

# Memorandum



**Date:** March 3, 2009

Agenda Item. No.  
12(B)2

**To:** Honorable Chairman Dennis C. Moss  
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

**From:** George M. Burgess  
County Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Burgess", written over the printed name of George M. Burgess.

**Subject:** Marine Safety Concerns at Government Cut

At its meeting of October 7, 2008, the Board approved Resolution No. R-1056-08, sponsored by Commissioner Barreiro, which directed an investigation and a subsequent report on marine safety concerns at and near the junction of Government Cut, Main Channel, Fisherman's Channel, Meloy Channel, and U.S. Coast Guard Channel. Due to the Port's lack of jurisdiction over these channels, Port staff brought this request before the Miami Harbor Safety Committee ("Committee") which is comprised, among others, of the United States Coast Guard, Biscayne Bay Pilot's Association, Fisher Island representatives, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue and Miami River representatives. The Committee recommended that the issue be discussed at the Fisher Island Turning Basin Subcommittee ("Subcommittee") which discusses marine safety concerns at this junction. The following concerns were cited from the Subcommittee.

The junction of Government Cut Channel, Main Channel, Fisherman's Channel, Meloy Channel, and U.S. Coast Guard Channel is one of the most congested and highly trafficked marine areas in Miami-Dade County. It is not only utilized by deep draft cargo and cruise vessels as a turning basin, but also utilized by Fisher Island ferries, tugboats, barges, tour boats, fishing vessels, recreational vessels, and personal watercraft (including jet skis) traveling to/from each of the five channels.

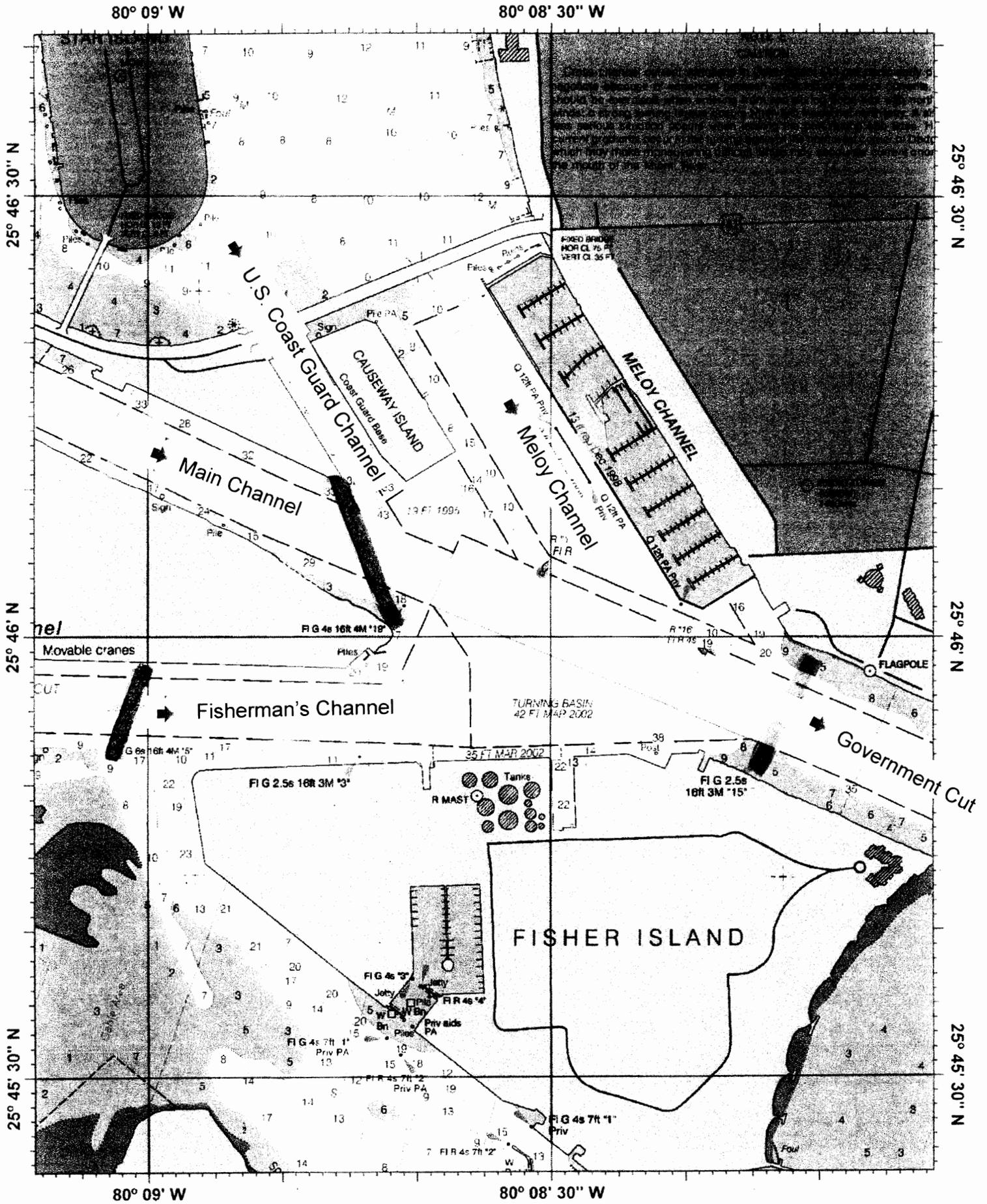
The Biscayne Bay Pilot's Association, whose pilots' transverse to/from the cruise and cargo vessels outside of the channels and navigate the vessels into the Port of Miami's berths, have offices and docks at the eastern tip of the port. Their experience reveals that the varying speeds of the vessels that converge into this small turning basin without regard to oncoming traffic are a safety issue for marine traffic. Additionally, the mooring cleats on their dock for the pilot boats have been damaged due to the strong wake these vessels are creating.

