

Miami River Commission

Annual Report 2008

Dredging Accomplished

In 2008, The Miami River Commission celebrated its 10th anniversary with the completion of its signature Maintenance Dredging and Environmental Cleanup Project.

This long-awaited community-wide initiative will significantly improve trade, jobs, business and the natural environment for many years to come. It took determination, skill and a community uniting in common cause.

We thank everyone who made it possible.



Viewed from the riverwalk, dredging nears completion at the mouth of the Miami River.

Inset: A view of the Miami River from a new residence.

This exciting new era for the Miami River was 36 years in the making.



The dredging's completion represents a triumph for the community against long odds.

Today, international shipping terminals no longer need to fill vessels' cargo to only half capacity. Larger megayachts can now navigate to the Miami River's historic boatyards for professional servicing. Shippers who used to require two trips now only need one, increasing efficiency, commerce and local employment. Only the dredging's completion in late 2008 makes all this possible.

CHALLENGES REMAIN, and this is the moment to build on the Miami River's emergence as a place to live, work and play.

The first order of business is dredging Wagner Creek and the Seybold Canal, deemed the most polluted bodies of water in Florida. The City of Miami is working hard to move forward with this estimated \$17 million project, which the Miami River Commission heartily supports. This dredging is vital both for business and for further environmental remediation.

The just-completed dredging on the River took per-

sistence, advocacy and an unprecedented community effort amid potentially fatal interruptions. Dredging started in 2004. Funding pressures forced suspension of the dredging in late 2005. After a 2¹/₂-year demobilization, the dredging resumed in February 2008 and was completed in October.

THIS WORK BENEFITS THE RIVER'S THREE MAJOR ZONES:

- The Upper River, with shipping terminals that provide a lifeline to more than 100 destinations in and near the Caribbean Basin;
- The Middle River, with its planned megayacht center, health district, parks and historic neighborhoods;
- The Lower River, emerging as one of North America's most vibrant downtown riverscapes.

The \$89 million project's success is the result of heroic effort by Miami-Dade's elected representatives in Washington, Tallahassee and Miami.

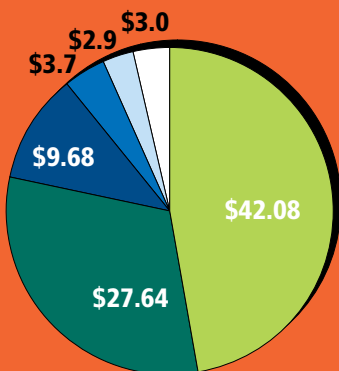
THE MRC IS GRATEFUL FOR the project's appropriations from Congress under the leadership of the Miami-Dade congressional delegation; the State of Florida, under the leadership of the Miami-Dade legislative delegation; the governor and his staff; the South Florida Water Management District governing board and staff; the Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) board and staff; the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners, mayor and administration, and the Miami City Commission, mayor and administration.

Dredging Budget Appropriated Funds

in millions

The Miami River Commission wants to thank The Florida Legislature, South Florida Water Management and FIND for making the completion of the project in 2008 possible. For more details, please see the Dredging Working Group report inside.

TOTAL BUDGET \$89 MILLION





ERIC BUERMANN

South Florida has scored a big victory

with the completed dredging and continuing environmental cleanup of the Miami River. Many people worked hard against long odds to make it happen. This effort took more than a decade from the formation of the commission, and 36 years after the late Sen. Claude Pepper, while a congressman, pushed the enabling legislation to dredge the river and reduce pollution. He would be proud today.

DREDGING AND STORMWATER. This is the foundation of so much other work both well along today and in urgent need of addressing. First on the list is the environmental cleanup of the most polluted body of water in Florida: Wagner Creek and the Seybold Canal. This estimated \$17 million dredging and cleanup will be led by the City of Miami. This work, in conjunction with stormwater improvements, will form the insurance policy for the river's long-term future.

