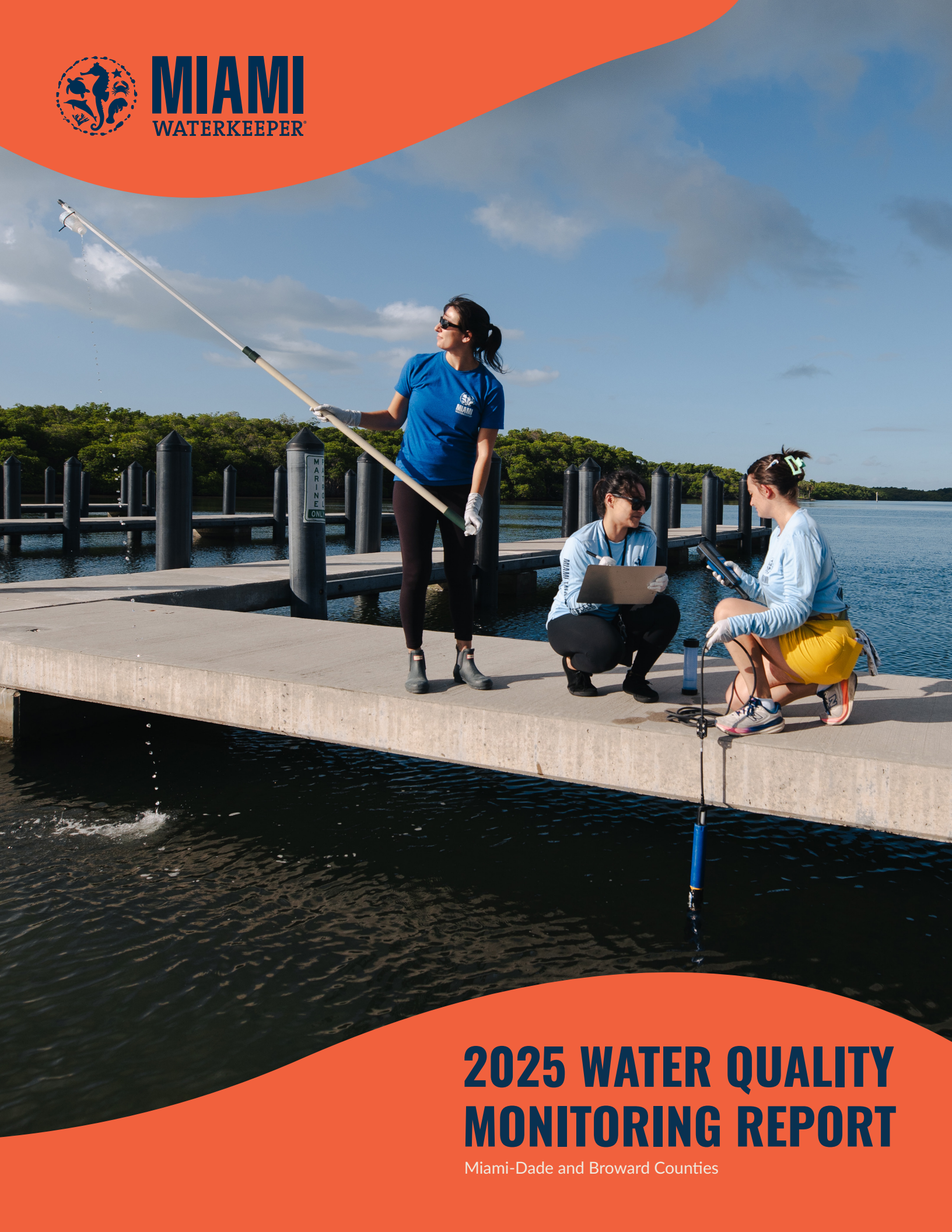




MIAMI
WATERKEEPER®



2025 WATER QUALITY MONITORING REPORT

Miami-Dade and Broward Counties

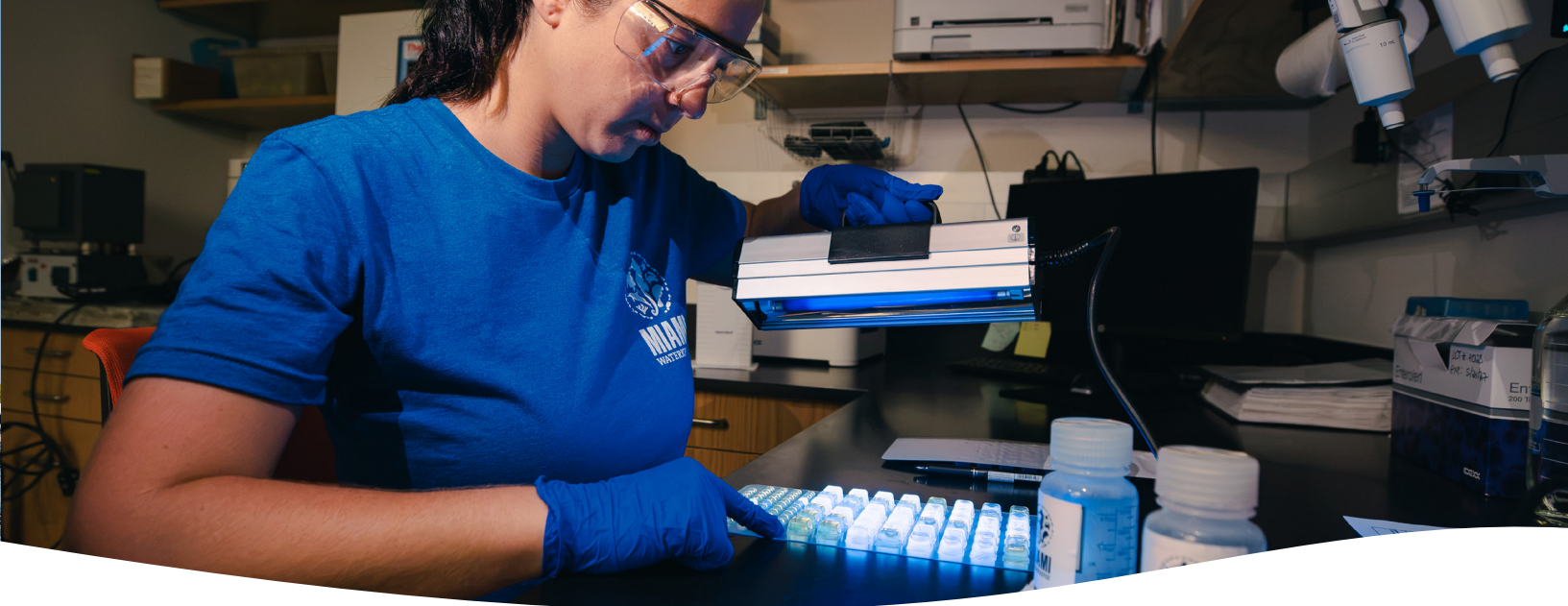


TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Miami Waterkeeper	3
Executive Summary	3
By the Numbers	3
Understanding Water Quality	4
Why Water Quality Matters	4
Our Monitoring Program	4
How Miami Waterkeeper Monitors Water Quality	4
What We Measure	5
Where We Monitor	5
Water Quality Maps	6-7
Understanding Water Quality Results	8
What Are Enterococci?	8
What Does a Red Swim Guide Result Mean?	8
Where Can Bacteria Come From?	9
How Do We Identify Likely Sources?	9
How Can Rainfall Affect Bacteria Levels?	10
What We Found in 2025	10
Elevated Bacteria Were Most Common in Inland Waterways	11
Broward County	12
Miami-Dade County	13
Long-Term Patterns Across the Monitoring Network	14
Broward County: Fort Lauderdale Region	15
Miami-Dade County: North North Bay Region	16
Miami-Dade County: South North Bay Region	17
Miami-Dade County: North Central Bay Region	18
Featured Monitoring Locations	19
Jose Marti Park (Miami River)	20
Sweeting Park (New River North Fork)	21
Why These Case Studies Matter	21
Protect the Water You Love	22
Reduce Stormwater Pollution	22
Pick Up Pet Waste	22
Use Fertilizer Responsibly	22
Support Septic-to-Sewer Solutions	22
Recreate Responsibly	22
Looking Ahead	23
Future Monitoring	23
From Monitoring to Solutions	23
Protect the Water You Love	23

About Miami Waterkeeper

Miami Waterkeeper defends everyone’s right to use and enjoy clean water. We work for a resilient South Florida where people, communities, and nature can thrive together.

