

US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
PORT EVERGLADES NAVIGATION IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT MEETING
COMMENTS SECTIONS

Wednesday, February 22, 2017

2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Broward County Convention Center
1950 Eisenhower Boulevard
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33316

Reported By:
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1 (The following is a transcription of Session 1
2 of the Comments Section of the meeting.)

3 - - - - -

4 RON DREW: Well, first, thank you to the Army
5 Corps for allowing us to have this input today and
6 for the work that you've done so far.

7 I spoke at the last meeting a couple years ago
8 probably or more about the importance of Port
9 Everglades to our region. It's one of our largest
10 economic engines, it's one of our largest economic
11 drivers, it's one of our largest employers, and it's
12 so important that we continue to be a successful
13 port here, that we can't have, as the ships become
14 larger, the ship bypassing us and going up the coast
15 to other places. It's just too important to our
16 economy.

17 I believe the work that's been done so far by
18 the Army Corps of Engineers is commendable. I
19 believe the mitigation that's being done and will be
20 done is going to be successful, and I support the
21 project continuing based on what I just saw in the
22 overheads. Thank you.

23 - - - - -

24 JUSTIN TUTTLE: My name is Justin Tuttle. I'm
25 a student at the University of Miami, and I'm

1 working now in exploration sciences. And one of the
2 things that I'm really concerned about is the
3 potential impacts on the reefs.

4 I am familiar with what happened with the Port
5 of Miami expansion, and because of that I just want
6 to make sure that the proper methodologies and
7 enforcements are in place so that we can prevent
8 another kind of tragedy going on as just burying our
9 reefs in sediment.

10 You know, I think that there's more of an
11 impact than just the 150 meters that can really do
12 something that will make sure that endangered cycle
13 coral and other species that we need to protect that
14 are critical to the reef ecosystem are protected as
15 well. So that's the main thing that I want to focus
16 on.

17 - - - - -

18 KELLY COX: Hi, everyone. My name is Kelly
19 Cox. I'm the staff attorney and program director at
20 Miami Waterkeeper. We're a local nonprofit
21 organization that's dedicated to keeping our water
22 swimmable, drinkable, and fishable in south Florida.

23 We're engaged in current and ongoing litigation
24 with the Army Corps of Engineers over the PortMiami
25 dredging project and the severe impacts that the

1 coral reef suffered in that region. We're concerned
2 with the situation in Port Everglades in that the
3 Army Corps of Engineers is not adequately
4 considering the lessons learned from Port of Miami.

5 We know that the NEPA process, the National
6 Environmental Policy Act, requires the Army Corps to
7 rely on the best available science, and we think
8 that the best available science includes
9 incorporating lessons learned from the Port of
10 Miami. In fact, we think it's grossly inappropriate
11 that the Army Corps has put forth information
12 denying impacts to, denying severe impacts to the
13 reefs in Port of Miami and suggesting that those
14 same impacts won't occur here in Port Everglades.

15 We think it's necessary to take as many
16 precautions as possible to protect our reefs for our
17 clean water economy here in south Florida. A lot of
18 what people believe our tourism industry relies upon
19 is having access to these coral reefs, and I think
20 you'll hear a lot of that from people here today.

21 Finally I want to mention that the sister
22 agency to the Army Corps of Engineers, the National
23 Marine Fisheries Service has come forward and said
24 multiple times that the impacts in PortMiami greatly
25 exceeded all anticipated impacts due to

1 sedimentation, and we really believe that the Army
2 Corps should listen to its sister agency which is
3 the expert agency in Port Everglades and in
4 PortMiami and really take care to protect our coral
5 reefs and our ecosystems. Thank you.

6 - - - - -

7 GEORGE DEHN: My name is George Dehn, and
8 myself and my neighbors live near the port, and I've
9 been lucky enough to live here since '82.

10 And my main concerns, and I hope they're
11 addressed, is the blasting that occurred in 1982.
12 Our houses shook. I know there are alternates. I
13 know our county commissioner is under the impression
14 there will not be blasting, but the project manager
15 said that hasn't been decided yet, your project
16 manager.

17 We retained counsel. If need be we'll
18 litigate. If need be we'll ask for injunctions. So
19 we implore you to consider other technologies, and
20 if need be we'll ask the Court to make sure that
21 there's a surety bond from independent financial
22 institution, not the Federal government.

23 On that same regard other projects have been
24 done here. You mentioned that money hasn't been
25 approved. Myself and my neighbors, we are happy

1 this project is going forth. We're not -- we
2 understand the economic positiveness, if you were,
3 for the whole community, but we feel as taxpayers
4 Broward County needs to be assured with a surety
5 bond ahead of time that they'll be reimbursed. None
6 of this 10, 15-year later 20-year later stuff.

7 You mentioned it hasn't been approved. The
8 project's been approved but the money hasn't been
9 let. So the money needs to be let or we're going to
10 ask for a surety bond or we're going to ask for an
11 injunction, whether it's against you guys or Broward
12 County as citizens.

13 The last thing is, I'm sure you're aware of it,
14 but the sand that is accumulating from the accretion
15 is almost ready to go past the big breakwater over
16 there. Hopefully that'll be addressed because all
17 this will be for not if the sand pours in. As I
18 understand it there's 40,000 cubic yards each year
19 is added.

20 And so with that we want the project to be
21 successful, but we don't want our homes to be
22 ruined. Thank you.

23 - - - - -

24 RACHEL SILVERSTEIN: Hey, everyone. I'm Rachel
25 Silverstein. I'm the executive director and

1 waterkeeper of a local nonprofit group Miami
2 Waterkeeper.

3 I'm actually going to save most of my remarks
4 for tonight for the 6 p.m. meeting, but I do want to
5 take this opportunity to request the Army Corps
6 actually provide the opportunity for a public Q&A
7 session so that we can all hear each other's
8 questions and the Army Corps' answers if that's a
9 possibility. I know there's a lot of interest in
10 that happening in the room as well, so if that's a
11 possibility we would all really appreciate that and
12 I think that would make for a really great public
13 meeting.

14 In addition to the last speaker that just spoke
15 to you, I want to also address the flooding and
16 flushing models that I believe have been completed
17 and could potentially impact the flooding of the
18 buildings nearby, the port as well, so we want to
19 see that be completed.

20 And, again, I'm going to save most of my
21 comments for this evening and will be submitting
22 technical comments as well. Thank you.

23 - - - - -

24 PATRICIA ANTRICAN: I pass.

25 - - - - -

1 BRETTNY HARDY: My name is Brettny Hardy with
2 Earth Justice, and I'm here on behalf of Miami
3 Waterkeeper, Center for Biological Diversity,
4 Florida Wildlife Federation, and the Diving
5 Equipment and Manufacturer's Association.

6 I want to speak briefly about the legal
7 obligations of the Army Corps during this scoping
8 process.

9 The National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA
10 as you mentioned, is this country's most fundamental
11 environmental protection. It requires the Army
12 Corps to stop and think about what potential damage
13 this dredging project is going to have on coral
14 reefs in Fort Lauderdale.

15 It requires the Corps to take a hard look at
16 not only the direct impacts, like the removal of
17 coral, but also the indirect impacts that could
18 occur from sedimentation that happens from dredging.
19 And it requires the Army Corps to do these things
20 before it begins the dredging and also requires the
21 Army Corps to look at all reasonable alternatives in
22 order to mitigate or to reduce these harms. And it
23 requires the Corps to consider these harms, these
24 damages from a cumulative perspective, especially
25 considering the myriad of stressors that these coral

1 reefs are suffering from. So we expect that the
2 Corps will meet these legal obligations and complete
3 a supplemental environmental impact statement.

4 And this is really important. It matters.
5 It's not just a paper exercise, because the coral
6 reefs in Florida are vanishing. There's only a
7 small fraction of what existed before.

8 And so it's critically important that the Army
9 Corps take into account the devastating damage that
10 the dredging did in Miami, that best available
11 science showed the dredging did in Miami, and to
12 prevent that damage to the corals here because there
13 are industries relying on the coral, industries like
14 tourism, recreational diving, recreational fishing,
15 and they're going to be watching the Army Corps to
16 make sure it does its best job to ensure the
17 survival of the coral. Thank you.

18 - - - - -

19 DAN LINDBLADE: Hi, everyone. I'm Dan
20 Lindblade. I'm the president and CEO of the Greater
21 Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce.

22 And it's interesting to understand that we've
23 been working on this project so long that we're in I
24 think the 20th year of our discussions to deepen,
25 widen Port Everglades.

1 And, you know, the Chamber represents all types
2 of interests. We represent tourism. We represent
3 business. We represent international trade. And
4 we've worked really hard to make sure that we're
5 being held accountable for what's going on, because
6 a lot of our members are scuba divers, fishermen,
7 and tourists obviously coming from all over the
8 country and the world for that matter.

9 But, you know, the checks and balances that are
10 in place in our government are there for a reason.
11 And this young lady who just talked before me, I'm
12 sure that we're going to make it through this and
13 have the checks and balances, and you guys at the
14 Corps will be responsible for answering to best
15 practices that are happening out there and using the
16 latest scientific data.