Fisher Island operates ferries which transport workers and residents to and from the island from two different locations; one on the south side of the Port and the other at Terminal Island adjacent to the Coast Guard Station. The crisscrossing of traffic through this junction at different speeds makes this ferry trip challenging during periods of high marine traffic including boating activities of recreational and personal watercraft. Fisher Island has also documented a few incidents where the strong wake has caused damage to the seawall and injured some passengers. There have also been accidents documented inside the turning basin involving vessels traveling at high speeds.

TransMontaigne, previously known as Coastal, operates a fuel farm on Fisher Island and utilizes the same slip as the ferries at the southern junction of the turning basin. The Subcommittee expressed concerns over whether the resulting surge causes any detriment to the marine environment. It is important for the USCG to study the impact of speed on both tidal action as well as the marine environment. The USCG has indicated that a formal review of this matter can be initiated. Upon receipt of a written request to this effect, the USCG will review and provide findings within approximately 6 months.



Assistant County Manager



80° 09' W

80° 08' W

25° 47' N

25° 47' N

25° 46' N

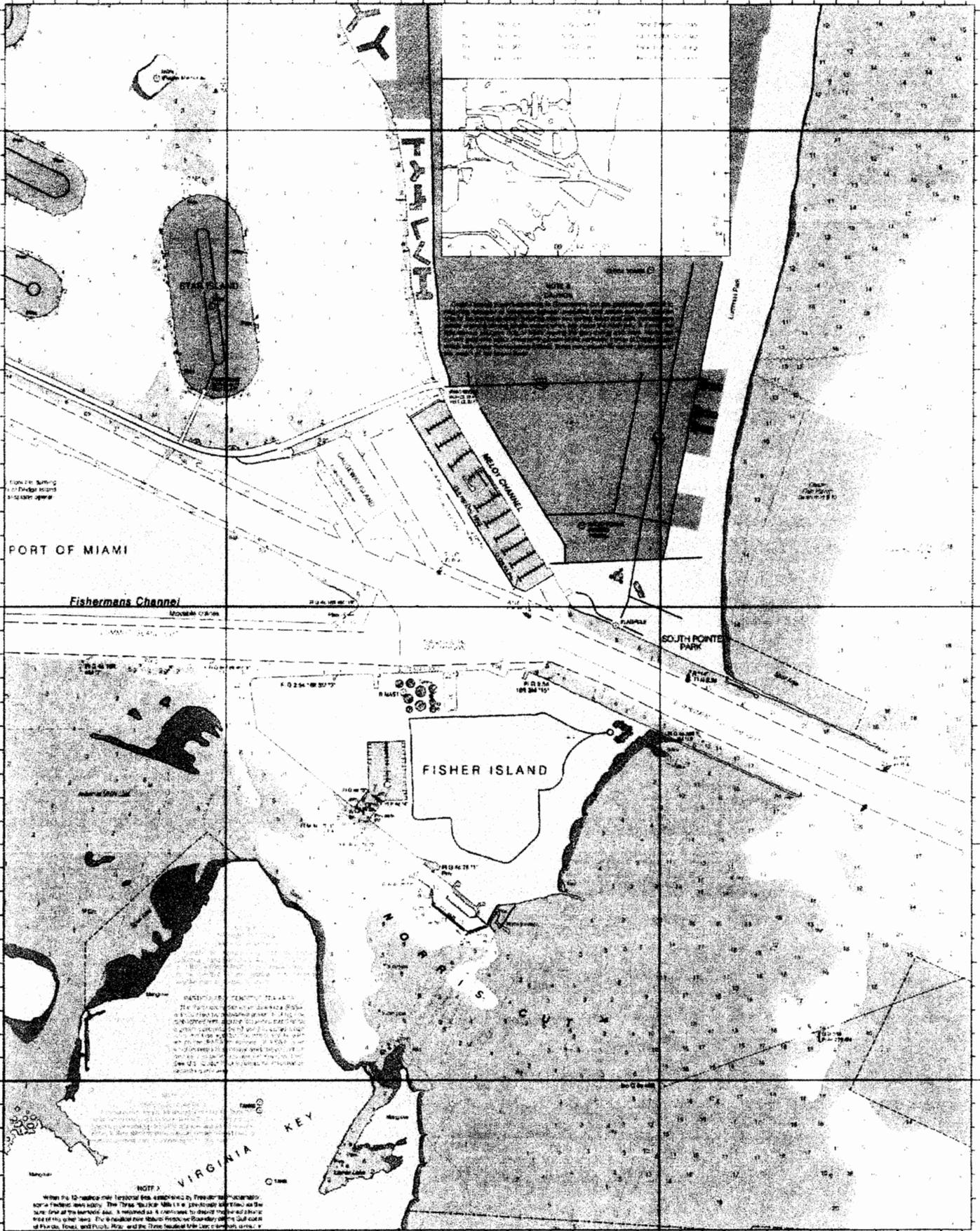
25° 46' N

25° 45' N

25° 45' N

80° 09' W

80° 08' W



NOTE: When this chart was last revised, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had not yet received the information on the proposed changes to the boundaries of the Port of Miami. The boundaries shown on this chart are those of the Port of Miami as of the date of the last revision. The boundaries shown on this chart are those of the Port of Miami as of the date of the last revision.