is seeking an additional \$23 million to start building the \$41 million bridge, supplementing \$18 million from an existing county bond. Once funding falls into place, the new bridge would open in five years. The existing, historic 1921 bridge

would move more than six blocks to the east and reopen as a pedestrian-only bridge connecting the City of Miami’s Fern Isle Park on the south shore with a newly-acquired park expansion area on the north shore of the river’s South Fork tributary.

THE SW FIRST STREET BRIDGE is slated for replacement in 2017 and is commencing a PD&E study in 2010.

Miami River Commission Members

*Cargo-loaded international shipping vessel navigating
the dredged Miami River's federal navigable channel*

Chair: ERIC BUERMANN, Esq.
South Florida Water Management District

Vice Chair: MR. PHIL EVERINGHAM
Designee of: Ed Swakon,
Chair of Marine Council

Florida Gov. CHARLIE CRIST
Designee: Ms. Patricia "Patty" Harris

State Rep. JUAN C. ZAPATA
Chair, Miami-Dade Delegation
Designee: Rep. Luis Garcia

Mayor CARLOS ALVAREZ
Miami-Dade County Mayor
Designee: Mr. Timothy Riera-Gomez

Mayor TOMÁS REGALADO
Mayor of the City of Miami

Commissioner BRUNO BARREIRO
Miami-Dade County Commissioner
Designee: Ms. Marlene Avalo

Commissioner FRANK CAROLLO
City of Miami Commissioner

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

Mr. RICHARD DUBIN
Chair, Miami River Marine Group
Designee: Mr. Orin Black

Ms. ALYCE ROBERTSON
Executive Director, Downtown
Development Authority
Designee: Mr. Javier Betancourt

Mr. BARRY JOHNSON
Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce
Designee: Ms. Megan Kelly

Dr. ERNEST MARTIN
Neighborhood Representative appointed
by the City of Miami Commission
Designee: Michael Cox

Ms. SALLYE JUDE
Neighborhood Representative appointed
by the Miami-Dade County Commission
Designee: Ms. Jane Caporelli

Ms. SARA C. BABUN
Member-at-Large appointed by the Miami-
Dade County Commission
Designee: Ms. Vilma Licea-Camejo

Mr. MANNY PRIEGUEZ
Member-at-Large appointed by the
City of Miami Commission

Mr. HORACIO STUART AGUIRRE
Representative from environmental
or civic organization appointed by the
Governor

Mr. JAY CARMICHAEL, Esq.
Member-at-Large appointed by the
Governor

Ex-Officio Members:

CONGRESSWOMAN ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN
Designee: Ms. Debbie Zimmerman

CAPT. JAMES "JIM" O. FITTON, USCG
Captain of the Port of Miami

Managing Director
MR. BRETT BIBEAU

Assistant Managing Director
MS. ASHLEY CHASE

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**Learn more about the river's
history, view records of our
meetings, see all our major
reports on our web site at
www.miamirivercommission.org
a great resource for what's
happening on and near the river.**

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