17 So the Chamber stands wholeheartedly in support
18 of moving forward with this project knowing that
19 we're going to have updates along the way before the
20 project actually begins. And that's the key to this
21 project is we're continually refreshing the data,
22 continually refreshing the information, and
23 monitoring what's happened in these other sites.

24 So with respect to Miami, I'm not a scientist.
25 We have one of our partners here who is. Dr. Dodge

1 can speak to a lot of the issues down there from
2 Nova Southeastern University. And we have all these
3 brilliant minds that are coming together to merge
4 together, and then the opponents of the project,
5 even those folks who are watchdogs for the project
6 and we need those people, too, in all of this effort
7 to make sure that we mitigate all of the issues out
8 there.

9 But, again, the Chamber, the business
10 community, we stand behind this, we want it done
11 correctly, and we support the project.

12 - - - - -

13 (Captain Kipnis left.)

14 - - - - -

15 EMILY STOKES: Hi, everyone. I just wanted to
16 say that it's great to be here. Thank you for
17 holding this session.

18 Really all I wanted to mention was I thought
19 that there were going to be artificial reefs put in
20 place, but the reefs that we have in our Florida
21 tract are all so important, and any kind of
22 artificial reef that would be put in place can't
23 possibly replace the important ecosystem services
24 that our local reefs do and that they create for us.
25 They keep our economic, they keep our grouper and

1 snapper healthy, and it's obviously economically
2 important. And I think that's something to keep in
3 mind as we go forward that artificial reefs are good
4 but they are not at all the same as our natural
5 reefs that have grown here. So thank you very much.

6 - - - - -

7 RON CODDINGTON: Hello. I'm Ron Coddington.
8 I'm a private industry representative with Southeast
9 Florida Coral Reef Initiative, and I've been a
10 consulting engineer in south Florida nearly all my
11 professional life.

12 Interesting, I'm the only living project
13 engineer that represented Port Everglades during the
14 last harbor deepening project. We had a reputation
15 of some of the cleanest dredging that's ever been
16 done on the coast of Florida. Why? Because we had
17 150-acre spoil site back here, and that's where
18 retained our water. We had four days retention time
19 for water.

20 Later in private business I was lucky to get
21 the contract to remove and rehabilitate that spoil
22 site. We removed nearly one-quarter million yards
23 of very fine sediment per the engineers sediment
24 passing at 200 sieve. This is the material that if
25 expelled on the reefs is the blanket that smothers

1 the reef. This is the stuff that happened in Miami.

2 What we need to do is we need to have the best
3 minds in engineering look at new innovative
4 techniques to handling our dredge. We don't have
5 the spoil site anymore. Instead of filling 150
6 acres of spoil site with four days retention time,
7 we're filling 200-foot barges 50. We need to look
8 at concepts of moving the barges away from the coral
9 reefs as far offshore as possible, or as one idea
10 has been discussed, pumping the dredge spoil
11 directly to the offshore disposal site.

12 These are the kind of things that need to be
13 taken into consideration so that we monitor closely
14 that we don't smother our reefs.

15 This is important. This is an economic engine.
16 It's a great economic engine for Broward County, but
17 also our reefs are an economic engine that must be
18 protected.

19 So Port Everglades needs to continue its
20 reputation of clean dredging by forcing the Corps of
21 Engineers to consider the most innovative techniques
22 that we possibly can take into account to contain
23 those sediments and not let them be transported onto
24 the reefs. That is the key to making this a project
25 that does not end up with environmental damage to

1 the area around Port Everglades. Thank you.

2 - - - - -

3 PATRICIA ANTRICAN: Still pass.

4 - - - - -

5 GAIL BULFIN: I'm Gail Bulfin, and I am with the
6 Port Everglades Advocacy Team which is a group of
7 business leaders from around Broward County.

8 We've been working with the port to learn all
9 about the projects of the port and have come to know
10 the leaders of Port Everglades. These are the
11 people who live, work, and play here, as well as us.
12 I found them to be very collaborative, very savvy,
13 and growing this port in a smart way is something I
14 have 100 percent confidence in.

15 We have worked with the Army Corps of
16 Engineers, we've learned a lot from you, and we are
17 confident that you're going to make the best
18 recommendations knowing that we have an incredibly
19 smart team at Port Everglades who are going to do
20 the right things for Broward County. So thank you.

21 - - - - -

22 LIZ HOPWOOD: My name is Liz Hopwood. I live
23 right at Breakwater Surf Club, and there's a lot of
24 population there. We have Points of America
25 apartment buildings, we have Sky Harbour, and we

1 have our 52 houses, and then the other neighborhood
2 that's south of that. So I'm representing them more
3 or less in my thought in that whenever the last time
4 was the blasting and the deepening of the channel
5 people's toilets and also pipes broke. We have
6 pipes under our houses. We have pipes all over. So
7 I just wanted to say something about that particular
8 concern.

9 And I was sitting there, I know I'm not an
10 engineer by any stretch of the imagination, just a
11 resident, but have we ever thought about going
12 through the park? Because this was Port Isabel, I
13 mean Lake Isabel initially and we broke through.
14 Could we just break through and have another inlet
15 where it doesn't impact anybody? Just a thought.
16 Thank you.

17 - - - - -

18 BILL COLE: Hello. I own a local dive shop.
19 I've been running charter boats out of Port
20 Everglades for 37 years, diving and snorkeling.

21 I'm just worried that if what happens here or
22 what happened in Miami happens here is going to be
23 completely devastating to my business and other dive
24 businesses in the area and the beautiful coral reef
25 that we have out here. I've seen over the 37 years

1 artificial reefs, boulders, transplants, they do not
2 replace the natural reef. Thank you.

3 - - - - -

4 RACHEL SILVERSTEIN: Hello again. Since we
5 have extra time I figured I might go into a little
6 bit of my comments I was going to save for this
7 evening, but I just want to clarify one thing to
8 you.

9 We've been characterized as project opponents,
10 and I just want to clarify that we're not trying to
11 shut down this project or prevent the port from
12 functioning or take away anybody's jobs. All we're
13 trying to do with the litigation here and with our
14 efforts to highlight what's going on with the reefs
15 is to make sure that the law is being followed, that
16 the reefs are being protected, and that this project
17 is done without harming resources that really belong
18 to all of us and harm -- you know, there's important
19 jobs that rely on the reefs as well as we just heard
20 Bill Cole mentioning as well.

21 Our shorelines are protected by our coral
22 reefs. We have diverse fish and other kinds of
23 habitats in there, not to mention the mangroves and
24 the sea grasses that are all going to be impacted as
25 well. So I just want to clarify that.

1 And I also want to talk about this fact sheet
2 that the Army Corps has been passing around. I find
3 it quite misleading and containing a lot of
4 misinformation. For example, it says, "Did the
5 Miami harbor deepening project cause excessive coral
6 or coral reef damage? No", and then basically
7 blames critics of the project.

8 The Army Corps' own contractors found extensive
9 damage at the Port of Miami. The Army Corps has
10 admitted to extensive amounts of damage occurring at
11 the Port of Miami. And the critics of the project
12 that the Army Corps is including in here and calling
13 inconclusive studies and incomplete studies on is
14 actually the expert Federal agency with jurisdiction
15 over this project, the National Marine Fisheries
16 Service, and their conclusions.

17 So I just want to note, you know, we're so far
18 beyond denying what happened in Miami. The point is
19 that we're all here today to learn lessons from
20 Miami, to move forward, to improve what's going on
21 in Port Everglades, and denying what happened in
22 Miami is not a productive way to learn lessons.

23 And so that's what I want to share with all of
24 you. I hope we can move forward, examine what
25 happened, be honest about it, and improve things for

1 the future for our reefs. Thanks.

2 - - - - -

3 STEVE WEBER: My name is Steve Weber. I live
4 in the Everglades House which is adjacent to the
5 inlet.

6 Back in August 2013 we attended this session,
7 we responded. I have not seen the report where
8 supposedly our comments were included in. I don't
9 know if there was a response to them, but I just
10 want to reiterate two comments that were already
11 made.

12 Our concern is the use of explosives to blast
13 bottom rock formations in order to deepen the port's
14 channels from 42 to 48 feet. We're concerned about
15 the blasts as residents of buildings nearly 50 years
16 old, we are concerned about the effects impacts and
17 may damage building foundations and well and piping
18 systems because of the blasts.

19 The other point that was made is compensation.
20 We're concerned about the response from the operable
21 authorities in the event of damage to property
22 should the port project cause damage to existing
23 local structures and infrastructure. There must be
24 a billing mechanism to compensate residents for the
25 cost of construction and/or repairs.

1 Many of these high-rise buildings have
2 undergone recent 40-year inspections and made
3 substantial investments on concrete restoration,
4 wind protection mitigation, and other costly
5 upgrades. The surrounding condominium association
6 cannot bear the financial costs of more potentially
7 expensive repairs.

8 Thank you very much.

9 - - - - -

10 RON CODDINGTON: Thank you for a little bit
11 more time.

12 What I also wanted to do is come out in strong,
13 extremely strong support of the National Marine
14 Fisheries' comments regarding this project.