Our work combines science, advocacy, education, and community engagement to address water pollution, habitat loss, and the impacts of sea level rise across Miami-Dade and Broward counties.

Through our independent recreational water-quality monitoring program, Miami Waterkeeper tests popular waterways each week and shares results through our website, the Swim Guide app, and social media. These results help residents and visitors make informed decisions about where and when to swim, paddle, fish, boat, and enjoy the water.

Executive Summary

Miami Waterkeeper tests recreational waterways across Miami-Dade and Broward counties each week so residents, visitors, and decision-makers have timely information about local water quality.

In 2025, elevated bacteria levels were most common in inland waterways. About 52% of routine samples from rivers and canals were above the Florida Healthy Beaches Program benchmark, compared with 22% from Biscayne Bay and Intracoastal waters and 10% from monitored beaches.

Long-term monitoring showed that some sites have recurring bacteria concerns, including Sweeting Park, Middle River Dock, Manatee Bend Park, Annie Beck Park, and Jose Marti Park. The results also showed that not all waterways behave the same way. At Jose Marti Park, samples exceeded the recreational water-quality benchmark more often after rain. At Sweeting Park, bacteria levels stayed high even during dry conditions.

This report explains what enterococci results mean, how to understand a red Swim Guide result, and how rainfall, environmental conditions, and source tracking can help

identify where follow-up action may be needed.

The main takeaway is simple: South Florida’s waterways are connected. Protecting Biscayne Bay and our coastal waters starts upstream, in the rivers, canals, storm drains, and neighborhoods that drain toward them.

By the Numbers

- 33 monitoring sites sampled in 2025
- 1,652 total samples collected in 2025: 1,369 routine samples and 283 resamples
- 476 routine samples exceeded the recreational water-quality benchmark
- 34.8% overall exceedance rate
- 14 waterbodies represented
- Sweeting Park had the highest exceedance rate: 100% (52 of 52)

Understanding Water Quality

Why Water Quality Matters

South Florida's waterways are part of everyday life. People swim, paddle, boat, fish, and enjoy our beaches, rivers, canals, and Biscayne Bay year-round.

When water is contaminated, it can affect more than recreation. Poor water quality can increase the risk of illness for people, harm fish and wildlife, and damage the ecosystems that make South Florida unique.

Regular monitoring helps turn water-quality data into public information people can use.

Our Monitoring Program

How Miami Waterkeeper Monitors Water Quality

Miami Waterkeeper monitors the same locations week after week because water quality can change quickly. Rain, runoff, tides, and pollution events can all affect bacteria levels.

Repeated monitoring helps us identify places where bacteria problems happen often, not just once. It also helps us share timely information through Swim Guide and support long-term efforts to improve water quality.

Samples are collected using established recreational water-monitoring methods and analyzed in Miami Waterkeeper's laboratory using the IDEXX Enterolert system to measure enterococci.

What We Measure

Miami Waterkeeper's recreational water-quality monitoring focuses on enterococci, a type of bacteria used to help evaluate whether water is suitable for recreation.

During each sampling event, we also record other water-quality and environmental conditions. These measurements do not identify where the bacteria came from, but they help describe what was happening in the water when the sample was collected and reveal patterns that may guide further investigation.

Together, these measurements help Miami Waterkeeper interpret bacteria patterns over time and identify where follow-up monitoring or source investigation may be needed.

