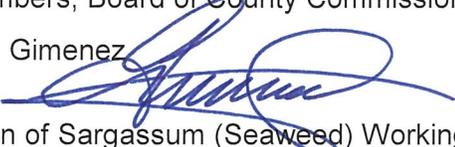


Memorandum



Date: July 23, 2019

To: Honorable Chairwoman Audrey M. Edmonson
And Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Carlos A. Gimenez
Mayor 

Subject: Expansion of Sargassum (Seaweed) Working Group

Recently, the topic of sargassum (seaweed) accumulating on Miami-Dade County beaches was discussed at the July 17 Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Committee meeting with Commissioner Higgins taking the lead, and at two recent City of Miami Beach (City) Commission meetings. I share the concerns expressed by City of Miami Beach Mayor Dan Gelber, Commissioner Higgins, Commissioner Heyman and the City Commissioners during these discussions, and I am committed to developing solutions now.

In consultation with Mayor Gelber and Commissioner Higgins, I am expanding the existing working group of representatives from the Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces (PROS) Department, the Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources (RER), and the Florida Department of Health that has been working with Commissioner Higgins, the City of Miami Beach, the County and State for the past several months, to also include Bal Harbour and the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau. We are encouraging participation by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection as well. We must work together closely so that we stay coordinated and focused on this important task.

As you know, we have record amounts of seaweed on our beaches that is washing ashore. This is particularly critical at "hot spots" where jetties and breakwaters cause large amounts of sargassum to accumulate without our ability to substantially mitigate it.

I am authorizing PROS to work with the Internal Services Department to contract immediately to remove seaweed from these hot spots. We will use other municipal contracts and emergency authorization to do this right now. I intend to bring you the agreements and the budget authorization retroactively in September so that we can get to work without delay. The focus of our efforts will be the hot spot areas characterized by man-made interventions to protect our beaches at three locations: the Bal Harbour and Haulover jetties; the Miami Beach breakwaters from 26-32 street; and the South Pointe jetty.

In addition, I strongly support the leadership of Commissioner Higgins, along with the advocacy of Commissioner Heyman, on this pressing issue. In particular, I support our efforts to have the State authorize a long-term permit for immediate work to get this crisis under control. Pulling State permits every two weeks simply does not recognize the "new normal." Keeping our beaches clean from sargassum is a month-to-month, continuous process.

I have instructed our legislative team to work with the State to make this happen. I urge Governor DeSantis to intervene today and to authorize an extended permit through the end of October, specifically to remove seaweed from these hot spots.

I will continue to keep you informed of our progress in the coming months. Should you require additional information, please contact Michael Spring, Senior Advisor, at 305-375-3710 or me directly.

- c: The Honorable Governor Ron DeSantis
The Honorable Mayor Dan Gelber, City of Miami Beach
The Honorable Mayor Gabriel Groisman, Bal Harbour Village
William D. Talbert III, President and Chief Executive Officer, Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau
Yesenia D. Villalta, APRN, DNP, MSN, Administrator / Health Officer, Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade
Samir Elmir, Division Director, Environmental Health and Engineering, Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County
Tony D. McNeal, Program Administrator, Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Jenna Caderas, Environmental Specialist, Southeast District, Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Carol A. Knox, Section Leader, Imperiled Species Management Section, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Abigail Price-Williams, County Attorney
Geri Bonzon-Keenan, First Assistant County Attorney
Jess McCarty, Assistant County Attorney
Michael Spring, Senior Advisor, Office of the Mayor
Jack Osterholt, Deputy Mayor and Director of the Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources, Office of the Mayor
Office of the Mayor Senior Staff
Maria I. Nardi, Director, Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department
Tara C. Smith, Director, Internal Services Department
Jim Murley, Chief Resilience Officer, Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources
Department Directors