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**MIAMI RIVER COMMISSION**

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## Dredging the River:

### Historical Overview

The River needs to be dredged for both economic and environmental reasons. In 1990, the Army Corps recommended maintenance dredging of the federal navigation channel as the build-up of sediments restricted ship navigation. The sediments are contaminated primarily from stormwater drainage systems that empty into the river from over 69 square miles of urban and industrialized areas. The sediments are contaminated with heavy metals, PCB's, pesticides, sewage, and petroleum products. These contaminated sediments are migrating into and degrading Biscayne Bay. Dredged spoils are normally disposed of in the ocean, however, the EPA ruled the sediments do not meet ocean disposal criteria and must be disposed in an upland site greatly increasing the cost of the project. In 1993, the Army Corps estimated the cost of dredging at \$12 million and the upland disposal cost at \$90 - \$105 million. In 1993, upland disposal costs were the full responsibility of the non-federal sponsor and local governments could not raise \$90 - \$105 million for River dredging. Miami-Dade County has been the "acting" local non-federal sponsor for this project for the entire period.

### Current Situation:

The **Miami River Commission** was established and determined River dredging was the number one priority to improve the Miami River. A Dredging Working Group was established that included all stakeholders and appropriate agencies. The Group established a phased dredging approach that lowered the overall costs to \$74 million. Meetings in Washington with Army Corps Headquarters personnel resulted in a more favorable cost sharing ratio of 80% federal and 20% non-federal for the Miami River dredging project. Additionally, with the help of our senators and congresspersons, \$5 million in federal funding was appropriated for River dredging in October 1999.

### Outstanding Issues:

The Army Corps cannot continue any further project work until a temporary disposal site is located and made available for the dredging project. Lands, easements and rights-of-way for the dredging project are the full responsibility of the local sponsor. The County is acting as the local sponsor and is now pursuing a land site that is acceptable for dredging. This action is primarily focused on property near the Miami Intermodal Center (MIC). Additionally, a funding partnership consisting of the County, City and State is in the process of being developed. Failure to obtain this land site and have a "real" local sponsor will cause these federal funds to be reprogrammed to other projects. Congressional support for River dredging next fiscal year (if we do not start this year) will be difficult if not impossible due to the massive Everglades Project. **We must start the River dredging project this year.**

### MORE

[Dredging FAQs](#)

### Dredging Benefits

- The River will be environmentally restored** and prevent further degradation to Biscayne Bay.
- The shipping industry will expand** as ships will be less dependent on high tide sailings and could transit at most times of the day and night. This will increase the estimated \$4 billion dollars of goods now being transported via the river and improve the economy.
- The River infrastructure will be in place** to maximize our trade opportunities with the numerous shallow draft ports of the Caribbean should political events increase trade opportunities, example, Caribbean Basin Initiative.
- The dredging project will be a catalyst** for explosive economic development of under utilized properties along the river and in the adjacent neighborhoods.
- Benefits to the State, County and City include:** enhancement of the environmental quality of the River and downstream areas of Biscayne Bay, improvement of brownfields redevelopment programs, improvement of the "Eastward Ho" initiatives, expansion of commerce and international trade, and better utilization of empowerment zones.
- Dredging or "cleaning" of the River will improve the live-ability** of River communities by enhancing riverwalks, greenways and parks for citizens and tourists.
- Dredging will eliminate the classification of the river as a "cesspool"** by the two Grand Jury reports and bring about a revitalization of this distressed urban waterfront area similar to other major cities like Baltimore, Jacksonville and Washington, D.C.
- Dredging will increase jobs.** The trade journal "Florida Shipper" notes that one small coastal freighter carrying 100 containers creates 77 jobs (indirect and direct) on shore. River dredging will allow the average river freighter to increase their cargo capacity from 160 containers to 240 containers. In 1998 alone, over 4000 cargo vessels called on the Miami River.