Where We Monitor

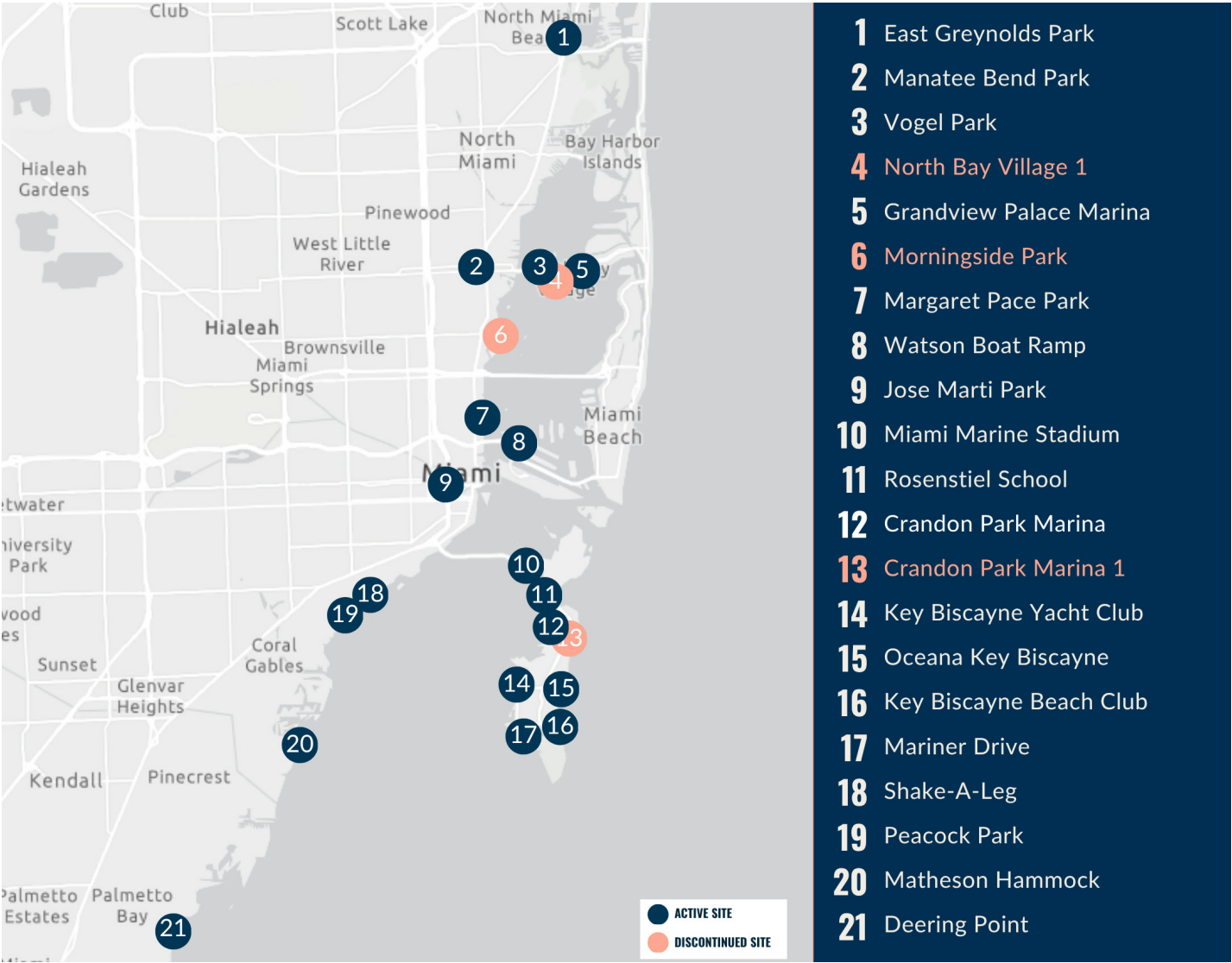
Miami Waterkeeper monitors recreational waterways across Miami-Dade and Broward counties, including inland canals and rivers, Biscayne Bay, the Intracoastal Waterway, beaches, and other places where people swim, paddle, fish, boat, and spend time near the water.

Many sites are monitored weekly throughout the year. Others are sampled through targeted projects, grants, partnerships, or special investigations. Together, these sites help us understand conditions across the connected waterways we monitor in Miami-Dade and Broward counties.