SMART GROWTH. Healthy communities require a vision. The Miami River Corridor Urban Infill Plan – prepared jointly with the City of Miami and Miami-Dade County – calls for high-density mixed-use and mixed-income developments in the downtown

lower river area; lower density as we move into historic neighborhoods in the middle river, and preservation and enhancement of the marine-industrial businesses which generate needed jobs, especially in the upper river area. That plan works in harmony with other plans described elsewhere in this report on Greenways, Stormwater and Multimodal Transportation.



A "PEOPLE-FRIENDLY" RIVER. We continue to plan and create publicly accessible greenways and riverwalks linking parks, homes and businesses – all well-maintained and policed – through a 10-mile greenways system and that will be a source of community pride.

THANKS ARE IN ORDER for past and future efforts. For this work,

I would especially thank bipartisan help from Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Kendrick Meek, Mario Diaz-Balart and Lincoln Diaz-Balart. In addition, we thank the members of the community and elected representatives who made this achievement possible through their efforts and dedication, among them Bob Parks, the founding chair of the Miami River Commission; his successor Irela Bagué; Dick Bunnell, former Chair of the Dredging Subcommittee, and the people of the Army Corps of Engineers, particularly Assistant Secretary John Paul Woodley and Col. Paul Grosskruger. We are thankful to all those who have turned the revival of the Miami River into a labor of love and made the community a better place.

–Eric Buermann, *Chair*

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, who was included in the "Book of Leaders 2008" – *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 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,"** – *1,000 Friends of Florida*, 2005
- **"BEST NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION,"** – *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

Testimonials

“The cleanup will bolster our environment for generations. Economic benefits will flow just as long, because in restoring the 5.5-mile-long river's channel to its former 15-foot depth from the silted-in 9 to 11 feet we've lived with for decades, we'll add vital shipping.”

MICHAEL LEWIS, Publisher, Miami Today

“The Miami River Commission has been very helpful, particularly with their work on the Greenway. The effect has been to make our neighborhood prettier and our business more visible. When you see planted trees and not garbage, people want to come. It is great to see the kids volunteering.”

MARTHA LONGUERIA, Casablanca Seafood Bar and Grill and Fish Market

“The Miami River Commission has been instrumental in the development of Southeast Florida's first large-scale commercial biodiesel production facility. The MRC has helped pave the way for Biomix Energy to bring its plant to the Miami River and produce a clean, renewable fuel.”

STEVEN KARPEL, Chief Operating Officer, Biomix Energy



Riverfront business: The new wave

In 2008, five new marine-related businesses opened along the Miami River and two expanded to additional sites. This growth was partially due to the completed dredging of the Miami River and the prospect of dredging on the Seybold Canal. The MRC believes that this new wave of businesses sets the stage for the coming years along the Miami River's dredged 15-foot-deep federal navigable channel.

New businesses include two new international shipping terminals, Gandara Marine, Campeones Boatyard and Marina on the Seybold Canal, and River Cove Marina. Expanding businesses include Garcia's Commercial Fishing, also on the Seybold Canal, and Miami River Lobster and Stone Crab.



New Gandara Marine at 450 NW North River Drive



New Campeones Boatyard and Marina at 600 NW Seventh Avenue on the Seybold Canal



Garcia's Commercial Fishing's new expanded site on Seybold Canal



Miami River Lobster and Stone Crab's new expanded site at 40 SW South River Drive



Renovated Miami River Cove Dockuminium on 2000 North River Drive



One of the two international shipping terminals that opened west of NW 27th Avenue in 2008.

DREDGING

Eric Buermann, Chair

THE CLOSING CEREMONY for the last dredging scoop took place Oct. 15 at the mouth of the Miami River on the publicly accessible riverwalk trailhead on the north shore's confluence with Biscayne Bay.

The effort took 36 years of vision, more than 10 years of hard work, \$89 million in local, state and federal money, a 2¹/₂-year temporary demobilization, discovery of buried World War II munitions, and the dedication, patience, persistence and creativity of hundreds of citizens, elected officials and stakeholders in the river.