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### DREDGING

## Dredging FAQs:

What types of pollutants are in the sediments? Are all of the sediments polluted?

The most common types of pollutants in Miami River sediments are heavy metals, such as lead, copper, zinc, cadmium, and mercury. These metals concentrations are ten to one hundred times above what would be expected for natural sediments. They also contain trace amounts of petroleum-related compounds and some types of pesticides. Contamination occurs throughout the navigable section of the River, however the highest concentrations are from Wagner Creek to the mouth of the River. Contaminants are associated primarily with the fine-grained silt and mud which has accumulated in the channel.

Is the sediment considered "hazardous waste"?

**No.** "Hazardous waste" is a designation under state and federal law pertaining to substances that could pose a significant threat to human health or the environment if the substance is disposed of, treated or handled improperly. Although the sediments are contaminated, they do not have high levels of pollutants or other properties that pose a significant threat to human health as defined by "hazardous waste".

If it isn't "hazardous", then why is there a concern about the pollutants?

Federal and State agencies have conducted laboratory experiments, called "bioassays," to evaluate the biological effects of the sediment on marine life. These studies have shown that the sediments from the Miami River are toxic to a variety of marine animals, including crustaceans, worms, clams, small fish, and larval oysters and sea urchins. Over the years, many different studies using a variety of different animals and test procedures have been completed. In these studies, the Miami River sediments have caused mortality, reduced reproduction or growth, or accumulation of contaminants in the test animals. This finding means that the pollution in the sediment could be affecting marine life in the River, and that sensitive wildlife and fisheries resources in Biscayne Bay could be affected if additional polluted sediment is discharged into the Bay.

Who conducted the sediment tests?

Sediment analyses and bioassays were performed as part of dredging-related and regional studies done by State and Federal agencies. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from the 1980's through the 1990's performed the most significant work

### MORE

[Historical Overview](#)  
[Dredging Benefits](#)



Which pollutant causes the toxicity?

The concentrations of the metals, as well as the petroleum-based substances, exceed levels believed to cause biological effects. The toxicity is probably the combined result of several of the pollutants.

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## Maritime Links

### Maritime Organizations

- [Biscayne Bay Partnership Initiative](#)
- [Marine Council](#)
- [Miami River Marine Group](#)
- [Seventh U.S. Coast Guard District Team](#)



### Maritime Businesses

- [Antillean Marine Shipping Corp.](#)
- [Florida Detroit Diesel-Allison](#)



### Civic Organizations & Partnerships

- [Citizens for a Better South Florida](#)
- [City of Miami Official Website](#)
- [DERM \(Department of Environmental Resources Management\)](#)
- [Welcome to Downtown Development Authority](#)
- [Historical Museum of Southern Florida](#)
- [Welcome to Miami-Dade County - On-Line!](#)
- [Miami-Dade District Five Commissioner Bruno Barreiro](#)



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[\*\*Miami-Dade Empowerment Trust\*\*](#)

[\*\*Miami Circle Home Page\*\*](#)

[\*\*South Florida Water Management District\*\*](#)

[\*\*Spring Garden Civic Association Newsletter - Homepage\*\*](#)

[\*\*State of Florida official Web site\*\*](#)

[\*\*The Trust for Public Land\*\*](#)

[\*\*Urban Environment League of Greater Miami\*\*](#)



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Hospitality Services [\*\*miamiriverinn Home Page\*\*](#)

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# THE MIAMI RIVER COMMISSION

## ONE VOICE for the river



### Minutes of Meetings: Last 6 months

If you want to see older minutes go to [ARCHIVES](#)



