



ADDRESSING SEWAGE POLLUTION

Miami-Dade County's sewage system is largely invisible, yet it is essential to our daily lives. A vast network of pipes, pumps, and treatment plants quietly collects wastewater from homes and businesses, sends it to one of three regional plants, and discharges treated water offshore. This system safeguards our environment, public health, and the delicate balance of Biscayne Bay.

Much of this infrastructure is 50 to 100 years old, and it is increasingly under pressure from rising sea levels, heavier rainfall, and worsening floods. Aging pipes and equipment are prone to failure, and when the system is overwhelmed, sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) occur. Tens of millions of gallons of untreated sewage have leaked into waterways in recent years, harming marine life, contaminating water, and threatening public health.

Recognizing these persistent problems, Miami-Dade has been under a federally mandated Consent Decree since 2013, requiring the county to address overflows, upgrade its infrastructure, and reduce sewage spills. As part of this effort, the county has committed to investing \$1.6 billion through 2028 to modernize pipes, pumps, and treatment plants and improve system reliability.

Miami Waterkeeper has been on the front lines, monitoring water quality weekly for fecal indicator bacteria, reporting results on the Swim Guide app, and investigating spills that had been overlooked for years. We are also auditing decades of SSO data to identify patterns, track recurring failures, and advocate for solutions that protect both people and the Bay.

The impacts of these sewage leaks on Biscayne Bay are profound. Untreated wastewater introduces bacteria, nutrients, pharmaceuticals, and other chemicals that disrupt the natural balance of the water. Contaminated water also poses health risks to swimmers, fishers, and seafood consumers, while beach closures impact tourism and local economies.

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Miami Waterkeeper is working toward a future where sewage spills are no longer a threat.



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