To Whom It May Concern:

          I am writing to express my strong opposition to the Port Miami re-dredging project. The Army Corps and its contractor caused irreparable damage to our coral reefs during the initial dredging of Port Miami. More than 250 acres of coral reefs were smothered in fine dredging sediment and our coral reef in the impact area may never recover. The initial dredging project grossly underestimated impacts to the benthic ecosystem and now we are learning that the Army Corps did not dredge deep enough the first time around. This is absolutely unacceptable.

South Florida is home to the only nearshore, barrier reef system in the continental United States. Our reef tract is a national treasure and generates billions of dollars for South Florida’s economy. Reefs provide food, shelter, and breeding sites for commercially and recreationally valuable fish and they provide important coastal barriers for storm surge. Unfortunately, our reefs are in urgent crisis. We have lost more than 80% of our reefs in Florida since the 1970s. Natural and manmade threats such as climate change, warming oceans, water pollution, ocean acidification, coastal construction, and disease outbreaks threaten their very survival. The last few years have been riddled with coral bleaching and disease events in South Florida -- our reefs cannot handle additional pressures at this time, especially not another dredging project in Miami.

After the devastating impacts of the last dredging project, the Port of Miami is now proposing another project because they didn’t dredge deeply enough last time. This is a gross misuse of hundreds of millions of dollars of public funds. It is unconscionable to think that the last project, which resulted in unimaginable harm and sacrifice to Florida’s coral reefs, was not sufficient to achieve the intended goal of a deeper shipping channel. Now, our already imperiled reefs are facing even more damage.

As a resident of South Florida, I adamantly believe that this project should not take place. It is a blatant misuse of taxpayer dollars and will repeat the environmental harm that our community has already suffered. Our coral reefs cannot withstand this additional threat and we should not allow history to repeat itself. This new project should not even be considered until a full accounting of impacts from the first dredging operation is completed and full mitigation requirements are assessed.

          Please help to protect our coral reef ecosystems from the hazardous impacts of dredging. Another dredging project should not be permitted at the expense of our ESA-listed corals, reef habitat, and a myriad of fish and wildlife communities that depend on coral reefs. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments and for your efforts to protect our coral reefs in Miami.

*Sincerely,*

*{Your Name}*