General Commission	Executive Committee	Dredging Committee	Quality of life Committee	Economic Development & Commerce Group
<a href="#">Mar. 5, 2001</a> <a href="#">Feb. 5, 2001</a> <a href="#">Jan. 8, 2001</a> <a href="#">Dec. 4, 2000</a> <a href="#">Nov. 6, 2000</a> <a href="#">Oct. 2, 2000</a>	<a href="#">Jan. 26, 2001</a> <a href="#">Dec. 1, 2000</a> <a href="#">Oct. 30, 2000</a> <a href="#">Sept. 25, 2000</a> <a href="#">Aug. 23, 2000</a> <a href="#">July 24, 2000</a>	<a href="#">Jan. 10, 2001</a> <a href="#">Nov. 15, 2000</a> <a href="#">Oct. 11, 2000</a> <a href="#">Sep. 13, 2000</a> <a href="#">Aug. 17, 2000</a> <a href="#">Jun. 28, 2000</a>	URBAN INFILL SUBCOMMITTEE <a href="#">Jan. 11, 2001</a> <a href="#">Dec. 15, 2000</a> <a href="#">Sep. 1, 2000</a> <a href="#">Aug. 24, 2000</a>  STORMWATER SUBCOMMITTEE <a href="#">Jan 19, 2001</a> <a href="#">Oct. 18, 2000</a> <a href="#">Sept. 27, 2000</a> <a href="#">Aug. 30, 2000</a> <a href="#">Aug. 4, 2000</a>  GREENWAYS SUBCOMMITTEE <b>March 8, 2000</b> <a href="#">Feb. 1, 2000</a> Nov. 5, 1999 Oct. 20, 1999 July 21, 1999 July 9, 1999  <b>Wagner Creek stormwater report</b>	<a href="#">Feb. 20, 2001</a> <a href="#">Nov. 1, 2000</a> <a href="#">Sept. 28, 2000</a> <a href="#">June 14, 2000</a> <a href="#">Feb. 16, 2000</a> <a href="#">Sept. 7, 1999</a>  GRANT INVESTIGATION SUBCOMMITTEE <a href="#">Aug. 21, 2000</a>
	Other Important Documents <b>JUST RELEASED:</b> <a href="#">Miami River Greenway Action Plan</a>  <a href="#">Miami River Commission Spring Economic Report 2001</a>  <a href="#">Miami River Commission Study Report</a>  <a href="#">Miami River Commission Spring Report 2000</a>  <a href="#">Miami River Improvement Act</a>			

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## Greenways

**Greenways are a vital link** in bringing the Miami River to its full potential. Generally, its goals are to make the river more accessible to the public, and the land more accessible to boaters. Greenways systems have been successfully devised in Cleveland, Chattanooga, and Providence, where public access, parks, paths, and bikeways coexist with maritime uses.

**Here is the Miami River Commission's vision on Greenways:** The Miami River is a valuable natural and historic resource and the namesake of our community. We envision the Miami River as an ecological system that serves to enrich the lives of residents throughout the Miami metropolitan area. The Miami River Greenway will help to improve the future economic well-being of our community by increasing public access to the waterway, sustaining the "working river" maritime shipping industry, restoring water quality in the river channel, serving as an attractive destination for local residents and visitors, encouraging appropriate adjacent land use, fostering an ethic of stewardship for plants and animals native to the river landscape, and celebrating the multicultural ethnicity of our community.

[Greenways project themes](#)  
[Greenways goals and objectives](#)



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boat traffic on the river

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## About the Commission:

**THE MIAMI RIVER COMMISSION** was formed by the Florida Legislature in 1998 as the official clearinghouse for all public policy and projects related to the Miami River. Its mission is to help ensure that government agencies, businesses and residents speak with one voice on river issues.

In less than three years, the commission has brought about the river's first dredging in nearly 70 years, and put into motion a Greenways program to reclaim and enhance the river's environs and landscape. It has worked with varied interests to work with common cause to make the river stronger economically and environmentally. The commission seeks to improve every aspect of river life.