AMONG THE GOALS IN OUR CURRENT EFFORTS:

- Seeking non-guaranteed reimbursements from the federal government for \$21 million advanced in 2007-2008 by the Florida Legislature (\$15 million); South Florida Water Management District (\$3 million), and the Florida Inland Navigational District (\$3 million).
- Dredging Seybold Canal and Wagner Creek, contaminated with dioxins and other pollutants.
- Finishing the Miami River Greenway

On the reimbursement, we are optimistic that at least \$10 million in potential refunds – already approved by President Bush, the House and the Senate before the election suspended the Conference Committee's work – will come back to our state and local governments in 2009.

Dredging was complicated in mid-2008 by the discovery of buried munitions dating back to World War II, when the Merrill-Stevens facility was a center for manufacturing more than 1,000 military vessels.

This effort required specialists to handle dredging and disposal of munitions, heightened safety procedures and the inevitable resulting change orders. That project near the 12th Avenue Bridge was completed successfully, after the ceremonial last scoop, allowing dredging crews to demobilize in November.

GREENWAYS

Dr. Ernest Martin, Chair

IN PARTNERSHIP with the Trust for Public Land, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), the city, county, and riverfront developers, the MRC continued progress toward implementing The Miami River Greenway Action Plan (available at www.miamirivercommission.org).

In 2008 the public and private sectors continued developing the following sections of the publicly accessible Miami River Greenway system:

PUBLIC SECTOR:

- City of Miami, with grant funding from the Florida Department of Transportation, constructed an on-road Greenway along North River Drive from I-95 to NW 2nd Street.

Working Group Reports

PRIVATE SECTOR:

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

The MRC would like to thank the Florida Legislature for authorizing \$2.2 million to replace the collapsed seawall adjacent to the ancient Miami Circle site and create a riverwalk to finally create public access to this site purchased by the taxpayers in 1998 for \$26 million. We encourage the state of Florida to complete this task.

MRC is continuing to coordinate and cosponsor volunteer cleanup and beautification of the

river with Hands on Miami, the University of Miami, Ransom Everglades, AARP, Florida International University, Service for Peace, the Junior League, Engage Miami and other groups. The MRC continues to meet with the City of Miami administration regarding the needs for additional maintenance, security and special events, which are critical to ensure the Greenways’ success and longevity after completion.

URBAN INFILL

James Murley, Chair

THE MRC IS WORKING closely with the city and county for the long-term planning of the river area. The Miami 21 zoning rewrite is at the heart of this effort.

In keeping with the spirit of the working river, the City of Miami in 2008 created a special D-3 zoning category for marine

industrial businesses – a category that exists exclusively on the Miami River. On Nov. 4, Florida voters gave a further boost to working river properties by voting overwhelmingly for Amendment 6, which would assess waterfront properties based on current use.

In another vital effort, plans are moving forward on the Miami River Corridor Multimodal Transportation Plan, adopted by the MRC in 2007 in partnership with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), city and county. The plan recommends multi-modal transportation improvements to accommodate the significant growth of residents, tourists and freight along the Miami River.

In addition, the plan recommends other multi-modal transportation improvements, including, but not limited to:

waterborne transit, synchronizing signals with drawbridge openings; two-waying certain one-way streets; a tugboat basin, a centralized freight-forwarding center, and more.

Despite the economic slowdown, mixed-use and mixed-income redevelopment continues, often on once-vacant and contaminated brownfield sites within the downtown lower river section of the Miami River corridor. There are 4,208 residential units recently completed, 5,215 units under construction and 6,548 units in final permitting stages along the Miami River.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & COMMERCE

Bruno Barreiro and Megan Kelly, Co-Chairs

DESPITE GLOBAL ECONOMIC turbulence, five new marine businesses opened in 2008, anticipating increased trade and

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 and parks



MIAMI RIVER MAINTENANCE DREDGING CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1935

Army Corps of Engineers dredges Miami River to 15-foot depth and 90-150-foot width.

1972

Congress authorizes Corps to investigate maintenance dredging of Miami River to improve navigation and reduce pollution.

1977

Corps feasibility study placed on hold, pending action by local governments in cutting pollution. Study resumes 1985.

1986

Congress directs Corps to “remove polluted bottom sediments” from the Miami River, with local governments paying 25 percent of cost.