15 National Marine Fisheries after watching what
16 went on in Miami has suggested that the Corps give
17 consideration to a closed or a cessation of dredging
18 during the peak coral spawning period. This is very
19 important. You're listening to experts when they
20 make these opinions. National Marine Fisheries
21 knows what they're talking about.

22 While that's something very new and innovative,
23 don't we want to be new and innovative at Port
24 Everglades? Remember, this is a great port. We can
25 do it right.

1 By looking at a coral closure, it's not as
2 unusual as it seems. All of our dredging projects
3 along the beach stage themselves for the turtle
4 spawning season, the turtle nesting season.

5 In this case we need to look at the most
6 critical corals that are off our coast, and an extra
7 measure that can help prevent coral damage is to
8 suspend dredging during the peak spawning seasons.

9 Much of this peak spawning season also
10 coincides with the highest water temperatures when
11 our corals are most susceptible to coral bleaching
12 and coral disease. By giving them a break during
13 this time period, we may significantly reduce the
14 impact that this dredging project has, that in
15 cooperation with the innovative engineering
16 techniques that I hope the Corps comes up with, and
17 we can find that this is one of the best dredging
18 projects that has ever been done in a coral reef
19 environment. Thank you, sir.

20 - - - - -

21 COMMISSIONER CHIP LAMARCA: Ron, I think that
22 also coincides with tourism season as well.

23 I've been honored to represent District 4 which
24 goes from the beach Deerfield Beach down to Harbour
25 Inlet at Port Everglades for the past six years, and

1 I live on the coast in the north part of the county.

2 And I could tell you the vast majority of my
3 time in office has been spent in the Army Corps'
4 offices, dealing with National Marine Fisheries,
5 NOAA agencies, not just one project, but luckily for
6 me two projects - the Beach Renourishment Project in
7 Segment II of which a couple of our contractors are
8 here, as well as some of our staff who did an
9 amazing job with the project, environmentally
10 friendly. We brought sand from an outside source.
11 We did all the things that we thought were going to
12 be the most effective for our environment, not cost
13 effective but environmentally effective.

14 One of the things that's important is, and it's
15 as we look at the project that we're talking about
16 here -- I've made most of those trips with our port
17 staff and other folks in the advocacy team. We're
18 obviously waiting, what, this has been 20 years, a
19 bit patient. I would consider that's pretty good
20 patience, even with the Federal government. But the
21 bottom line is we have done this in a procedure that
22 has been taking environment first, taking our
23 economy along with that as it goes and as port
24 expansion happens, those are important things. But
25 we don't want to be the ones that don't do

1 something, as Ron had mentioned, that isn't the most
2 environmentally friendly.

3 I want to mention something and I want to just
4 say that I represent one side of the political
5 spectrum that's not usually given credit for caring
6 about the environment, which is unfortunate, because
7 we take half of the people out of the conversation
8 if we do that.

9 I wasn't in the office in the late 70s or early
10 80s, but somebody decided it was going to be a great
11 idea to put a million tires in the ocean. Now, as
12 for somebody who thinks about conservation first,
13 we'll look at that and say, you know, why are we
14 doing this? I get the concept, but clearly we're
15 dealing with that now. So we don't want to be in a
16 situation we're dealing with anything like that in
17 the future.

18 Clearly we want to move the project forward, we
19 want to do it environmentally consciously, and I
20 will be keeping an eye on the issue of blasting.

21 - - - - -

22 (Session 1 of the Comments Section is
23 concluded.)

24
25

1 and see how much this has impacted the loss of
2 corals off of southeast Florida, because this
3 die-off has happened in parallel with the dredging
4 of the Miami project, so we see that there is a
5 potential for some correlation in this damage.

6 I'm concerned about the deep dredging, how it
7 affects beaches through erosion. Deep dredging
8 increases the flow of current in and out of the
9 ports, and as we know the sand flows south along the
10 beaches, and so this dredging project could damage
11 beaches all the way down to the very tip of Florida,
12 that is a serious problem.

13 I'm concerned too that larger oil tankers will
14 be brought into this area, that there could be a
15 catastrophic oil spill. I don't think that has been
16 addressed, and that is one of my concerns about
17 larger tankers being used and larger ships. I don't
18 see all the benefits.

19 Since you said at the end of this we can come
20 back for some more, I'm going to hopefully come back
21 again. Thank you.

22 - - - - -

23 JEFF TORODE: I'm going to do some speed
24 reading here, our big two minutes.

25 My name is Jeff Torode. I own and operate

1 South Florida Diving Headquarters. I was a member
2 of SEFCRI, vice chair for many years, and a member
3 of the Coastal Ocean Forum.

4 I would like to thank, first of all, all of you
5 that were involved with the legal action to get us
6 here today. Thank you very much. Hopefully this
7 comes of something.

8 First let me restate that the dive industry is
9 against Port Everglades expansion for obvious
10 reasons. I have a list here that I'm not going to
11 go through all of them because I don't have much
12 time, but obviously the destruction of coral reefs
13 is detrimental to our industry and the vitality of
14 our industry.

15 We question the validity of the project after
16 segmenting the turning notch to improve the cost
17 benefit analysis, it's a little quick pencil action
18 there. We also question the need to have two Post
19 Panamax ports within 30 miles of each other.

20 We acknowledge this project is probably going
21 to go through no matter what, but we ask you to use
22 the best available science and plan for monitoring
23 and mitigation of the reefs in Port Everglades.
24 Let's get a supplemental EIS that incorporates the
25 lessons we've learned from Miami. Instead of

1 accounting for all the estimated 150 meter indirect
2 or impact zones, that should be moved to 1000
3 meters.

4 The scope of the mitigation plan needs to be
5 extended and the cost factored into the estimated
6 project cost to affect the cost benefit analysis.

7 I'm going to skip to the conclusion.

8 You know, the biggest thing we need is a third
9 party. We need another set of eyes independent to
10 see what's going on. It's not that we don't trust
11 the Corps, but there's been a lot of misinformation
12 that's come out. And when you say, oh, the corals
13 are dying because of disease and warm water when, in
14 fact, they've been buried for a year already, that's
15 pretty much a dead giveaway.

16 When you ask for what else can we do, stop
17 hiring dredging companies that violate, continually
18 violate best management practices and standards.
19 Why don't we start there. Maybe we should let
20 another agency pick that dredging company. Thank
21 you.

22 - - - - -

23 SKIP COMMAGERE: Thank you very much. I have
24 to rush through this as well.

25 And I want to talk tonight about the cost of

1 mitigation damage, the loss of jobs, and the
2 reduction of quality of life. The cost of
3 mitigating is going to be substantially more than I
4 think that they believe.

5 If you look at the reefs on either side of the
6 channel all the way through this project, it's
7 amazing and it's full of life. This life feeds the
8 life on the reefs in Broward County.

9 The loss of jobs, you know, you would think
10 with all these ships are coming in we're going to
11 have a lot of new jobs. The problem is that those
12 ships, the size, they are going to be, everything is
13 going to be mechanized as much as possible,
14 especially in a right to work state. They're just
15 about ready to pass a 20 percent import fee. The
16 feasibility or the volume of imports may drastically
17 be reduced.

18 Reduction of quality of life. I ask you to use
19 Google Earth, Google Earth ports of southern
20 California, large ports, zoom in, look at the
21 quality of life in those particular areas, and ask
22 yourself, is that where I want to live? And I don't
23 think it is. Thank you.

24 - - - - -

25 JUSTIN TUTTLE: Hi there. My name is Justin

1 Tuttle. I've been in south Florida for about ten
2 years now, and one of the things that first drew me
3 here is the diving and just being on the water. And
4 one thing that you really have here in particular is
5 accessible reef that you could literally get to from
6 walking off the beach.

7 And I think that one of the things that we
8 really need to assess and look at is the real, not
9 only the environmental impact and do an
10 environmental assessment, but also a reassessment
11 with the idea that if we are discovering new facts,
12 new information, that there is either more coral or
13 that the dredges have an impact that is, that does
14 not necessarily correspond to the models, that then
15 we have to be able to stop the dredging, mandatory
16 halt, and then take an actual look at what's really
17 happening so that way we avoid dredging that ends up
18 killing the reef that has an impact and we just kind
19 of plow through full steam ahead.

20 So basically that realignment of the actual
21 facts to the models and to the assessments that are
22 going to weigh some sort of legal mechanism that
23 enforces what's really happening. That's it.

24 - - - - -

25 STANLEY PANNAMAN: Hi. My name is Stan

1 Pannaman, and I'm the conservation chair for the
2 Broward Group of the Sierra Club, and I'm also a
3 resident of Tamarac. I care what happens in Broward
4 County.

5 Florida reefs are invaluable to the economy,
6 ecology, and livelihood of south Florida. Our reefs
7 generate billions of dollars for the local economy
8 and create habitat for valuable fish and other
9 marine life. Unfortunately we have lost over
10 80 percent of the reefs since 1970.

11 I urge the Army Corps of Engineers to
12 incorporate lessons learned from PortMiami and to
13 the environmental planning so the same disaster does
14 not happen in Port Everglades.

