



ADDRESSING FERTILIZER RUNOFF

Biscayne Bay is in crisis. Excess nitrogen and phosphorus—nutrients that feed algae—are entering the Bay from multiple sources, with fertilizer runoff among the largest contributors. When these nutrients wash off lawns and landscapes during rainstorms, they fuel algae blooms that block sunlight, deplete oxygen, and kill seagrass, fish, and other marine life.

Fertilizer is food for plants and primarily provides nitrogen and phosphorus in a form that the plant's roots can easily absorb. It is used by the agriculture industry to grow food and it supports ornamental and residential landscaping. Residential lawn fertilization is estimated to be the second-largest contributor of household nitrogen in the U.S.

Miami Waterkeeper is tackling the problem head-on. Our research, advocacy, and education led to Florida's strongest fertilizer ordinance in Miami-Dade County, followed by ordinances in Monroe County and eight municipalities. Key provisions include:

- No fertilizer use during the summer rainy season (May 15–Oct 31)
- Phosphorus-free fertilizers
- At least 65% slow-release nitrogen
- 20-foot buffers from storm drains and waterways
- Proper yard clipping management and training for commercial applicators

Education is critical. Through ongoing outreach, we teach residents, landscapers, and municipalities how to apply fertilizer safely and reduce runoff into Biscayne Bay.

By focusing on fertilizer—a root cause of nutrient pollution—we can prevent algae blooms, restore seagrass, protect fish populations, and improve water quality.



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