1990

Final feasibility study recommends maintenance dredging and ocean disposal of sediments.

1991

The EPA recommends against ocean disposal; the Miami River Coordinating Committee (MRCC) recommends more costly upland disposal.

1998

State of Florida creates Miami River Commission (MRC), which identifies dredging as a priority.

business resulting from dredging. Stakeholders in the river also have launched plans to create a Miami River Free Trade Zone.

IN 2008 ALONE:

- Jones Boatyard is now able to use its lift that can pull 250-foot megayachts, which now have the ability to navigate the Miami River due to the completion of the dredging project.

- Biomix Energy, a biodiesel plant builder, announced its intentions to create a biodiesel plant near the river's western end. Ultimately, this facility is designed to import and process the inedible jatropha plant for transshipment as biodiesel fuel elsewhere in the United States.

The largest project remains Merrill-Stevens Dry Dock Company's \$55-million-plus expansion. The recreational boatyard has been in continuous operation on the Miami River since 1923.

The expansion, first announced in 2006, will include a 2,500-ton lift capable of removing 250-foot megayachts for servicing.

The project will create 350 new jobs with salaries well above the county average, a marine vocational school, publicly accessible riverwalk/greenway sections, and a Miami River historical exhibit/museum area. Mr. Antonio Villamil and Mr. Charles Yaros of the Washington Economics Group prepared an independent economic analysis, which estimated a total annual recurring economic impact from the facility at \$195 million.

The Miami River Corridor Multimodal Transportation Plan includes a major recommendation to alleviate downtown truck traffic through implementing "short-sea shipping" operations shifting cargo containers from the Port of Miami to the Upper River,

where they would link with multimodes of transportation including rail and air, thereby reducing downtown truck traffic.

In addition, the Economic Development and Commerce Working Group is recommending Miami-Dade County create an "Upper River Plan" followed by Miami Intermodal Center Associated Development Specifications and Guidelines. The Plan, specs and guidelines will provide the needed framework to steer appropriate intermodal connectivity between the Port of Miami River and adjacent Miami Intermodal Center, Miami International Airport and existing railroad lines.

STORM WATER

Sallye Jude, Chair

THE WORKING GROUP'S most urgent task in 2008 and 2009 is the dredging and environmental

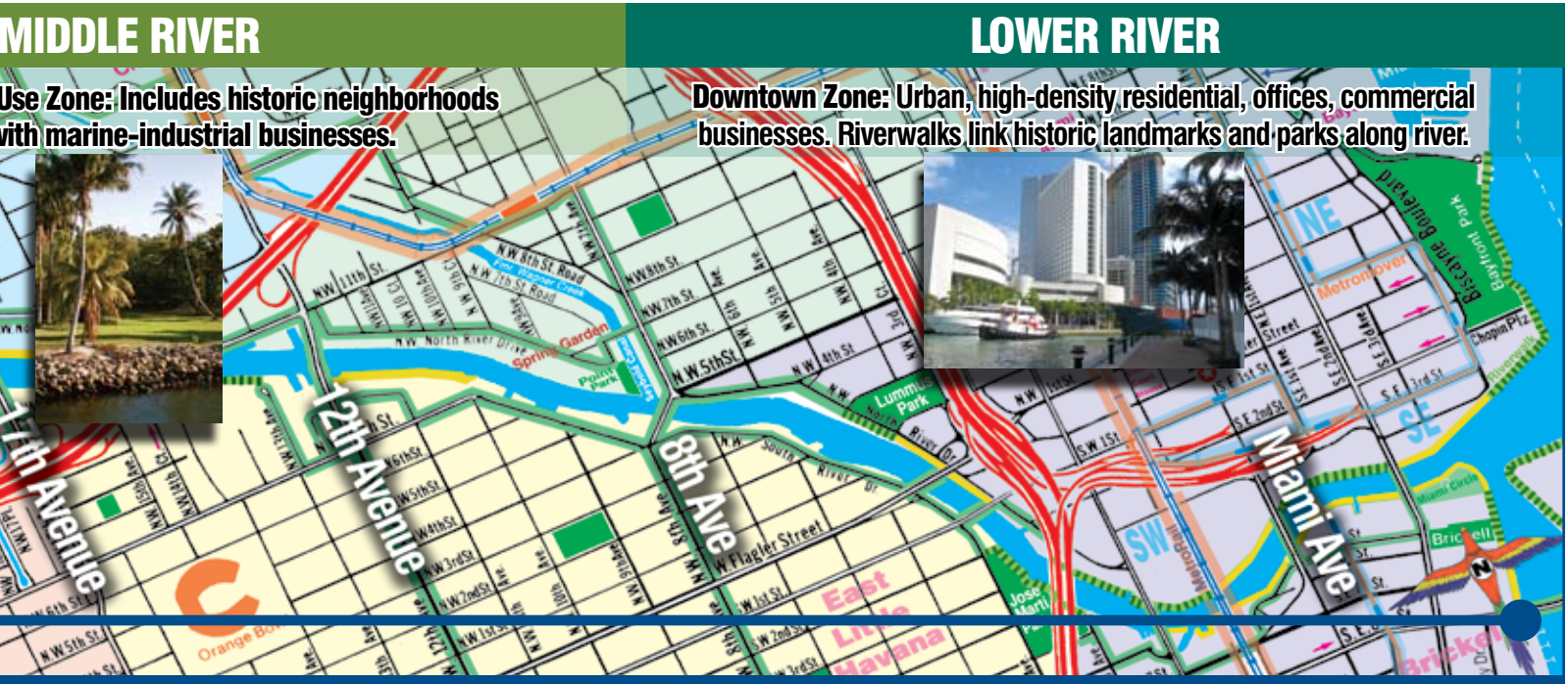
cleanup of Wagner Creek and Seybold Canal, deemed the most polluted bodies of water in the State of Florida.