The Commission's immediate roots go back more than 20 years, but the deeper causes of the river's challenges today go back to Miami's emergence as an urban center in the 1920s boom. As the area's population exploded, stormwater and untreated sewage flowed into the river and Biscayne Bay. During World War II, the river became a manufacturing center for PT boats for the U.S. Navy. The river took on more of an industrial character from this time.

Public attention turned to the river's environmental health in the 1970s. In 1984, the Miami River Coordinating Committee came into being as a clearinghouse for information and issues relating to the river.

Accomplishments in reducing pollutants did not reverse the river's neglect quickly enough. In 1991, a Grand Jury report called the river a "cesspool" and attacked the civic and political community's neglect of the river. A second report in 1998 was also sharply critical.

**THE MIAMI RIVER STUDY COMMISSION** was formed to propose a solution to the river's challenges. The first dramatic results took years.



In January 1998, The Miami River Study Commission, chaired by **ROBERT L. PARKS**, above, issued a "Call to Action," calling the river "the most studied, yet least understood and most neglected feature in South Florida." It urged civic and political leaders to harness the river's potential as an economic engine for industry and as a tourist attraction in the heart of Miami. It warned of the environmental threat to Biscayne Bay.

[Accomplishments](#)
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**WHILE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE** the river gathered strength in the 1990s, the community needed an effective, recognized, and energetic coordinating body with active participation of elected officials with power to get things done. The study group proposed a Miami River Commission to address these priorities: dredging, creating greenways, improving water quality, enforcement, disposing of derelict vessels, and developing adjoining areas in a beneficial way. Answering the Study Commission's Call to Action, the Florida Legislature formed The Miami River Commission (MRC) as the official public clearinghouse for Miami River matters until at least the year 2003. The commission went to work quickly,

**FOR THE FIRST TIME** in memory, elected officials, businesses, residents and other river stakeholders represented on the MRC are speaking with one voice. Inspired by similar riverfront renovations in Cleveland and Chattanooga, the commission has fostered these efforts:

The MRC prompted the Army Corps to recommend that the federal government pay for 80 percent of dredging costs, including disposal.

**IT HELPED LAUNCH** a riverside Greenways program, starting with the Lummus Park/Riverside neighborhood, in alliance with the Trust for Public Land

**THE COMMISSION COULD NOT** have accomplished its work alone. A dedicated group of non-members were critical to its success and deserve special mention. **Dr. Fran Bohnsack** of **The Miami River Marine Group** has done as much as anyone to unite the commission's varied interests in the belief that a vital commercial artery can also become a destination for the public and an asset to the community. **Brenda Marshall** and **Lavinia Freeman** of the **Trust For Public Land** have worked energetically through the Greenways program to turn the river into a showcase. Without these two groups and these three people, the commission simply would not be where it is today.

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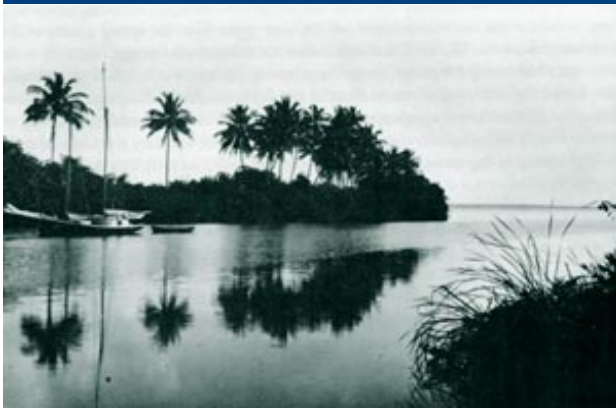
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## About the river:



Ralph Munroe's 1884 photo of the mouth of the Miami River (Miami Circle site at right).



Mouth of the Miami River 2000, looking west toward Brickell Bridge.