15 I urge you to make full use of the best
16 available science to plan for monitoring and
17 mitigation of the reefs near Port Everglades. The
18 Corps should establish turbidity's limits and
19 protectives of the reefs and prevent excessive
20 sedimentation that can smother reefs like they did
21 in PortMiami.

22 I believe that third party oversight is
23 essential in order to protect habitat, and I also
24 request that interpretation reports and surveys to
25 limit conflicts of interest.

1 Please implement mandatory regulations on reef
2 damage and do not solely rely on adaptive management
3 which fail to protect reefs during the dredging at
4 PortMiami.

5 Finally I urge the Corps to draft a
6 supplemental environmental impact statement that
7 considers the weight of PortMiami and lessons
8 learned there. Thank you.

9 - - - - -

10 LAILA HADDAD: My concerns have already been
11 expressed.

12 - - - - -

13 CHERYL PHIPPS: I'm going to send my comments
14 via e-mail. Thank you.

15 - - - - -

16 SHELBY WEDELICH: Hi. My name is Shelby
17 Wedelich. I'm a tropical marine ecosystem
18 management student at the University of Miami. And
19 I think that this project needs some serious,
20 serious revamping in terms of the management of the
21 mitigation surveys.

22 Sedimentation doesn't just affect the coral at
23 the time of sedimentation. It increases disease
24 after the fact up to several years afterwards, and
25 coral reefs supply a third of the economy here, and

1 they're really drastically reduced already. They
2 can't afford another hit. And we already have
3 redundancy in the type of port from Port of Miami.

4 There's not, I don't see the economic benefit
5 of continuing as we are when you already have such a
6 drastic cost that's not properly represented because
7 you're not representing -- you're only representing
8 the loss within the dredging area. I want to see
9 how this model accounts for sedimentation outside.
10 And I don't think it's going to be an if there is a
11 plume, I think it's going to be a when, because
12 there is inefficiencies in the dredging material
13 that are currently being used. That's absolutely
14 unacceptable, and I am really, really disturbed by
15 the project proceeding as planned.

16 There are also impacts on sea grasses and
17 mangroves that I don't think are properly considered
18 because all of those environments interact in terms
19 of the antigenetic life stages of fish that are
20 extremely valuable to our tourism and our local
21 economy.

22 And that's all I have to say about that. Thank
23 you.

24 - - - - -

25 DR. ROSS CUNNING: Hello. I'm Ross Cunning,

1 and I am a researcher at the University of Miami
2 studying coral biology and ecology.

3 I've been studying the reefs here only for
4 about ten years, but I've witnessed major declines
5 in these ecosystems. Given the numerous threats
6 facing our reefs, I believe we must do everything in
7 our power to protect them and ensure their future
8 persistence, and this includes protecting them from
9 sedimentation and other damages associated with
10 dredging operations.

11 As part of these operations I believe that
12 third party oversight is essential in order to
13 obtain honest data interpretation, reports and
14 surveys, and to limit conflicts of interest. The
15 best way to ensure that we understand the true
16 impacts to our reefs is to make all of the raw data
17 that is collected available immediately and openly
18 through convenient online platforms, such that any
19 interested party is able to easily access, review,
20 analyze, and make conclusions based on these data.

21 This level of transparency is absolutely
22 critical in both the preliminary and supplemental
23 environmental impact assessments, baseline surveys,
24 and during the project itself, and I urge the Corps
25 to make data accessibility a top priority moving

1 forward.

2 Finally I urge the Corps to draft a
3 supplemental environmental impact statement that
4 considers the Port of Miami lessons learned based on
5 the best available science that includes all
6 interpretations of those data that have been
7 presented and published. Thank you.

8 - - - - -

9 MICHAEL CONNELLY: Hello. I am a graduate
10 student at the University of Miami in the Cnidarian
11 Immunity Lab, and I'd like to raise some concerns
12 about sublethal effects of sediment on corals
13 related to their immune status and potential for
14 sediment to create disease within these populations.

15 I'd also like to point out a recent 2016 study
16 that demonstrated that these Broward corals are at
17 the northern extent of their range and are
18 genetically distinct from a lot of the other
19 Acropora corals in south Florida, and that should be
20 taken into concern with regards to the coral
21 mitigation and restoration, and especially that
22 these corals that are within their northern limits
23 are adequately preserved and restored.

24 I would also reiterate Ross' points about third
25 party oversight and the availability of the data

1 collected by the Corps to independent researchers
2 for their, to be able to draw their own conclusions.

3 And then I'd also like to say on a personal
4 note I've been in Florida for five years and my
5 favorite dive site is off the Fort Lauderdale beach
6 park which is within two kilometers of this site,
7 and I would really hate to see personally the site
8 damaged as a result of the dredge impact and not be
9 able to enjoy that for myself and the friends that
10 visit me here for a dive and want to experience
11 that. So that's all I have to say.

12 - - - - -

13 SPEAKER FOR PHIL KUSHLAN: Obviously I'm not
14 Phil. He couldn't make it, so I'll be speaking on
15 his behalf.

16 My name is Philip Kushlan. I'm a Coconut Grove
17 resident who grew up diving in reefs in south
18 Florida. I'm also a Ph.D. student studying the
19 resiliency of south Florida's reefs, as well as an
20 active member of Miami Waterkeeper.

21 I had the opportunity to help in the rescue of
22 corals from the Port of Miami as the dredging was
23 starting, and I was amazed by the site. It was
24 incredible to see these huge flat morphologies of
25 several species that are usually only found out on

1 the reef thriving in this marginal inshore habitat;
2 however, they were already being buried at the
3 margins by sediment.

4 I also had several chances to revisit the
5 mitigation site, as well as some of the sites near
6 the channel during the project, and saw firsthand
7 these huge corals which had survived at the port for
8 years were being buried alive by sediment. It was
9 unambiguous. You could sweep the sediment away at
10 the margins and find the buried skeleton with no
11 outward growth on it and a layer of black anoxic
12 bacteria growing. There's no way that the coral
13 tissue could have died prior to being covered by
14 sediment. It was the burial that killed the tissue.

15 We have an important opportunity to avoid the
16 mistakes the Port of Miami dredged up in Port
17 Everglades by drafting a supplemental environmental
18 impact statement reflecting the lessons that we
19 should have learned, namely: one, that we need to
20 incorporate baseline data that actually is a
21 baseline and not taken years ago where after
22 dredging has already begun; two, that we need
23 accurate turbidity monitoring and we need to be
24 looking far beyond 150 meters from the channel; and
25 third, most importantly, that we need independent

1 third party oversight of compliance.

2 Thank you for your consideration. Phillip
3 Kushlan.

4 - - - - -

5 ANDRIANA FRAGOLA: Hi, everybody. My name is
6 Andriana Fragola, and I am a graduate student at the
7 University of Miami Rosenstiel School focusing on
8 marine conservation and shark research. That
9 doesn't mean I don't care about corals and the rest
10 of the ecosystem.

11 So I've grown up in Miami. I was born here,
12 and I've been diving since I was 12 years old. The
13 ecosystems and the reefs here are incredibly
14 important to the economy of Florida, for ecosystem
15 services, storm buffering, there are so many things
16 that I know Sierra is definitely going to reiterate
17 right after me.

18 But there's so many benefits that come from
19 these ecosystems, and something in particular to
20 consider for this Port Everglades project is kind of
21 what Mike was saying about how they are genetically
22 different. So it's incredibly important to protect
23 this separate genetic diversity, as well as the fact
24 that the thickets in this area are much healthier
25 than a lot of the Florida, further southern

1 Floridian Acropora coral reefs, so it's incredibly
2 important to take that into account.

3 It is also incredibly important to understand
4 that these are species that are listed under the
5 Endangered Species Act, so that means that they are
6 endangered, which means endangerment of extinction,
7 so any threat and any kind of deleterious problems
8 that could come from this dredging, any reduction in
9 their population is serious going forward for their
10 protection and their existence in the future.

11 So it is something that should be taken
12 seriously, and any precaution to reduce this any
13 kind of bad effects for these corals is incredibly
14 important, so important to think about. So that's
15 all I have to say.

16 - - - - -

17 ADAM NARDELLI: Hi. I am a graduate of Nova
18 Southeastern Oceanographic Center. I'm also an AP
19 environmental and science teacher, high school. But
20 I've been a recreational dive instructor for over
21 five years, a diver down here for over ten years. I
22 have seen the reefs go down and downhill since I
23 started here ten years ago. The reefs cannot handle
24 any more environmental impact.

25 But aside from the aesthetic reasons and the

1 ethical reasons of why we should protect these reefs
2 and avoid projects like this, the devastation that
3 occurred from the Port of Miami's dredge was where
4 80 percent of corals were buried should be a case
5 study of what not to do in the future. And why this
6 continues to happen I understand is because economic
7 boom is a win for big business. And I want to talk
8 about the dive industry down here in south Florida
9 which often gets overlooked.

10 From DEMA, a letter was sent out from Tom
11 Ingram who's the executive director. South Florida
12 or Florida in general is second to California in
13 terms of certifications.