This project is in the purview of the City of Miami, which hired CH2M Hill for \$1 million to design and get permits for the estimated \$17 million project. The design and permitting should be completed in early 2009.

Miami has submitted a \$16.7-million request for the project as part of the potential federal economic stimulus package and may seek a \$1-million grant from the Florida Inland Navigation District and the South Florida Water Management District.

Marine business have opened or expanded on the Seybold Canal in the last year, among them Campeones Boatyard and Marina, and Garcia's Commercial Fishing.

This working group is now among the commission's most important, as the antiquated



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1999

Corps amends the Miami River dredging project cost-share ratio to 80 percent federal and 20 percent local funding, making project feasible.

2001

Corps advertises dredging Request for Proposals, asks private utilities to relocate crossings.

2003

Corps and local project sponsors execute Miami River Dredging Project Cooperation Agreement. Corps reviews five submitted RFP bids.

2004

Miami River maintenance dredging commences in the upper river at the salinity dam.

2005

Dredging temporarily demobilized due to lack of available pledged federal cost share with 40 percent of the project completed.

2007

Army Corps orders dredging to resume.

2008

DREDGING RESUMES IN FEBRUARY. PROJECT COMPLETED IN OCTOBER.



Scavenger 2000 Decontamination Vessel removing a hazard to navigation in between several vessels.

storm water and sanitary sewer system serving the 69-square-mile Miami River basin, which needs to continue renovations as recommended in the Miami River Commission's *Miami River Basin Water Quality Improvement Report* available at www.miamirivercommission.org along with quarterly agency implementation progress reports.

Environmental agencies continue to implement the working group's Miami River Basin Water Quality Improvement Plan. Those agencies include the City of Miami, Miami-Dade Department of Environmental Resource Management and the Water and Sewer Department, South Florida Water Management District and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

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. In 2007 new Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) water quality goals were established for Wagner Creek.

The Commission is pleased to report that Miami-Dade County has given the MRC \$100,000 for one year for the Scavenger 2000 decontamination vessel, which collects floatable debris and decontaminates 10,000-15,000 gallons of river water per minute, injecting a minimum of 150,000 liters of oxygen per hour. It doubles as a sprayer for cleaning the shoreline and putting out fires. DERM has reported a decrease in contaminants along the river since the Scavenger commenced service in 2001.

