

MIAMI BEACH

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee Members

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: December 2, 2024

TITLE: DISCUSS NEXT STEPS TO ESTABLISH A MARINE PARK OR CONSERVATION AREA IN SOUTH BEACH.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is presented to the members of the Public Safety and Quality of Life Committee for discussion and further direction. While waters off the Miami Beach Coast are home to a diverse marine ecosystem, the potential creation of a marine park or conservation area would require extensive environmental regulatory review and approval and sufficient funding for the design and permitting process as well as the operations and maintenance of the area. The Administration recommends that the Committee refer the item to the Finance and Economic Resilience Committee and the City Commission for \$250,000 be prioritized within the FY 2026 budget process.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

At the June 26, 2024 City Commission meeting, item C7 BE Resolution No. 2024-33137 (Attachment A) was approved directing the Administration to prepare a Letter to Commission describing the necessary regulatory approvals and explore the feasibility of creating a Miami Beach Marine Park or Marine Conservation Area from South Pointe Pier to Sixteenth Street.

On September 23, 2024, the City Administration provided Letter to Commission, LTC # 419-2024, (Attachment B) detailing the environmental regulatory approvals that would be required for the potential creation of the project.

At the October 30, 2024 City Commission meeting, the Mayor and City Commission approved C4 AI, a referral to the Public Safety and Quality of Life Committee (PSNQLC), to discuss the next steps for assessing the feasibility, safety, and funding needs for the potential creation of a marine park or conservation area in South Beach, sponsored by Commissioners Laura Dominguez and David Suarez (Attachment C).

ANALYSIS

The City of Miami Beach is committed to the preservation, protection, and enhancement of our natural resources. The waters off the Miami Beach Coast are home to a diverse marine ecosystem consisting of endangered sea turtles utilizing our beaches as nesting habitat, a variety of tropical fish, nurse sharks, endangered queen conch, seahorses, various hard corals and reef system. While there is an existing boating restricted area demarcated by current buoys, the creation of a marine park or marine conservation area may cover a new large 16-block area currently utilized by boaters. The creation of a marine park or marine conservation area would need review, approval, and permitting from the environmental regulatory agencies as detailed in Attachment B.

Design and Permitting

Due to the environmental agencies' collective requirement for comprehensive plans detailing the marine park or conservation area design, a consultant familiar with marine and coastal engineering and permitting would need to be engaged to develop the plans and navigate the environmental permitting process. It is estimated that engaging a marine and coastal environmental consultant may cost up to \$250,000 for design and permitting of the project. The cost of construction will vary based on the amount of structures such as swim and mooring buoys proposed to be installed, and the scope of the selected consultant would include construction estimates at several points during the design process.

Operations/Enforcement

Enforcement and swimmer/ diver safety are critical aspects of managing a marine park or conservation area as regulations ensure the objectives of the area are met. Enforcement of the area would require coordination across multiple departments/ divisions such as Marine Patrol, Ocean Rescue, and Parks & Recreation. To assist with the operation and enforcement, it's recommended that the following measures be established:

- Clear boundaries for the park or conservation area
- Specify any zoning and/or usage restrictions
- A penalty system for violations

The proposed area is highly trafficked by vessels making staffing enhancements crucial to park operations and enforcement. A preliminary scoping meeting was held with departments and funding needs were identified for enforcement including staff salaries, patrol equipment, and operational costs. Per conversations with Marine Patrol, a minimum of one (1) vessel and associated staff would be required seven (7) days a week during daytime hours to monitor and enforce the park. Ocean Rescue advised they would require two additional boats and personal watercrafts, and additional staffing to the address the area. Moreover, enhanced staffing for these departments would be needed to address parkgoers entering the marine park from the beachside and from the oceanside. It's important to note that the above staffing and vessel requirements could change depending on the size of the park. In addition, an educational period, including staff and local stakeholder training, would be required to learn and convey the rules of the park.

An element of the design process would need to include a minimum of a five or ten year operational plan for the park to include maintenance requirements and associated costs. Yearly funds would need to be set aside in the budget process for marker/buoy inspections and perpetual maintenance including repair/replacement of any damaged structures.

Engagement with the community will be needed to provide education and awareness. This is important for local support and voluntary compliance, and public feedback which could aid in the design and permitting process.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

As a capital project, the marine park would require design, permitting, and construction. Administration recommends that \$250,000 be prioritized in the FY 2026 budget process for the design and permitting phase.

Does this Ordinance require a Business Impact Estimate?

(FOR ORDINANCES ONLY)

The Business Impact Estimate (BIE) was published on .

See BIE at: <https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/city-hall/city-clerk/meeting-notice/>

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

CONCLUSION

This item is presented to the members of the Public Safety and Quality of Life Committee for discussion and further direction. While waters off the Miami Beach Coast are home to a diverse marine ecosystem, the potential creation of a marine park or conservation area would require extensive environmental regulatory review and approval and sufficient funding for the design and permitting process as well as the operations and maintenance of the area. The Administration recommends that the Committee refer the item to the Finance and Economic Resilience Committee and the City Commission for \$250,000 be prioritized within the FY 2026 budget process.

Applicable Area

South Beach

Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?

Yes

Is this item related to a G.O. Bond Project?

No

Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481, includes a principal engaged in lobbying? No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s):

Department

Environment and Sustainability

Sponsor(s)

Commissioner Laura Dominguez
Commissioner David Suarez

Co-sponsor(s)

Condensed Title

Discuss steps to establish Marine Park conservation area in South Beach. (Dominguez/Suarez)
EN