14 Recreational scuba diving and snorkeling
15 contribute about \$11 billion to the US gross
16 domestic product. In Florida largely centered in
17 south Florida snorkeling accounts for about 4.24
18 million visitor days per year while scuba diving
19 accounts for about 4.56 million visitor days
20 annually. The combination of snorkeling and scuba
21 diving creates about 26,000 full time equivalent
22 tourism-related jobs in Florida each year. This is
23 over \$20 million in sales of equipment, education,
24 and travel for local economies in the state.
25 Overall it contributes about \$904.4 million to the

1 Florida economy each year.

2 So this is an industry that's going to be hurt
3 by this, because nobody wants to dive in water that
4 is poor visibility. Nobody wants to dive on
5 mitigated corals. Okay. They come here to see
6 beautiful pristine reefs that we used to have, and
7 if we let them go grow and do their own thing they
8 will come back. That's all I have to say.

9 - - - - -

10 RACHEL SKUBEL: Hello, everyone. My name is
11 Rachel. I'm a Ph.D. student at UM studying how
12 sharks are responding to climate change in south
13 Florida.

14 So as everyone else has been saying, obviously
15 these corals aren't only important for fish species
16 and other marine wildlife that depend on them, but
17 they're also important for the south Florida economy
18 of fishing, diving, snorkeling. It's more than just
19 the corals, and so that's why it's obviously such a
20 huge issue. And I myself have been fortunate enough
21 to go diving by these coral reefs, and I can attest
22 to the fact that I would do it again, and I'd be
23 concerned if their health was in decline.

24 And as we saw at the Port of Miami, obviously
25 the sedimentation there was shown, you know, by

1 multiple scientific studies to cause damage that
2 could not necessarily be reversed like could not
3 reverse mortality, et cetera.

4 And I'd like to say, you know, in addition to
5 what's been said here, you know, being someone who
6 studies climate change, the issue is that we need to
7 give these corals the best chance they can in the
8 face of climate change that's obviously already a
9 huge issue, and when you add these other stressors
10 to it which have been shown, you know, very
11 conclusively to cause other declines in health and,
12 you know, really, really challenge them, we need to
13 consider, you know, really giving them the best
14 chance and, you know, incorporating climate change
15 modeling of impact to these corals in the
16 supplementary environmental assessment because, you
17 know, it's important to have a holistic
18 understanding of what these corals are going to be
19 going through and, you know, consider the best way
20 to protect them given their endangered status and
21 importance overall. Thank you.

22 - - - - -

23 SIERRA SARKIS: Hi. I'm Sierra. I'm also a
24 student, graduate student at University of Miami.
25 My focus is marine conservation.

1 I just think it's important to start by
2 pointing out that the Florida reef track is the only
3 coral reef that extends into the continental United
4 States, so it's extra special and we should take
5 extra caution in planning these projects that could
6 be so environmentally damaging.

7 Obviously the environmental damage was vastly
8 underestimated at the PortMiami project, and so now
9 this project being so similar we have a really
10 unique opportunity to do it right this time and
11 avoid all of the blunders that occurred at
12 PortMiami.

13 Over 250 acres of critical habitat were damaged
14 and hundreds of coral colonies were buried, and at
15 this point in time given all of the climate change
16 impacts and all of the stress that's already
17 occurring on our coral reefs and given our new
18 presidential administration, we really don't have
19 the time to make these types of mistakes anymore.

20 And also a lot of other people that have come
21 up and spoken, a lot of the other speakers have
22 already expressed the economic importance of our
23 coral reefs, and I just personally don't think that
24 the economic benefits of this dredge project
25 outweigh the loss of these ecosystems. Just I

1 really hope that we can do it right this time. And
2 that's all I have to say.

3 - - - - -

4 MATTHEW SCHWARTZ: Good evening. My name is
5 Matthew Schwartz. I'm director of a little
6 nonprofit in Florida, south Florida called South
7 Florida Wildlands Association established in 2010 to
8 protect the wildlife and habitat in the greater
9 everglades.

10 We've been on this project for quite some time.
11 We have objections to it. We have severe objections
12 to it. I'm going to talk as somebody who's also
13 sued the Federal government several times over
14 failed NEPA documents and won, and I'm going to say
15 a few words about NEPA.

16 First of all, NEPA doesn't require an outcome.
17 There's no particular outcome that NEPA requires.
18 What it does require these folks to do in the Army
19 Corps is to take what's called a hard look at the
20 environmental consequences from a major Federal
21 project before that project takes place. So I'm
22 going to lay out a few of the things, just some of
23 the things. I'll probably never get finished. It
24 should have been three minutes.

25 Another thing before I start that, this is --

1 what is this thing? What are you guys doing?
2 You're cheerleading for the port? You're
3 cheerleading for the port? This is a rhetorical
4 question. You guys are working as lobbyists for
5 Port Everglades? You're here to evaluate a project
6 objectively, scientifically; not to cheer and talk
7 about the economic benefits to the county. That's
8 disgusting. I'll throw that away here.

9 Okay. These are the things that I'm suggesting
10 you look at carefully: impacts on all fish,
11 manatees, sea turtles, birds, sea grasses in the
12 area, impacts on the recreation.

13 I was just looking at my e-mail, I was invited
14 to run a kayaking trip at Whiskey Creek right across
15 the channel. John U. Lloyd State Park now has a new
16 name that I forgot the name of it, but there's a
17 creek right across the channel that's going to be
18 impacted by this project severely. There are
19 mangroves over there. There's a state park. People
20 paddle there, they fish there, they recreate there,
21 and that's going to be impacted.

22 I'm running out of time. I'm going to have to
23 come back.

24 Look at the no action alternative seriously.
25 Somebody just mentioned we just dredged the port

1 30 miles away. You need to compare this. A
2 reasonable range of alternatives has to be evaluated
3 when you do these projects. Evaluating that
4 particular project in relationship to what you did
5 at Miami is a good way to start.

6 Okay. I'll come back.

7 - - - - -

8 MARA SHLACKMAN: I'll pass for now.

9 - - - - -

10 CHELSEA KREBS: Hi there. I am definitely not
11 here as an expert. I'm just a local. I've lived in
12 Fort Lauderdale my whole life. My father's a
13 commercial fisherman. I work for the parks
14 department now.

15 I've got nothing against Port Everglades. I
16 spend a lot of time in Port Everglades. I'm an
17 ocean kayaker. I cut through the port to get out
18 the inlet. BSO yells at me a lot. I'm used to
19 that. They're just doing their job.

20 I also work as a mate part time on a tender
21 service boat that works in Port Everglades, the
22 yacht transport. We pick them off the yacht, we
23 bring them to Pier 66, they have a margarita, we say
24 goodbye.

25 I spend a lot of time in Port Everglades. I'm

1 there in the morning. I'm there at night. I'm
2 there in the pouring rain. I know what time that
3 stupid cruise ship plays that stupid theme from the
4 love song, talking on the cell phone while they're
5 doing that.

6 I got nothing against Port Everglades. I know
7 you got to do what you got to do. I am totally
8 against this project however. I don't know why
9 anyone would go ahead with this project knowing what
10 you know about what happened in Miami. Why do you
11 want to do that again here in Fort Lauderdale?

12 And I know you guys have a job to do. I know
13 you're just here to, you know, to make the, what is
14 it, the inlet bigger; is that what we're doing here?

15 Okay. We have to live here. We have to work
16 here. There might be an oil spill because of this.
17 There are endangered species that live out here and
18 they're going to get killed. And I just don't know
19 how you can go ahead with this project. I'm sorry.

20 - - - - -

21 JUSTIN BUEHLER: Hello. I want to start by
22 saying I oppose the project. I think any coral loss
23 is too much.

24 That being said, with the assumption the
25 project is moving forward, my main concern is the

1 protecting the spawning snook that congregates
2 inside the outer entrance channel during the months
3 of August, September, and October.

4 So this is a picture of snook and how they
5 congregate in the outer entrance channel. I took
6 this September 24th of last year. Okay. So the
7 area I'm talking about is right over here where
8 what's commonly called the second reef intersects
9 with the entrance channel.

10 Those snooks stack up there to spawn, and it's
11 like a magnetic force draws them to that position.
12 Now, if there's any blasting that takes place in
13 this area, it's very dangerous. It cannot take
14 place during the months of August, September, or
15 October.

16 I put my concerns on like a forum, and I got a
17 response from someone who said they worked on a
18 previous blasting project. He said in the early
19 80s -- he says, "Your concern is well-founded. In
20 the early 80s I was a project manager on a blasting
21 project, and the first shot floated 180 spawning
22 snook. The project over 90 days had a dead snook
23 count of 1800, and that's just the ones that floated
24 in the first ten minutes."

25 So I guess, you know, let's just be clear. If

1 there's any blasting that takes place in the outer
2 entrance channel, it cannot take place during
3 August, September, or October, because it's just not
4 worth the risk. These fish build the entire regions
5 of population, and if they're killed it could be
6 horrible, catastrophic for the fishing industry and
7 everything. So anyway that's it. Thanks.

8 - - - - -

9 PROFESSOR ANDREW BAKER: Hello. My name is
10 Andrew Baker. I'm a professor of marine biology and
11 ecology at the University of Miami Rosenstiel School
12 of Marine and Atmospheric Science, which is about
13 two miles away from the Port of Miami dredge site.