Outreach

Throughout 2008, 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 the sponsors, partially listed below, who contributed volunteers, supplies and money to the "greening" of the river.

The 12th annual free Miami Riverday Festival was held in April 12, 2008, featuring river boat tours, live music, environmental education, marine expo, historic re-enactors, children activities and much more. The 2009 Miami Riverday is scheduled April 4, 2009, at Jose Martí Park, SW 4 Street and SW 4 Ave., 11 am-4 pm.

The MRC completed a website redesign this year, by Toni Kirkland Graphics, and available at www.miamirivercommission.org.

All MRC and subcommittee meetings are publicly noticed and public participation is encouraged. The full MRC meets on the first Monday of every month at noon.



Volunteers creating new riverfront park along Miami River Greenway.

MRC thanks volunteer event sponsors:

Miami-Dade County

City of Miami

Florida Drawbridge

Florida Department of Transportation

Community Image Advisory Board

BC Architects

EDAW/AECOM

Budget Rent-A-Car

Hands on Miami

Vila and Son Landscaping Corporation

University of Miami Butler Service Center

University of Miami School of Law

H.O.P.E. (Helping Others Through Pro Bono Efforts) Public Interest Resource Center

Sherwin Williams Paints, 668 NW 5th St.

Bridges

The Miami River Commission is thankful to the Florida Department of Transportation for its heroic, and often unheralded, work on improving the infrastructure of the roads and bridges along the Miami River. Here is a rundown of state and county ongoing and upcoming projects:

THE NW 5TH STREET BRIDGE

FDOT replacement of the 1929 bascule bridge that was a hazard to navigation has begun, with completion set for spring 2010 at an estimated cost of \$54 million.

THE NW 12TH AVENUE BRIDGE

continues to undergo a \$64 million FDOT replacement, and is expanding from four to six lanes. Traffic has moved to the new northbound span, as the contractor continues work on the southbound span, with completion scheduled in spring 2009.

THE NW 17TH AVENUE BRIDGE,

owned by Miami-Dade County, re-opened for traffic in March, after a \$10-million repair of steel deterioration and rust damage extended the bridge's life by 40 years.

THE SW FIRST STREET BRIDGE

was repaired in early 2008. FDOT has earmarked the 1929 bridge for replacement in an estimated 7-10 years.

THE TAMIAMI BRIDGE, over the Tamiami Canal just west of 27th Avenue, has been earmarked for

replacement by Miami-Dade County, which is seeking an additional \$23 million to start building the \$41 million bridge, supplementing \$18 million from an existing county bond. If funding falls into place, the new bridge would open in five years. As part of the plan, the existing, historic 1921 bridge would move more than six blocks to the east and reopen as a pedestrian-only bridge connecting City of Miami's Fern Isle Park on the south shore with a newly-acquired park expansion area on the north side of the river's South Fork tributary.

Miami River Commission Members

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

MR. ED SWAKON
Chair of Marine Council
Designee / **Vice Chair:** Phil Everingham

Florida Gov. CHARLIE CRIST

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

Mayor CARLOS ALVAREZ
Miami-Dade County Mayor
Designee: Mr. Robert Villar

Mayor MANUEL A. DIAZ
Mayor of the City of Miami
Designee: Mr. Robert Ruano

Commissioner BRUNO BARREIRO
Miami-Dade County Commissioner
Designee: Ms. Lubby Navarro

Commissioner JOE SANCHEZ
City of Miami Commissioner
Designee: Mr. Steve Wright

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. Elena Licea

Mr. MANNY PRIEGUEZ
Member At Large Appointed by the
City of Miami Commission

**REPRESENTATIVE FROM
ENVIRONMENTAL OR CIVIC
ORGANIZATION APPOINTED BY
THE GOVERNOR:** To be designated

**Member at Large Appointed by
the Governor:** To be designated

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS:
CONGRESSWOMAN ILEANA
ROS-LEHTINEN**
Designee: Ms. Debbie Zimmerman

