

# Memorandum



**Date:** July 3, 2023

**To:** Honorable Chairman Oliver Gilbert, III  
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Item No. 2(B)(5)  
July 18, 2023

**From:** Daniella Levine Cava  
Mayor

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniella Levine Cava".

**Subject:** Promote and Improve Awareness Regarding Biscayne Bay – A Combined Response to Directives 211499, 212139, 213042, 210207, 210807, 192825, 192403, and 121564

---

The Board of County Commissioners (Board) adopted Resolution R-474-21 on May 4, 2021, directing the administration to develop and implement a multilingual, multimedia public awareness campaign and educational outreach program to promote and improve awareness regarding Biscayne Bay. The public awareness campaign and educational outreach program shall, at a minimum: (a) promote and improve awareness of the economic, commercial, and recreational opportunities of Biscayne Bay; and (b) inform the public of proper and improper ways to dispose of trash and the impacts of littering, marine debris, and fertilizers to the health and management of Biscayne Bay.

In addition, the Board adopted several related resolutions as directives to create topic-specific educational campaigns to benefit the health of Biscayne Bay which, due to a lack of resources, have not been fully implemented. The “Biscayne Bay Friendly” campaign will serve as the hub to unite all campaigns and implement related directives and address future initiatives. All messaging for the public and visitors should emphasize how individual actions can positively or negatively impact Biscayne Bay and our unique environmental resources.

## **Biscayne Bay Friendly Campaign**

The Chief Bay Officer (CBO), with the support from the Office of Resilience (OOR), is developing an overarching educational campaign for residents, businesses, tourists, and students to help illustrate how their day-to-day actions can impact the health of Biscayne Bay. The campaign’s goal is rooted in helping the public develop and experience personal connections with Biscayne Bay and our unique environmental resources and educate on what can be done to help protect and conserve them. My budget included \$333,000 in the FY 2022-2023 and the budget was adopted by the Board to carry out this important campaign. The campaign will include the following:

- Promote messaging through the Multimedia – Multilingual Campaign
- Partnerships for Environmental Education & Outreach
- Incorporate existing and future Bay education Board directives

## **Biscayne Bay Economic Study Update**

To promote and improve awareness of the economic, commercial, and recreational opportunities of Biscayne Bay the Board adopted Resolution R-473-21 directing the County Mayor or County Mayor’s designee to negotiate a cost-share partnership with the South Florida Water Management

District (SFWMD) to update the 2005 Biscayne Bay Economic Study. Biscayne Bay supports industries in Miami-Dade County, such as tourism, commercial and recreational fishing, and other water-based recreational activities; these industries directly and indirectly provide employment for residents of Miami-Dade County. The Biscayne Bay Task Force recommended that the County immediately enter a cost-share partnership with the SFWMD to update its 2005 Biscayne Bay Economic Study. The purpose and scope of which is to estimate the economic contribution of Biscayne Bay from 2005 to 2019 as it is used in real estate development, recreation, shipping, cruising, commercial fishing and to update the recreational uses and intensity of use of Biscayne Bay. In addition to updating the original study, this version will add a hedonic economic analysis of the impact of Biscayne Bay on real estate value in Miami-Dade County. The study is expected to be completed by Fall of 2023.

## **Education and Enforcement**

### **Abandoned, Derelict, and At-Risk Vessels and Marine Debris Removal**

The Board adopted Resolution R-299-21 on April 20, 2021, for the disbursement of \$500,000.00, from the Biscayne Bay Environmental Enhancement Trust Fund for the removal and disposal of bulky marine debris from Biscayne Bay, its tidal tributaries, and the foreshore. Commission District 4 initiated the Miami Dade Waterways At-Risk Vessels Task Force to help foster collaboration with all marine law enforcement jurisdictions. The CBO and RER-DERM staff developed an education and outreach campaign for boaters, municipal partners, and marinas to help raise awareness on the impacts At-Risk Vessels have on the Bay.

In response to R-299-21 and the At-Risk Vessels Task Force, RER created the Abandoned, Derelict and At-Risk Vessels webpage reporting progress on identifying and removing these vessels and providing the public with information they need to report abandoned, derelict and at-risk vessels. The Be Biscayne Bay Friendly campaign will continue to promote these resources and educate the public especially boaters on this on-going problem which harms Biscayne Bay.

Since the start of 2022, RER-DERM working with MDPD Marine Patrol, the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission (FWC), and the City of Miami Marine Patrol has removed 34 Abandoned Derelict Vessels from Biscayne Bay.

As of November 2022, the MDPD Marine Patrol Unit affected 60 arrests, most were for liveries (illegal charters). The MDPD Marine Patrol Unit issued 2,048 citations and 3,290 verbal warnings, the majority for manatee zone violations, but also including illegal charter activities, and safety violations regarding floatation devices, among others. The MDPD Marine Patrol also conducted 126 Miami River enforcement details; attended 15 school presentations at the elementary and middle school level; and attended 2 community outreach events hosted by the Chief Bay Officer and DERM.

### **Proper Trash Disposal**

The Proper Trash Disposal directive was adopted by Resolution R-1260-19 on November 19, 2019. The public awareness campaign will focus on proper trash disposal and educate the public on how to dispose of trash properly with a focus on impacts that littering on land have on Biscayne Bay and waterways. The campaign will include additional signage regarding proper trash disposal in key locations on and around Biscayne Bay and the negative impacts of littering per Resolution R-1335-19 adopted on 12/3/19.