14 My lab was one of the few to receive a permit
15 to rescue in a last minute attempt to save some of
16 the corals from Miami, and so I brought some of
17 these along as a visual aid. Some of these corals
18 as you can see are quite beautiful. They're maybe
19 two, possibly even three decades old, and corals
20 that take 25 years to grow are going to take
21 25 years to be replaced.

22 The number of corals influenced by the sediment
23 plume at the Port of Miami is truly staggering. If
24 you scale up the numbers from calculations that have
25 been done, we're talking about tens of thousands,

1 possibly hundreds of thousands of corals just like
2 this that have been lost as a result of those
3 activities.

4 Now, you'll see information in the handout that
5 you all have where a calculation is made of
6 .4 miles, of square miles being lost as a result of
7 this activity, and that number is dismissed as being
8 an insignificant impact given the scale of the
9 Florida Keys as a whole. I reject that argument
10 100 percent.

11 This is, .4 miles is one mile in that direction
12 and almost half a mile in that direction, and this
13 was an area right off of Miami Beach, right off of
14 South Beach. With all of the impacts the corals are
15 facing from climate change, from disease, from other
16 impacts, nutrient pollution, corals need all the
17 chances they have to be able to survive these
18 impacts, and the last thing that we should be doing
19 is physically destroying them in a way that could
20 have been avoided.

21 So I want to point out as a coral scientist and
22 a geneticist that with the declining population of
23 corals that we have, we have to make sure that there
24 is sufficient stepping stones for corals to be able
25 to migrate in an era of climate change through these

1 natural corridors that exist which includes
2 Miami-Dade and Broward County. If we remove these
3 stepping stones by removing .4 of a square mile, we
4 greatly impact the ability of these reef ecosystems
5 to recover as a result of climate change impacts.
6 Thank you.

7 - - - - -

8 JANE FAWCETT: Hi. My name is Jane Fawcett,
9 and I'm a Pompano Beach resident, but I'm also on
10 the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative and
11 involved with our Florida reefs management coming up
12 with the comprehensive management strategy. Our
13 nonprofit Vone Research has been involved with coral
14 reef restoration, particularly moving, transplanting
15 corals of opportunity and reattachment of Elkhorn
16 fragments.

17 Anyway, what I wanted to do is tell you that
18 I've been diving and snorkeling off this area for
19 since 1968. That's a long time. And I've seen
20 firsthand the loss of 80 percent of the corals. And
21 even 10 percent would be too much, but 80 percent is
22 just staggering. And I'm really afraid that the
23 future generations will not have the opportunity to
24 experience this national treasure.

25 I know Sierra already mentioned that it's the

1 barrier reef in the continental United States, and
2 it is something that not only locally we should
3 protect, there should be a national effort to doing
4 everything we can.

5 So I have five things for the Army Corps. And
6 thank you for letting us engage in our comments.

7 Number one is don't make the same mistakes that
8 you made in the Port of Miami. They are drastically
9 underestimated.

10 Number two, third party oversight is critical.
11 I don't see Cry of the Water here or Palm Beach Reef
12 Rescue, but they do an excellent job of keeping
13 these types of projects in line.

14 Number three, mandatory regulations on reef
15 damage. There's got to be compensation for the reef
16 damage. We know there's going to be damage.

17 I'm going to echo the other people. We
18 definitely need a supplemental EIS statement. I
19 believe it has not been updated since 2015, and so
20 much occurred in 2015 and 2016. Here it is 2017,
21 that needs to be updated in the form of a
22 supplemental EIS.

23 And fifth, to move it out to 1000 meters for
24 controlling, looking at control locations,
25 monitoring. 150 meters is nothing. It really needs

1 to be 1000 meters. We've seen damage beyond that in
2 multiple projects in the past.

3 But again, thank you for the opportunity to
4 express our concerns, and I really hope we don't
5 continue this drastic loss of coral.

6 - - - - -

7 CHERYL HARRIS: Thank you. I'm a resident of
8 Delray Beach, and I don't have any credentials like
9 most of the people in this room do, but I am
10 concerned about what could happen because of this
11 project given what did happen in the Port of Miami.

12 Coral reefs and the other ecosystems in our
13 oceans and waterways here are very important, and
14 it's for numerous reasons that have been noted by
15 many of the people here already and by people who
16 have been writing in various forms and places. And
17 I join everybody's urging you to learn from what
18 happened during the operations in PortMiami and to
19 take every precaution this time to preserve the
20 reefs and minimize what could happen to the other
21 life in the waters near Port Everglades.

22 Also just because there could be, this can be
23 irreversible damage that occurs, and, therefore, the
24 environmental assessments and precautions need to be
25 thorough, and so I hope that the Corps staff will

1 proceed cautiously here where some ecosystems are at
2 stake. Thank you.

3 - - - - -

4 CARL MAHLER: Good evening. I'm a diver and a
5 boater who regularly uses these waters with my
6 family, and I know we've heard a lot about corals
7 and economics tonight, but the population of Broward
8 County has exploded by 8 1/2 percent over the last
9 five years, and that leads all other counties in the
10 state and has continued, is expected to continue.

11 The port needs to be allowed to grow in order
12 to meet this demand. The big Post Panamax ships are
13 already coming into Port Everglades, and having a
14 deeper and wider channel would increase the safety
15 margins of those ships that come into the port. And
16 that's all I have to say. Thank you.

17 - - - - -

18 RACHEL SILVERSTEIN: Hello. I'm Rachel
19 Silverstein. I'm the executive director and
20 waterkeeper of the local nonprofit called Miami
21 Waterkeeper.

22 We've actually been involved in litigation for
23 the last two years in the Port of Miami for
24 Endangered Species Act violations for the damage
25 that occurred there and we're also involved in

1 litigation for Endangered Species Act and NEPA
2 concerns here at Port Everglades.

3 So I'm very happy that this public comment
4 meeting is taking place and that the Army Corps has
5 agreed to rescope NEPA. I think we need to learn a
6 lot of lessons from what happened in Miami and I'm
7 hopeful that going through this process that we
8 would get there.

9 But I did see this Frequently Asked Questions
10 document that many people have referenced. This
11 contains a ton of misinformation and really
12 misleading information, and in particular I want to
13 know this question posed in the Frequently Asked
14 Questions, "Did the Miami Harbor deepening project
15 cause excessive coral damage or coral reef damage?"
16 The answer is "no" here, and then it blames critics
17 of the Miami deepening project for overstating the
18 impacts.

19 In fact, the data about the impacts comes from
20 the Army Corps' own contractors and from the expert
21 Federal agency in this project, the National Marine
22 Fisheries Service.

23 This document also calls the National Marine
24 Fisheries Service's conclusive reports that were
25 published as peer reviewed literature and a peer

1 reviewed journal as inconclusive, and we're expected
2 to wait for the Army Corps' contractors to complete
3 their study and deference was given to them, when,
4 in fact, their data is showing the same thing as
5 everybody else is showing as well.

6 So this is really disheartening, and we're
7 going to be submitting very long technical remarks
8 and comments about how to do this project better.
9 Of course, two minutes isn't enough to get into all
10 of it. We've had some really awesome comments
11 tonight, so I want to thank everybody for coming out
12 and standing up for the reefs as well. It's really
13 important.

14 But I do want to correct the record here with
15 these Frequently Asked Questions and, you know, we
16 will be making these longer technical comments
17 available for the public as well. Thank you.

18 - - - - -

19 LISA MICELI: All right. I hate speaking,
20 everyone knows. I'm going to look over here because
21 I get nervous.

22 Well, everyone already spoke about what I
23 didn't know how to put into two minutes. We spoke
24 about coral damage, disease, the sea grass beds, the
25 beach renourishment, the sediment coverage, the

1 decline in tourism, endangered species, the problem
2 with the Miami dredging.

3 So I'm here to speak, I guess, I'm a local.
4 I'm a resident. I was born, I was raised here 46
5 years, I'm old. And so the ocean,
6 Lauderdale-By-The-Sea is actually my home, Fort
7 Lauderdale beach. I know everything. I've seen our
8 land disappear. I grew up and there were no
9 buildings, there were no condos, so I've seen our
10 corals disappear.

11 And I just think this is -- you know, what
12 about the manatees? I can't tell you how many times
13 I've been on the boat. I go on Royal Caribbean
14 three times a year. Our favorite thing to do is
15 when the music's playing The Love Boat and, you
16 know, we look at the manatees and the families and,
17 you know, that's our joy. We look forward to that.
18 So when you start blasting, how are you protecting
19 these animals? That's their home.

20 What about when, you know, the cover, the
21 sediment, it's going to cover all the fish, the
22 corals. I'm a coral hugger, you know. What about
23 the little creatures and the lobsters? That's going
24 to affect lobster season, you know, the diving
25 industry.

1 No one wants -- I dive almost every week in
2 Lauderdale-By-The-Sea, and I honestly stopped
3 diving, what is it, I haven't dived in like 6,
4 7 months because they just did a beach renourishment
5 and there's nothing. The coral reef is gone.
6 There's no fish. I used to sit and take photos, and
7 now I'm lucky if I see a fish go by, I'm like, oh,
8 get the camera.

