

# **Miami River Commission's Stormwater Subcommittee Public Virtual Workshop Minutes January 5, 2022**

The Miami River Commission (MRC) Stormwater Subcommittee's public virtual workshop convened at 10 am, January 5, 2022. Attendees of the publicly noticed virtual workshop (no votes nor actions taken) included:

Ely Estevez and Harry James, City of Miami  
Omar Abdelrahman and Oscar Aguirre, DERM  
Armando Vilaboy, SFWMD  
Marcia Steelman, WASD  
Anita Nash, FDEP  
Spencer Crowley, FIND  
Charlie Hand, Seybold Canal Homeowner  
MRC board member Patty Harris  
MRC Managing Director Brett Bibeau.

**I. "Miami River Basin Water Quality Improvement Plan" Agency Quarterly Implementation Progress Reports** – Prior to the public workshop Mr. Omar Abdelrahman, Miami Dade County's Department of Environmental Resource Management's (DERM) submitted the following Miami River Basin Water Quality Improvement Plan's progress report.

July – September 2021 - The most alarming water quality violation was detected in July 2021 at Wagner Creek testing location 02 (WC02), where 24,200 (MPN/100ml) Enterobacteria was found, while the clean water standard is only 130 (MPN/100ml). MRC Director Bibeau cited a 12/27/21 FDEP email stating in part:

"Those efforts indicated stormwater conveyances under NW 20<sup>th</sup> St. at the head waters of Wagner Creek/Seybold Canal showed signs of low volumes of untreated human waste...and the county and city stormwater quality managers were aware of the results and planning to work on the issues per their future MS4 permit commitments."

In addition, Miami Dade County's Department of Environmental Resource Management's (DERM) quarterly Miami River Basin Water Quality Improvement Plan's progress reports include water quality samples taken at 4 locations on the Miami River, 3 locations on Wagner Creek, 1 location on Tamiami Canal, 1 location on Comfort Canal, and 4 locations in Biscayne Bay for Enterococci Bacteria, E. Coli, Ammonia Nitrogen, Total Phosphate, and turbidity, including 5-year tracking charts.

Ely Estevez stated currently the City of Miami provides vacuum truck services in all catch basins within the Miami River Water Basin once a year. Ms. Estevez stated twice a year would be ideal and she would provide a cost estimate for this increased service.

Ms. Marcia Steelman, WASD, stated she will confirm that Miami Dade County provides vacuum truck services in all catch basins within the Miami River Water Basin once a year.

Mr. Charlie Hand stated the Stormwater system in Spring Garden is not well maintained, for example more City of Miami Street Sweeping Machine service would be helpful. Ms. Estevez stated she would request more street sweeper services in Spring Garden.

1,000 “Smart manhole covers” are being installed, with 200 per district, including some along the Miami River.

The 2008 Miami River TMDL is for nutrients to be removed which is officially being provided by the Scavenger Water Decontamination Vessel Services.

Charlie Hand asked about the recent repeated very high turbidity events in Wagner Creek, Seybold Canal which then flowed into the Miami River, even on dry days. Ms. Estevez stated using green dye testing methods the City of Miami and DERM found the contamination source is the construction of I-836. Therefore, the City of Miami is still fining FDOT \$500 per day x 255 days = \$127,500 and counting. MS Estevez stated the case remains open at that the City of Miami will require FDOT to conduct testing and dredging to remove the sediments.

The Miami River is officially and logically part of the designated Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve Act. Attendees discussed the recently appropriated \$30 million to improve water quality in the Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve, with an additional \$20 million budgeted for ‘FY 22-23, for a grand total of \$50 million. MRC Director Bibeau cited the following July 2021 email exchange with DERM:

“I appreciate your email. Few questions please:

1. “There are several stormwater improvement projects that will get at driving down pollutants entering the system, piloting technology” Where are the referenced projects on the Miami River?
2. “as well as testing alternative maintenance schedules for cleaning out storm drain basins.” For the Miami River storm drain basin, how often does County currently clean out the storm drains, and what is the “alternative maintenance schedules for cleaning out storm drain basins” which is being tested along the Miami River?
3. “Additionally, we are working to use new technologies to prevent and predict sanitary sewer overflows and the County will also be conducting septic to sewer conversions.” Where are the referenced projects on the Miami River?

Regarding the Scavenger Water Decontamination, please note it decontaminates 600,000 gallons of water per hour while injecting 150,000 liters of oxygen into the water every hour. In an 8 hour shift it decontaminates 4,800,000 gallons of water, and injects 1,200,000 liters of oxygen into the water. Therefore, it appears to meet the subject FDEP grant agreement line item which states, “reduce or eliminate sources of water quality pollution...with a focus on the Miami River...\$2,150,000”.

Currently, and budgeted for next fiscal year as well, the County thankfully provides the Miami River Commission \$140,000 per year for the Scavenger Water Decontamination vessel to provide 12.5 service hours per week in the 1 mile stretch of the Miami River located in unincorporated Miami-Dade County (27 Ave to NW 36 ST). In addition, the City of Miami contracts the Scavenger Water Decontamination vessel 5 service hours per week in the 4 mile stretch of the Miami River from Biscayne Bay to 27 Ave. Therefore, if only \$57,500 from “DEP Agreement No. C2001, Attachment 3, Pg 3 of 4” which states, “Water Quality Initiatives - Water Quality Characterization: Identify and reduce or eliminate sources of water quality pollution...with a focus on the Miami River...\$2,150,000” is added to the current MRC / County / Scavenger contract, then we would immediately be able to provide an additional 5 needed service hours per week in the City portion of the Miami River from Biscayne Bay to 27 Ave. If this \$57,500 in eligible ST funding is used as proposed for 5 hours of Scavenger Water decontamination Vessel service hours in the Miami River from Biscayne Bay to 27 Ave, plus the City currently funding 5 service hours per week in this same portion of the River which directly connects with Biscayne Bay, would bring this portion of the Miami River up to a combined 10 service hours per week (while County continuing to fund 12.5 service hours per week in unincorporated Miami-Dade County portion of the Miami River from 27 Ave to NW 36 ST / salinity dam).