Additionally, the County will include education and messaging to a variety of groups regarding current regulations against the dumping or blowing of grass clippings and other yard trash onto roads, drains, gutters and sidewalks per Resolution R-814-12 adopted on October 2, 2012. Similar to the Fertilizer Awareness campaign, the campaign will specifically target landscaping, gardening and lawn care companies, and will send educational information to these groups regarding best practices including proper disposal of yard debris and the prohibition of fertilizer use from May 15<sup>th</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup> every year.

### **Plastic Free 305**

One way to promote economic opportunities which help support Biscayne Bay health is the **Plastic Free 305** initiative adopted by Resolution R-1179-21 on December 1, 2021. Plastic Free 305 is a voluntary certification program for businesses located in Miami-Dade County and launched during Earth Month in 2022. The program provides a platform for businesses that reduce or eliminate their use or distribution of single-use plastics and polystyrene. In 2023, the County will partner with local non-profits to expand the reach of the program in all commission districts and municipalities. The Biscayne Bay Friendly campaign will complement the program and help highlight businesses meeting the Plastic Free 305 goals.

### **Live Like a Local – Biscayne Bay**

The Board adopted Resolution R-946-21 on October 5, 2021 and directs the administration to conduct an educational and outreach campaign using the “Live Like a Local” messaging with a specific focus on Biscayne Bay. Miami-Dade County has experienced an increase in tourism during the pandemic and continues to receive millions of visitors each year. The County leads the State in registered motorized vessels totaling 74,622 in 2022. The Biscayne Bay Friendly campaign will incorporate messaging to reach visitors and educate them on the risks of illegal charters, rules related to recreation in the Bay spoil islands, manatee wake zone speed limits, and unlawful dumping on land and water.

### **Fertilizer Awareness Week**

The Board adopted Ordinance No. 21-26 on April 20, 2021 and directed the administration to implement the Miami Dade County Ordinance for Florida-Friendly Fertilizer Use on Urban Landscapes. A variety of educational and outreach activities have been conducted by RER-DERM

staff and the CBO in partnership University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS). A fertilizer ordinance marketing toolkit was developed to share with municipalities and a webpage was developed [www.miamidade.gov/fertilizer](http://www.miamidade.gov/fertilizer) to support education and public outreach efforts. The Biscayne Bay Friendly Campaign will include messaging to support and expand existing efforts.

### **Baywatch & Fish Kill Action Plan**

RER-DERM in coordination with the CBO serves as the lead agency in the event of an environmental crisis, such as a fish kill or algae bloom event.

The County has secured the services of certified contractors who remain on-call to remove and properly dispose of the fish biomass from the affected areas. The biomass must be removed as soon as possible as decomposition can exacerbate the existing poor water quality conditions and release additional nutrients and bacteria into Biscayne Bay. Biomass consolidation and removal locations will be identified and coordinated with affected coastal municipalities.

The public is encouraged to report any unusual signs of aquatic wildlife in distress or algae blooms immediately. The CBO in collaboration with RER-DERM developed a communication campaign and reporting tools to make it easier for the public to report any issues, fish kills or algae blooms on Biscayne Bay. The public now has a variety of ways to help report issues by calling RER-DERM 24-hour complaint desk at 305-372-6955, calling 311, using the 311 APP, emailing [baywatch@miamidade.gov](mailto:baywatch@miamidade.gov), or using an online form <http://tinyurl.com/baywatch305>

The Biscayne Bay website is continually updated during fish kills to keep the public informed and includes a list of frequently asked questions.

### **Environmental Education & Outreach**

Collaboration and partnerships with Community Based Organizations focused on environmental education will complement the Biscayne Bay Friendly campaign and is an essential component to enhance public education and activate neighborhoods countywide using grassroots education and beautification activities in collaboration with commission districts, cities, schools, businesses, and neighborhood associations.

This year, the County was successful in leveraging grant program funding to create a special focus on Biscayne Bay education. Working together with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and RER-DERM, legislation was adopted to transfer the grant management of the Environmental Education funds for these organizations to The Miami Foundation. The County has streamlined the process and scope of work for these grant funds to make the process easier to access and promote increased participation from smaller nonprofits with connections to underserved communities. The scope of the grants will include conducting environmental outreach programs to educate businesses, residents, and students on the Biscayne Bay ecosystem, our unique water resources, such as the aquifer and our drinking water to our surface waters, coastal and marine resources and habitats. The programs will reinforce the Biscayne Bay Friendly messaging to

Honorable Chairman Oliver Gilbert, III  
and Members, Board of County Commissioners  
Page 5

communities countywide on how our individual actions can have a negative or positive impact on the health of the Bay.

Should you require additional information, please contact Irela Bagué, Chief Bay Officer, [irela.bague@miamidade.gov](mailto:irela.bague@miamidade.gov).

cc: Geri Bonzon-Keenan, County Attorney  
Gerald Sanchez, First Assistant County Attorney  
Jess McCarty, Executive Assistant County Attorney  
Office of the Mayor Senior Staff  
Lourdes Gomez, Director, Regulatory and Economic Resources Department  
Irela Bague, Chief Bay Officer  
Basia Pruna, Director, Clerk of the Board  
Eugene Love, Agenda Coordinator  
Yinka Majekodunmi, CPA, Commission Auditor  
Jennifer Moon, Chief, Office of Policy and Budgetary Affairs