9 So now we're at that problem here, and we have
10 it in Miami, so now we're merging it together. So
11 this is going to hurt us. It's going to hurt
12 tourism, it's going to hurt diving industry, and
13 it's going to hurt the future generation.

14 - - - - -

15 MICHAEL KRANZLER: Good evening. Much what's
16 already been said is what I was going to say, so
17 I'll keep this pretty short.

18 I come here really as an attorney. I have a
19 major concern as to how the information came out
20 about the Miami Port project.

21 What I really want to see is some third party
22 oversight to prevent any misrepresentations. As
23 some of you may be aware, in the Miami Port project
24 there are Federal filings that had photographs of
25 coral that was undamaged and represented as being

1 part of the Miami Port that was actually from the
2 Cayman Islands. I believe there's the photo right
3 there.

4 So, again, as an attorney that's a major
5 concern to me. That's something I would never risk
6 my license over that. I just want to make sure you
7 have some sort of oversight this time around to
8 prevent that from happening again. We can't make
9 any decisions, the courts can't make any of their
10 decisions if they don't have the right information.

11 - - - - -

12 INA TOPPER: Hi. My name is Ina Oost Topper,
13 and I'm the chair for the Broward Chapter of the
14 National Sierra here.

15 One thing that hasn't come up yet tonight was,
16 number one, indeed given the political changes in
17 Washington, in a few months from now there's no more
18 EPA. Does it mean that whatever we're doing here is
19 for naught tonight and everything will go out the
20 window? I'm just saying it's a hypothetical
21 question, but one wonders.

22 Number two, it is well-known by now that all
23 the data that recollect before the Port of Miami
24 project was started was a result of very outdated
25 research. Who's to say that we are not doing the

1 right research right now? What assurance do we have
2 that the whole thing is not repeating itself all
3 over again?

4 Number three, I did see something about
5 relocating coral. What is the proof of a very
6 successful venture like that? Do we have any
7 research, extensive research where it has been done?
8 You're talking about quite a bit of relocation, and
9 I'm just wondering, can we be told what the success
10 rate is of such extensive relocation?

11 Thank you so much.

12 - - - - -

13 BRETTNY HARDY: Hi. I'm Brettney Hardy and I
14 work at Earth Justice. Thank you for putting on
15 this comment period and hearing all of the public.

16 I personally lived in Key West for five years
17 and have dived and worked throughout the regions, so
18 the corals and the marine environment here have a
19 special place in my heart.

20 I work as an attorney now, and I'm representing
21 Miami Waterkeeper, Center for Biological Diversity,
22 Florida Wildlife Federation, and DEMA. Together we
23 brought litigation challenging the adequacy of the
24 original EIS that the Army Corps published to
25 support the dredging project here in Port

1 Everglades, because the original EIS contains the
2 same plans and information that the Army Corps had
3 included at Port of Miami, and you've heard already
4 how things went in Port of Miami. Thankfully that
5 litigation is on hold and the Army Corps now is
6 rescoping the EIS and producing a supplemental
7 environmental impact statement.

8 And I want to briefly talk about the legal
9 responsibilities of the Corps in producing that
10 statement. The gentleman previously mentioned that
11 the Corps needs to take a hard look at the impacts
12 of Miami. The National Environmental Policy Act
13 that governs the environmental review process here
14 is one of our most fundamental environmental
15 protections, and it requires the Corps to really
16 stop and take a look at what's going to happen to
17 coral before it starts dredging, to look at all
18 reasonable alternatives, to consider the cumulative
19 impacts that are going to happen with regard to all
20 the other stressors that coral reefs are facing, and
21 to look at the most accurate scientific information
22 possible. And this is really important, because
23 there are at least six out of seven of the coral
24 species that are listed on the Endangered Species
25 Act that are present in this project area, so the

1 Corps needs to take this seriously and do the best
2 job that it can. Thank you.

3 - - - - -

4 STANLEY PANNAMAN: I'd like to address what
5 Rachel Silverstein from Miami Waterkeeper said.

6 In Miami the dredging proved disastrous for the
7 coral reefs in the area. The Corps had assumed
8 there would be minimal impact to coral, but instead
9 fine grain sediment from the dredging project harmed
10 tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of
11 coral colonies, and over 250 acres of reef
12 designated as critical habitat for the ESA listed
13 Staghorn corals.

14 The National Marine and Fisheries Service
15 assessed that that area and determined that
16 95 percent of the surveyed reefs are no longer
17 suitable for habitat for corals and some of the
18 damaged reefs will never recover naturally.

19 This is what we could expect to happen right
20 here in Broward County when they start the dredging
21 if they don't take into consideration the mitigation
22 and if we don't have third parties to monitor what's
23 going on.

24 The Army Corps of Engineers is a political
25 agency. These people follow orders. We cannot

1 trust the orders that they follow. We have to
2 ourselves see what's going on. Thank you.

3 - - - - -

4 KELLY COX: Hi, everyone. My name is Kelly
5 Cox. I'm the staff attorney and program director
6 for Miami Waterkeeper. We're, as Rachel said, a
7 local nonprofit focused on swimmable, drinkable, and
8 fishable water in south Florida.

9 I think what I take issue most about this
10 project is the failure to incorporate lessons
11 learned from the Port of Miami. In fact, I think
12 the blatant disregard for the expert agency's
13 opinion, and the expert agency being the National
14 Marine Fisheries Service in this project, the Corps
15 is the action agency. They're supposed to defer to
16 the expert agency under NEPA and other environmental
17 laws for expert opinions.

18 These people who work at NMFS and NOAA are, in
19 fact, experts. They're Ph.D.'s. They're trained in
20 fisheries, sciences, and many of them are future
21 members of this governmental organization maybe
22 sitting in this room. And I think it's really,
23 really important that we just don't disregard what
24 the expert agency is saying, and that's exactly what
25 happened in the Port of Miami.

1 The National Marine Fisheries Service came
2 forward and said that they grossly underestimated
3 the impacts in Port of Miami, and I think that the
4 Corps ignored that in a letter in May of 2015 I
5 believe. And the National Marine Fisheries Service
6 even said that the sedimentation impacts with coral
7 reefs in the Port of Miami was an unequivocal take,
8 a legal take of endangered and threatened species.
9 And I think that the Corps needs to actually do
10 something about that rather than just taking it with
11 a grain of salt and disregarding it.

12 And so I hope here in Port Everglades that
13 we're able to actually utilize these experts and
14 their expert opinions and effectuate action based on
15 those expert opinions rather than saying no thanks,
16 we'd rather not. The easy way out is not
17 necessarily the best way out for our clean water
18 economy here in south Florida, including all the
19 industries that rely on the clean water and not
20 turbid water, and all of the different people who
21 enjoy and recreate and live in south Florida for
22 this exact reason. Thank you.

23 - - - - -

24 MELISSA RILEY: Hi. My name is Melissa Riley,
25 and I live in Dania Beach of Broward County. I'm

1 currently studying marine mammal science at UM, and
2 I'm also concerned about corals as many people who
3 have spoke are. But I'd also like to remind the
4 Corps that sea turtle season is from May to October,
5 and I worked for the Broward County Sea Turtle
6 Conservation Program and I'm very concerned about
7 the endangered species of sea turtles that nest in
8 the area. Thank you.

9 - - - - -

10 MATTHEW SCHWARTZ: So I just wanted to
11 emphasize a little more about the terrestrial
12 environment in the vicinity of both the channel and
13 the intracoastal, and I did mention John U. Lloyd
14 park and I felt bad because the park was recently
15 renamed. It's now the Dr. Von D. Mizell-Eula
16 Johnson State Park. These are named after two civil
17 rights leaders in Broward County responsible for
18 integrating beaches in Broward County. It wasn't
19 that long ago.

20 And I'm going to read from the approved
21 management plan by the DEP and talk about the
22 resources of that park and how this project, what
23 you guys are going to have to figure out how this
24 project is going to affect it. But this is their
25 statement.

1 "The park provides public beaches that are
2 enjoyed by nearly half a million Florida residents
3 and visitors each year.

4 "The park protects nearly two-and-a-half miles
5 of active marine turtle nesting area the three
6 species of marine turtle, including the endangered
7 green marine turtle, the leatherback marine turtle,
8 and the threatened loggerhead marine turtle.

9 "The park protects seven types of natural
10 communities and their rare and endemic plants and
11 animals including Beach Jacquemontia, wood stork,
12 brown pelican, osprey, and three species of
13 imperiled green turtle within a highly developed
14 urban area. It's a very important resource for the
15 people in Broward County.

16 "The park also protects the site of a dedicated
17 African-American beach in Broward County which is
18 representative of Florida's history during the civil
19 rights movement."

20 Virtually everything I've said about this area
21 also applies to West Lake Park and the Anne Kolb
22 Nature Center, also in that same channel. And these
23 sediments will move up and down the intracoastal,
24 they'll also move out to the beach area hitting the
25 marine turtles that a lot of people are concerned

1 about. This is a very important manatee area, we
2 know that for sure.

