



ADDRESSING STORMWATER POLLUTION

Miami-Dade County sees twice the national average rainfall—over 60 inches a year. As rainwater flows through streets and sidewalks, it collects oil, pet waste, fertilizers, bacteria, and pesticides, carrying them into canals and Biscayne Bay. These pollutants fuel algae blooms, seagrass die-offs, and fish kills, threatening the bay's health.

Municipalities are responsible for maintaining stormwater sewers, and ensuring that minimal pollutants make it into surface waters. They are required to obtain a state-issued Municipal Separate Stormwater (MS4) Permit, which is designed to set guidelines and ensure compliance.

In May 2022, Miami Waterkeeper and the Everglades Law Center teamed up to release a report evaluating the success of permit holders in the region. We developed a rubric aligning with 20 basic MS4 permit requirements, and graded the permittees on:

- A binary compliance standard (i.e., were requirements met?).
- A qualitative weighted scale of compliance (i.e., how well were terms implemented?).

Among all 35 permittees in Miami-Dade County, the average grade for binary compliance was a C-, and the average grade for qualitative compliance was a D.

The report shows a wide disparity in both compliance and effort on the part of local governments, as well as a pattern of protracted non-compliance and little meaningful enforcement. This poor compliance level is undoubtedly leading to deteriorating water quality in Biscayne Bay.

MS4 permits are rarely enforced by state or federal authorities. But since the release of our May 2022 report, the county unanimously passed a resolution adopting several Miami Waterkeeper and Everglades Law Center recommendations. Our work will continue to further the adoption of effective policy and green infrastructure recommendations into local stormwater plans.

Miami Waterkeeper continues to conduct follow-up conversations with municipalities on how to improve their compliance and to slow and clean stormwater before it enters our waterways.



+1 (305) 905-0856
hello@miamiwaterkeeper.org
www.miamiwaterkeeper.org

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