PLS note for several years in the past the Miami River Commission (MRC) had contracts with FDEP and SFWMD, in which FDEP and SFWMD paid the MRC and the funding was used to pay for services from the Scavenger Water Decontamination Vessel and additional important shoreline cleanups.

Please see attached Scavenger Report. Next, I will email you several independent analyses of its excellent services significantly reducing pollution in the Miami River and Biscayne Bay.

Thanks for your time and support for the Miami River.

Sincerely,  
Brett Bibeau  
Managing Director,  
Miami River Commission  
Cell 305 987 4446 – [www.MiamiRiverCommission.org](http://www.MiamiRiverCommission.org)

*Per State law the Miami River Commission acts as the official coordinating clearinghouse, advocate and watchdog, to ensure public policy and river projects are funded and implemented in a proper and timely manner.*



Miami River Commission - Stormwater Subcommittee  
Public Virtual Workshop Minutes  
January 5, 2022

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**From:** (RER)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 28, 2021 3:06 PM  
**To:** [brettbibeau@miamirivercommission.org](mailto:brettbibeau@miamirivercommission.org)  
**Subject:** RE: FDEP \$10M Grant Agreement

Hi Brett- hope all is well!

We have several initiatives outlined in the DEP funding that fall into 4 major categories- wastewater, stormwater, water quality, and restoration. Each of these program areas is focused on either identifying potential sources of pollutants (i.e., phosphorus, nitrogen, metals, fecal indicator bacteria, etc.) or eliminating the source. The grant is results-oriented with identifying a plan at the end on how to make the improvements needed to reduce or eliminate sources of contaminants with an almost exclusive focus on infrastructure. In our work to date, DERM divisions have prioritized the Little River and Miami River as focus areas causing the greatest impact to natural resources via eutrophication and other water quality impacts. That is where Miami River comes in, as you noted below. There are several stormwater improvement projects that will get at driving down pollutants entering the system, piloting technology, as well as testing alternative maintenance schedules for cleaning out storm drain basins. Additionally, we are working to use new technologies to prevent and predict sanitary sewer overflows and the County will also be conducting septic to sewer conversions.

I understand you may be interested in pursuing additional funding sources to support the scavenger, which as you know the County already contributes to substantially. Solid waste/debris play into our projects insofar as we understand that vegetative debris and solid waste can clog storm systems such that treatment systems can be overrode, leading to little or no treatment before stormwater reaches the Miami River and later the bay. When the system can't perform as designed because of waste, then the first flush of stormwater runoff cannot be adequately treated or treated at all, often carrying with it considerable concentrations of nutrients, bacteria, and other contaminants. While the DEP funds you inquired about are not applicable to marine debris such as the work the scavenger vessel does, there are many funding sources these days that do address marine debris, including NOAA and FWC (links to resources below). You'll note however that these programs also focus on prevention, not removal alone. It may be worthwhile to consider ways the City and MRC can work toward reducing the amount of trash entering the Miami River at the outset, in addition to removal once it has made its way into surface waters.

[Funding Opportunities | OR&R's Marine Debris Program \(noaa.gov\)](#)  
[Microsoft PowerPoint - McGee\\_FMTPH 2021 Final.pptx \(myfwc.com\)](#)

**From:** [brettbibeau@miamirivercommission.org](mailto:brettbibeau@miamirivercommission.org) <[brettbibeau@miamirivercommission.org](mailto:brettbibeau@miamirivercommission.org)>  
**Sent:** Monday, July 26, 2021 1:54 PM  
**To:** RER  
**Subject:** FDEP \$10M Grant Agreement

EMAIL RECEIVED FROM EXTERNAL SOURCE

Good Afternoon,

**PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

On 6/15/21 the BCC approved agenda Item 14A3, “approving Grant Agreement NO.C2001 With FDEP which Provides \$10,000,000 to MDC”. The Agenda Item’s backup included “DEP Agreement No. C2001, Attachment 3, Pg 3 of 4” which states, “Water Quality Initiatives - Water Quality Characterization: Identify and reduce or eliminate sources of water quality pollution...with a focus on the Miami River...\$2,150,000”. At your convenience please be so kind to reply information re the aforementioned projects on the Miami River. No rush.

Your time and support for the Miami River are appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Brett Bibeau”

RER is yet to answer the 3 pending questions, therefore MRC Director Bibeau resent the emailed questions to RER on 11/18 and 12/23.

On January 4, 2022, RER presented to the State’s Biscayne Bay Commission virtual public meeting that a portion of the aforementioned funding will be used for “Water Quality hot spot investigations” including the “Miami River”. MRC Director Bibeau asked for more details.

MRC Director Bibeau asked for a map depicting the locations of septic tanks within the Miami River Water Basin.

MRC Director Bibeau thanked the City of Miami for increasing the budgeted City Police Marine Patrol by 5 additional officers, and thanked Miami-Dade County for increasing the budgeted County Police Marine Patrol by 5 additional officers. Director Bibeau stated those budgeted officers are in the process of being filled, and the Miami River looks forward to the needed services from these additional budgeted marine patrol officers.

The MRC SSC’s next quarterly public virtual workshop will be March 5, 2022, 10 AM.