

**Miami River Commission's  
Urban Infill & Greenways Subcommittee  
and  
Economic Development & Commerce Subcommittee  
Public Meeting Minutes  
June 9, 2025**

Miami River Commission (MRC) Urban Infill & Greenways Subcommittee's Chairman Jim Murley convened the public meeting on June 9, 2025, 10 AM, 1407 NW 7 ST. The attendance sheet is attached.

**1) Discussion Regarding DERM's Recommended Revisions to the  
Manatee Protection Plan**

Chair Murley reflected that much has changed on the Miami River since Miami Dade County adopted their Manatee Protection Plan was adopted in 1995. Development has occurred in many locations along the river, e.g. condos, restaurants, improved marine industries and marina. A major changer since the outbreak of COVID, is the increased in charter boats picking up passengers at various locations, taking them out to Biscayne Bay, and returning often to pick up one or more charters during a day. While some of the charters comply with all applicable requirements, experienced attendees believe many are not in compliance. This significant increase in boat traffic has led to a greater opportunity for interaction with manatees transiting the Miami River corridor. Increased funding is needed for all federal, state, county and city marine enforcement units to maintain the idle no wake zone along the entire River Corridor in order to reduce injuries and fatalities to the "Threatened" Florida Manatees. Murley stated the MRC will be hosting a Special Task Force Public Meeting with the U.S. Coast Guard, City and County Marine Patrols, Police Departments, Code Compliance Departments, DERM, FWC, etc. to fight illegal charters, which are a serious problem on the Miami River. Attendees stated the Manatee Protection Plan needs to balance effective protections for Manatee's, while providing private property rights.

The attached timeline from the power point presentation prepared by DERM for their previous public webinar and public meeting was reviewed and discussed. Mr. Murley noted the MRC previously asked DERM to please provide the final draft legislation which the timeline indicates was presented to the Board of County Commissioners in 2014. DERM provided their draft amendments to the Manatee Protection Plan to the public on May 16, 2025, and the track changed version will be provided as part of the backup materials for this MRC agenda item when it is considered at the MRC's next public meeting on July 14, noon, 101 W Flagler.

Spencer Crowley stated this year alone FIND is considering awarding 12 grants to various Cities and Counties for Marine Patrol vessels, lifts, night vision, sonar, and derelict vessel removal, including the City of Miami which applied, yet unfortunately Miami-Dade County did not apply. Mr. Crowley encouraged Miami-Dade County to apply next year. MRC Chairman Horacio Stuart Aguirre stated the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary may assist the City and County Marine Patrols.

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Attendees reviewed and discussed the following documents which will be provided to the MRC as backup to this agenda item:

- 1) DERM's Track Changed Proposed Revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan
- 2) Miami-Dade County Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee's 23 Proposed Revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan (9/23/10 County Memo)

Spencer Crowley cited a state website which indicates in Miami-Dade County:

2024 - 18 Manatee fatalities of which 1 was caused by a vessel  
2023 - 15 Manatee fatalities of which 1 was caused by a vessel  
2022 - 18 Manatee fatalities of which 2 were caused by vessels  
2021 - 31 Manatee fatalities of which 3 were caused by vessels  
2020 - 25 Manatee fatalities of which 2 were caused by vessels

Judy Paul, riverfront resident, stated she witnessed a dead manatee on Wagner Creek which was hit by a vessel and all manatee death's regardless of cause, should be avoided.

John Michael Cornell noted the officially counted manatee population has significantly increased, as has the number of registered vessels, yet the number of Manatee deaths caused by vessels remains consistent. John Michael Cornell stated the Miami River is a safe location for a Dry Stack vessel facility capable of withstanding a Category 6 hurricane, which would save numerous vessels from sinking in Biscayne Bay when the next Hurricane hits Miami.

Armando Vilaboy, SFWMD, stated all SFWMD gates along the Miami River have sensors which stop the gates from closing on Manatee's, and asked to communicate further with DERM re their proposed revisions related to the SFWMD.

Attendees discussed the MRC recommend the following revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan:

- 1) Create a Manatee Protection Fund dedicated to Manatee Habitat & Law Enforcement enforcing Miami River's idle no wake speed zone, enforcement against illegal operations, and code compliance against illegal charters. This was the Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee's adopted "Motion 22". This revision should be made on page 107-110 of DERM's track changed draft revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan. Chair Murley stated that the Task Force made specific recommendations about funding for a range of actions, including significant increases in enforcement, and that the existing plan and any future amended plan will only be successful if accompanied by funding increase.
- 2) Increase fines for violation of the idle no wake speed zone, and escalate fines and consequences for repeat offenders. This was the Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee's adopted "Motion 1". This revision should be made in the policies goals and objective section starting on page on page 112 of DERM's track changed draft revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan.

**PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

- 3) Keep the Manatee Protection Plan's current "For the purposes of application of Marine Facility Siting Criteria for manatee protection to permitting of such facilities, an 'existing marine facility' is one that has been in use and possesses all required environmental approvals at any time since October 28, 1984." This was the Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee's adopted "Motion 10". (DERM 's proposed track changed revisions page 16 proposes to revise that date to become, "Existing marine facility—for the purposes of this plan, the definition of an existing boat facility is one which is operating with all required authorizations and is currently producing boat traffic, or has recently produced boat traffic in the past five years"). This revision should be made on page 16 to the definition of Existing Marine Facility DERM's track changed draft revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan.
- 4) Allow slip transfers from 1 property to another property in either direction on the Miami Rivers. This was the Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee's adopted "Motion 5 & 6". This revision should be made on page 104 of DERM's track changed draft revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan.
- 5) Currently Waterborne Transportation / Water Taxi is allowed on Miami River up to the 5 ST Bridge. Make revision to allow Waterborne Transportation / Water Taxi on entire Miami River and tributaries, which is currently allowed in the Fort Lauderdale's "New River", Palm Beach, and their respective Manatee Protection Plan's which were both approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. This was the Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee's adopted "Motion 9". This revision should be made on page 98 of DERM's track changed draft revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan.
- 6) On the Miami River make revision to remove "Waterborne Transportation / Water Taxi", vessels visiting parks and restaurants from the "Transitory Boat Slip" category / definition. Similar to other counties, do not count transitory slips towards the slip count. This was the Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee's adopted "Motion 9". This revision should be made to the definition of "Transitory Boat Slip" found on page 19 of DERM's track changed draft revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan.
- 7) In City of Miami Riverfront properties zoned D3 Marine Industrial and in Unincorporated Miami Dade County's portion of the Miami River (west of 27 Ave), allow increased boat slips in order to attract job generating marine industrial businesses. This revision should be made on page 112 forward of DERM's track changed draft revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan.

- 8) On the Miami River allow increased flexibility and slip counts for dry stack storage. This revision should be made on page 112 forward of DERM's track changed draft revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan.
- 9) On the Miami River revise the vessel to linear feet of shoreline ratio in Parks and Residential to 1 vessel per 50 feet. This revision should be made on page 87, under "new facilities" in DERM's track changed draft revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan.
- 10) A revision to the Manatee Protection Plan on the Miami River do not count vessels over 100' towards the allowable slip count, as currently done in other portions of Miami-Dade County. For example, if a Marine industrial zoned site with 500 linear feet located west of 27 Ave has a Marine Operating permit which allows 8 slips, they could have 8 slips in dry stack plus 5 x 100' vessels along the shoreline. This revision should be made on page 95 of DERM's track changed draft revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan.
- 11) Insert working with Miami River Commission to help Manatee's. This revision should be made on page 110 of DERM's track changed draft revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan.

MRC Subcommittee Chairman Murley recommends these public MRC Subcommittee minutes and the recommendation contained therein be adapted by the Miami River Commission after discussion and any amendments. Furthermore, in transmitting the minutes to the appropriate County, City and State officials MRC Subcommittee Chairman Murley recommends the MRC Chairman's letter emphasize the following.

1. The Miami River is a distinct waterway covered by the Countywide Manatee Protection Plan. Port Miami River is one of three Congressionally authorized navigation channels in addition to Government Cut and the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway. While the proposed amended plan breaks out information, e.g., Marine Operating Plans, etc., specifically for the Miami River, the jurisdiction and responsibilities of the MRC are not delineated in the proposed Plan. The MRC recommends that the final adopted plan clearly indicated those portions applicable to only the Miami River and also specifies the coordination role of the MRC set out in state legislation
2. The MRC appreciates the time extension allowed by DERM for submission of comments on the Manatee from July 5 to July 17, in order to allow full MRC review and approval at a public meeting. Going forward, the MRC requests that DERM engage the MRC and Miami River stakeholders in any proposed changes to the Plan impacting the Miami River. Open discussion in publicly noticed meetings provides the best opportunity that when this revised legislation is eventually filed with the Miami-Dade County Commission for consideration, it will be successfully adopted.

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This item is on the MRC's July 14 public meeting agenda, noon, Library Auditorium, 101 W Flagler.

**II) New Business**

The public meeting adjourned.

# History of Miami-Dade County's MPP

Florida Governor directs 13 key counties to develop MPPs

**1989**

Miami-Dade Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee (MPPRC) established

**2007**

FWC provides comments on MPPRC recommendations

**2010**

Proposed revisions to the MPP submitted to BCC Committee.

Item withdrawn and RER directed to informally submit to FWC and USFWS

**2014**

**1995/1996**

MDC's MPP approved and implemented

**2009**

MPPRC concludes and publishes recommendations on suggested revisions to the MPP

**2011**

County hosts a public workshop on proposed revisions

**2014 – present**

Continued coordination with FWC and USFWS on proposed revisions

**Miami River Commission's Economic Development & Commerce and  
Urban Infill & Greenways Subcommittee**

**Public Meeting**

June 9, 2025 – 10:00 AM

1407 NW 7 ST, Miami, FL

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