[River Guide and Map](#)  
[Miami River History](#)  
[Virtual River Tour](#)

From the time of the first Indian settlements, the community that became Miami formed on the banks of The Miami River. The earliest tribes lived, worshiped and traded by its rushing waters, brimming with sea life. Missionaries, soldiers and settlers followed. The City of Miami was founded at the river's mouth by Indian burial mounds and grew up along the river.

Over time, the river became the lifeblood of Miami's trade. Today, the river remains an economically critical artery of commerce, running 5.5 miles from Miami International Airport to Biscayne Bay.

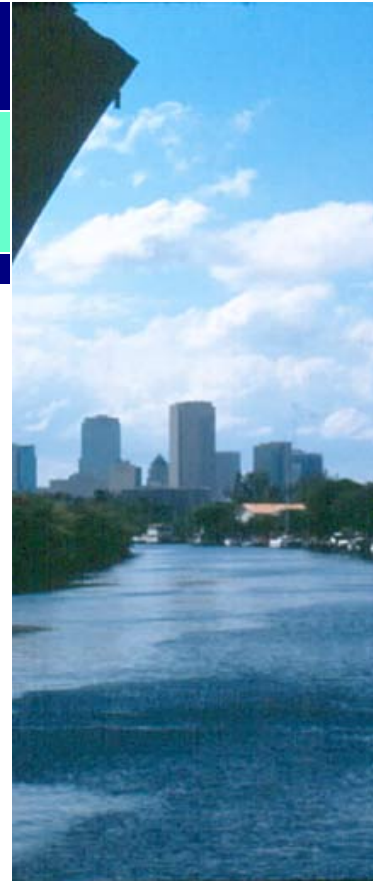
This truly working river has evolved into an exotic, vital urban waterscape without parallel in America. It flows past boatyards, marinas, public parks, tugboats, shipping terminals, pleasure craft, houseboats, mangroves, historic homes, shippers, restaurants and loading docks through the heart of downtown Miami into Biscayne Bay. The Miami River's 32 private terminals handle more than \$4 billion in cargo a year, making it Florida's fifth largest seaport.

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Don't miss the **Miami Riverday Festival**, presented by Antillean Marine, **Saturday, April 7, 2001, 1-9 p.m.** at historic Lummus Park at 404 NW 3rd St. in downtown Miami. See and hear Iko-Iko, Shoefly and other great entertainers. Enjoy food and refreshments, boat and walking tours, and unforgettable historic re-enactments. Stay tuned for more information!



**Upcoming river events**

See the Calendar of Meetings for the Commission's schedule for 2001.

[Calendar of Meetings](#)

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Welcome to the Miami River Commission, the watchdog, advocate and clearinghouse for the Miami River, which runs 5.5 miles from Biscayne Bay through the heart of Miami.

## Our Mission:

To act as the official coordinating clearinghouse for all public policy and projects related to the Miami River;

To develop coordinated plans, priorities, programs, projects, and budgets that might substantially improve the river area;



To unite all governmental agencies, businesses, and residents in the area to speak with one voice on river issues;

To act as the principal advocate and watchdog to ensure that river projects are funded and implemented in a proper and timely manner.



Just released: **The 2001 Economic Report**

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## Calendar of meetings

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Here is a schedule of general  
Commission meetings:

- [Monday, January 8th, 2001](#)
- [Monday, February 5th, 2001](#)
- [Monday, March 5th, 2001](#)
- [Monday, April 9th, 2001](#)
- [Monday, May 7th, 2001](#)
- [Monday, June 4th, 2001](#)
- [Monday, July 9th, 2001](#)
- [No August Meeting](#)
- [Monday, September 10th, 2001](#)
- [Monday, October 1st, 2001](#)
- [Monday, November 5th, 2001](#)
- [Monday, December 3rd, 2001](#)

The Miami River Commission meets at noon the first Monday of the month unless otherwise indicated at the Downtown Development Authority offices at 200 S. Biscayne Blvd., Suite 1818, Miami, Fl. 33131. Meetings usually last about 90 minutes and are open to the public.



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