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

Managing Director
MR. BRETT BIBEAU

Assistant Managing Director:
MS. ASHLEY CHASE

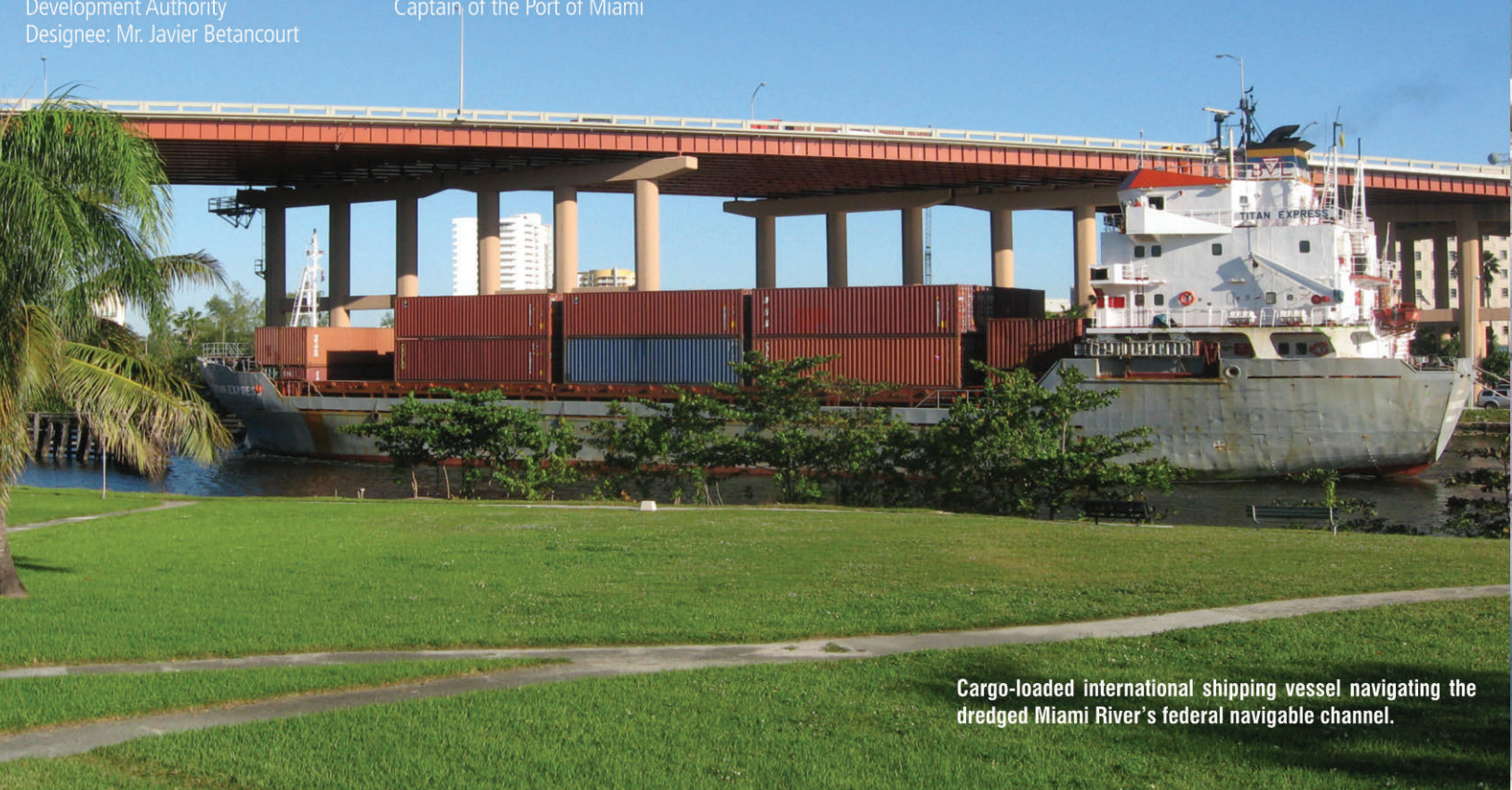
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Designed by:
Toni Kirkland Graphics

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

MIAMI RIVER COMMISSION

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