

Oceanographic Center Hosts Announcement of the Relocation of Commerical Anchorage



Senator Bill Nelson's representative Willowstine Lawson, regional director; Richard Dodge, Ph.D., OC dean and NCRI executive director; and Congressman Ron Klein's representative, Laurie A. Watkins, M.P.A.



Cmdr. Michael Henderson, NOAA navigation manager; Glenn A. Wiltshire, Port Everglades deputy port director; Steve Higgins, Broward County Environmental Protection Department; Richard Dodge, Ph.D., dean Oceanographic Center; Capt. Karl Schultz, Coast Guard Captain of the Port.

On March 6, 2008, a press conference was held at the NSU Oceanographic Center (OC) by the Port Everglades Harbor Safety Committee formerly announcing the reconfiguration of the commercial ship anchorage in Ft. Lauderdale. The modifications were made after a review of commercial vessel groundings and in an effort to protect fragile living coral reef areas adjacent to current anchorage locations.

The OC and its National Coral Reef Institute (NCRI) are both represented on the Harbor Safety Committee, which is chaired by the Coast Guard Sector Miami and includes representation from federal, state and county agencies, and local maritime and environmental stakeholders. Richard Dodge, Ph.D., OC dean and NCRI executive director, opened the press conference by highlighting the contribution of NCRI and OC researchers to this decision, stating "The new anchorage configuration represents a giant step forward in attempting to solve ship anchor and grounding issues at the Port Everglades anchorage. The reconfiguration was a partnership effort among all the stakeholders and represents a joint effort to both preserve the anchorage function and to protect the invaluable reef resources." This was truly a stakeholder event which resulted in management decisions with intended positive results.

NCRI researcher Dr. Brian Walker was particularly instrumental in providing GIS based images of the anchorage boundaries and the groundings.

Progress of the new anchorage will be closely followed and evaluated for success. Enforcement is a key factor in ensuring no further reef injury.

The Coast Guard banned ships from anchoring in a rectangle of water off Fort Lauderdale after years of ship groundings on fragile coral reefs.

This area, known as Anchorage A, runs parallel to the beach and is where cargo ships have waited for instructions or berths at Port Everglades. Since 1994, ten ships have run aground and many more have dragged anchors on the reefs, smashing coral and shearing off sponges from ecosystems that took thousands of years to develop. Over 11 acres of coral reef has been obliterated.

The revised anchorage plan intends to protect the reefs without harming the port's multibillion-dollar business.