3 I also want to talk, I've got 13 seconds, heavy
4 metals will be entering into the water from this
5 project, and Broward County has acknowledged that
6 roads, industrial activity are the major source.
7 We've got lead, cadmium, chromium, zinc, all of
8 these issues have to be covered in that hard look
9 that you folks do when you do this environmental
10 impact statement. And I do suggest you do a full
11 environmental impact statement, not a supplemental.
12 Start from scratch. Thank you.

13 - - - - -

14 DREW MARTIN: Drew Martin again with the
15 Loxahatchee Group of the Sierra Club.

16 I'm not an expert on science, but I actually do
17 have a Master's degree in international business, so
18 I can't say I'm an expert but I think I have some
19 knowledge of the international trade. And I think
20 that the economic study is far exaggerated in its
21 benefits of what it'll do for the economy in south
22 Florida while the risks and damage to the dive
23 industry and the fishing industry is far
24 underestimated, and this is a great concern to me.

25 We live on a planet that is fairly small and

1 there is no place else in the universe we can live.
2 The coral reef system is an integral part of the
3 environment ecological system that our species
4 evolved with. If we kill this reef system not only
5 will it dramatically damage south Florida, but it
6 will dramatically damage the world. So many of the
7 species, the reefs are the nurseries for so many of
8 our species, the reefs and the estuaries.

9 I don't feel -- I feel that we rush to these
10 judgments to approve these projects based on false
11 economic data that makes us feel like, oh, we have
12 to do this, we have to create this, we have to allow
13 all these large tanker ships, a lot of these large
14 ships into Florida, but we really don't have to do
15 that. There is an existing port of 42 feet, it's
16 economically successful right now.

17 There is no urgency to approve this project,
18 but there is an urgency to protect the earth. And
19 if we don't do that, then all this economic benefit
20 that supposedly we're expecting will be for nothing
21 because our species won't be around to enjoy it.

22 So I hope you will take that into consideration
23 when you are doing your EIS. And I agree with a
24 third party analysis. And I hope these beautiful
25 corals will be around for the next generation.

1 Thank you.

2 - - - - -

3 MARA SHLACKMAN: Hi. I've been a resident of
4 Fort Lauderdale beach for over 20 years now, and I
5 want to certainly echo and thank all the other
6 speakers who have spoken tonight.

7 And I've been out on the beaches with friends
8 of mine who were monitoring turtle nests during sea
9 turtle nesting season. I don't have the stamina to
10 stay up that late to be out there into the wee hours
11 of the morning doing that. But it's very important
12 that we protect our sea turtle population.

13 Also I was thinking as I was listening to the
14 remarks of others here that I see a lot of flocks of
15 ibis and I see pelicans and other birds in the area,
16 and I wonder how this will affect them and whether
17 that's been studied. So I think the Corps really
18 needs to take a hard look at all these issues.

19 Thank you.

20 - - - - -

21 JEFF PALUMBO: Hey guys. I just wanted to
22 bring up a couple things that weren't addressed
23 either.

24 I'm a UM grad student. I'm also the president
25 of the research diving club at UM. And when we dive

1 we actually make a drive all the way up to Fort
2 Lauderdale to do beach dives because we don't have
3 access to a boat, so it's actually one of the only
4 places in south Florida where you can go without a
5 boat and dive and it's actually worth it and not a
6 bridge.

7 So that's one of the things I'd really like to
8 point out is that California may be beating Florida
9 in certifications which is also money, but they're
10 right behind Florida -- or you're right behind
11 California. And if you had, if you lose beaches
12 like this you're not going to get them back. So
13 there's no boat -- basically you have to have a boat
14 to go diving here if you lose that beach. It's not
15 totally true, but it's one of the best beaches in
16 Florida to go diving off of. And if you lose that
17 you lose one of the biggest keystone staples of
18 Florida. And all this money like from diving and
19 all that, it's going to go out the window.

20 I teach every weekend, I take people out scuba
21 diving, I teach them how to dive, and just seeing
22 how excited people get, like it really changes your
23 mind in how you view things. But if that goes away,
24 I mean, there's no price for that. So the whole
25 state really is at risk here on one beach. It may

1 sound a little dramatic, but that's how I see it as
2 a scuba instructor and as a diver. Thank you.

3 - - - - -

4 PROFESSOR ANDREW BAKER: I don't know where my
5 original two minutes went, the blink of an eye.

6 So there is something else that I wanted to
7 share with everyone here which was that you may have
8 heard in the news reports that the corals in the
9 Port of Miami were principally affected by a disease
10 outbreak which occurred about the same time as the
11 dredging activities was going on.

12 And, in fact, the contractors who work for the
13 Corps to look at the environmental effects of
14 dredging actually published a paper not so long ago,
15 a few months ago, based on the fact that they had
16 recorded the most lethal unprecedented episode of
17 coral bleaching potentially on record. And
18 interestingly enough and coincidentally enough the
19 epicenter of the outbreak of this disease was a mere
20 two miles away from the dredge site. Subsequently
21 the disease spread all the way down through the Keys
22 and all the way up into Martin County and it has
23 become Florida's worst ever disease on record.

24 In the report that these contractors published
25 no mention is made of the fact that a large Federal

1 dredging project is occurring at the same time and
2 virtually and identically the same place as the
3 epicenter of the outbreak.

4 And I think it's really important that we point
5 out, first of all, that there's good scientific
6 evidence that dredging can cause disease as a result
7 of stuff that's released into the water column with
8 the sediments; and secondly, that even if the
9 dredging activity doesn't cause the disease, it will
10 severely exacerbate the effects of a disease, both
11 of which could end up with the same patterns of
12 disease that we, in fact, documented.

13 So I think we need to keep our eyes open that
14 there are potentially interacting stressors that
15 dredging will exacerbate. A lot of our focus, my
16 focus has been on the direct impacts of
17 sedimentation, but there's lots of indirect impacts
18 of dredging and sedimentation that exacerbates
19 existing problems.

20 I also want to reiterate a point that's been
21 made many times which is that the data sets all
22 agree, the data sets from the contractors of the
23 Army Corps and the data sets from Florida DEP, from
24 NOAA, they all agree what changes is in the
25 interpretation and the presentation of those results

1 which are very misleading if you read the
2 contractor's version of the report.

3 So I would really push for as my single
4 strongest recommendation that there be, as has been
5 mentioned, a third party oversight of what is going
6 on so that we have the opportunity to be transparent
7 in both the presentation of the data and its
8 interpretation. Thank you.

9 - - - - -

10 ADAM NARDELLI: I don't have much to say, but
11 just a second. It seems to me that there is a
12 consensus for third party oversight. So just can we
13 go on record. Can we just call like an order to
14 vote on how many people are in agreement that there
15 should be third party oversight, can you just raise
16 your hand so that we can come up with a consensus?
17 So it seems like this side of the room, I don't
18 know, probably, there's 39, about 90 percent of the
19 room. I would say that, about 39 people are in
20 consensus for a third party oversight. That's all I
21 just want to put on the record.

22 - - - - -

23 MICHAEL CONNELLY: I want to point out also
24 that in 2014 and 2015 there was widespread bleaching
25 as a result of thermal stress in the Keys and along

1 the south Florida reef track, and I'd like to make
2 the recommendation that should there be observed
3 high sea surface temperatures that the Corps should
4 potentially reduce or suspend their dredging
5 operations in the summer months when those
6 temperatures are here.

7 - - - - -

8 STANLEY PANNAMAN: I have one question, sir.
9 During sea turtle season do you plan on dredging?

10 TIM MURPHY: Sir, I'm precluded from answering
11 any questions. I apologize for that, but I can't
12 answer any questions.

13 - - - - -

14 DAN BURDENNO: Hi. My name is Dan Burdeno. I'm
15 a graduate from the University of Miami RSMAS campus
16 in '12 where I studied coral biology. And I would
17 just like to reiterate pretty much what everyone
18 else, my colleagues, my friends have said that we
19 need a third party oversight. We need a better look
20 at what happened in Miami. It was absolutely
21 disgusting what was allowed to happen.

22 And honestly what's even more disgusting to me
23 is the response that the Army Corps and other
24 divisions of our government had in coming out and
25 basically trying to brush it under the rug, trying

1 to say that this didn't happen when it did and we
2 have the evidence that it did happen. And I think
3 that is one of the main things that we need to take
4 a look at in how they handled the actions after the
5 fact and how that's going to be the same way they're
6 going to handle it after Port Everglades, and that,
7 you know, I would like to see change. And I really,
8 really want to see change, and I hope that we see
9 change, and I hope it's not repeated. Thank you.

10 - - - - -

11 (Session 2 of the Comments Section is
12 concluded.)

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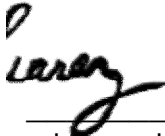


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STATE OF FLORIDA,)
 ss:
COUNTY OF BROWARD.)

I, Victoria Suarez, do hereby certify that the foregoing, Pages 1 to and including 76, is a true and correct transcription of my stenographic notes of requested proceedings had in the City of Fort Lauderdale, County of Broward, State of Florida.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto affixed my hand this 2nd day of March, 2017.

  
Victoria Suarez,
~~Court Reporter~~