Measurement		What it tells us
	Enterococci	A type of fecal indicator bacteria used to evaluate recreational water quality. High results mean fecal contamination may be present, and illness risk from water contact may be higher.
	Rainfall	Helps show whether recent runoff may have carried bacteria, fertilizer, oil, pesticides, dirt, or other pollutants into waterways.
	Salinity	Measures how much dissolved salt is in the water. It helps show freshwater or saltwater influence.
	Dissolved oxygen	Measures how much oxygen is available in the water for fish and other aquatic life. Low oxygen can stress aquatic life.
	Turbidity	Measures how clear or cloudy the water is. Cloudier water can reflect suspended particles, algae, sediment, or runoff.
	Chlorophyll-a	Helps estimate how much algae may be present in the water. Higher algae levels can be linked to nutrient-rich conditions and may contribute to lower oxygen when algae break down.
	Water temperature	Measures how warm or cool the water is. Warmer water can hold less dissolved oxygen and can affect aquatic life.
	Tides and weather	Help describe water movement, mixing, and conditions at the time of sampling.

Miami-Dade Water Quality Map



Broward Water Quality Map



Understanding Water Quality Results

What Are Enterococci?

Recreational waters can contain bacteria, viruses, parasites, and other germs that may make people sick. Testing for every possible germ would be expensive and time-consuming.

Instead, water-quality programs test for fecal indicator bacteria. These bacteria are easier to measure and can warn us when fecal contamination may be present.

Enterococci are one type of fecal indicator bacteria. They live in the intestines of people and many animals and are commonly found in fecal waste.

A high enterococci result does not prove that harmful germs are in the water. But it does mean fecal contamination may be affecting the water, and the risk of illness from swimming or other contact may be higher.

What Does a Red Swim Guide Result Mean?

Miami Waterkeeper uses the Florida Healthy Beaches Program benchmark of 70 enterococci per 100 milliliters of water to evaluate recreational water quality. Results above 70 appear red on Swim Guide.

A red result does not mean everyone who touches the water will get sick. It means bacteria levels were elevated when the sample was collected, and the risk of illness from swimming, paddling, or other contact with the water may be higher.

Because water quality can change quickly, a red result is a snapshot of one place and one moment in time. Repeated red results are more concerning because they may point to a recurring water-quality problem.

Throughout this report, the Florida Healthy Beaches Program's recreational water-quality benchmark is shortened to water-quality benchmark. A routine sample above 70 enterococci per 100 milliliters is called an exceedance, and percentages show how often exceedances occurred. Miami Waterkeeper applies this benchmark across beaches, Biscayne Bay sites, and tidally influenced canals so results can be compared across connected waterways.

Download the Swim Guide App

Available in the App Store and on Google Play.

Search for your beach

Free real-time water quality information for over 7,000 beaches, lakes, rivers, and swimming holes all over the world.

Find out the water quality

Use the water-quality icons to see the latest monitoring status for your beach.

Current Status

- Most recent test results met water quality standards
- Most recent test results failed to meet water quality standards
- Water quality information is too old to be considered current

Historical Status

- Beach passed water quality tests 95% of the time
- Beach passed water quality tests 60-95% of the time
- Beach failed water quality tests 40% of the time or more



Where Can Bacteria Come From?

Enterococci can reach waterways from many sources, including leaking sewer lines, sewage overflows, failing septic systems, pet waste, wildlife, boat waste, and stormwater runoff.

The source matters because different sources can pose different health risks and require different solutions. Human wastewater is of particular concern because it can contain pathogens that specifically infect people. Human wastewater may call for sewer or septic repairs. Pet waste may call for better cleanup, education, and enforcement. Wildlife-related bacteria may require a different response.

Enterococci can also survive in sediments, beach sand, and decaying plants after the original pollution has entered the environment. That means a high result does not always mean a new pollution event just happened.

How Do We Identify Likely Sources?

Enterococci testing can tell us when fecal contamination may be present, but it cannot tell us exactly where it came from.

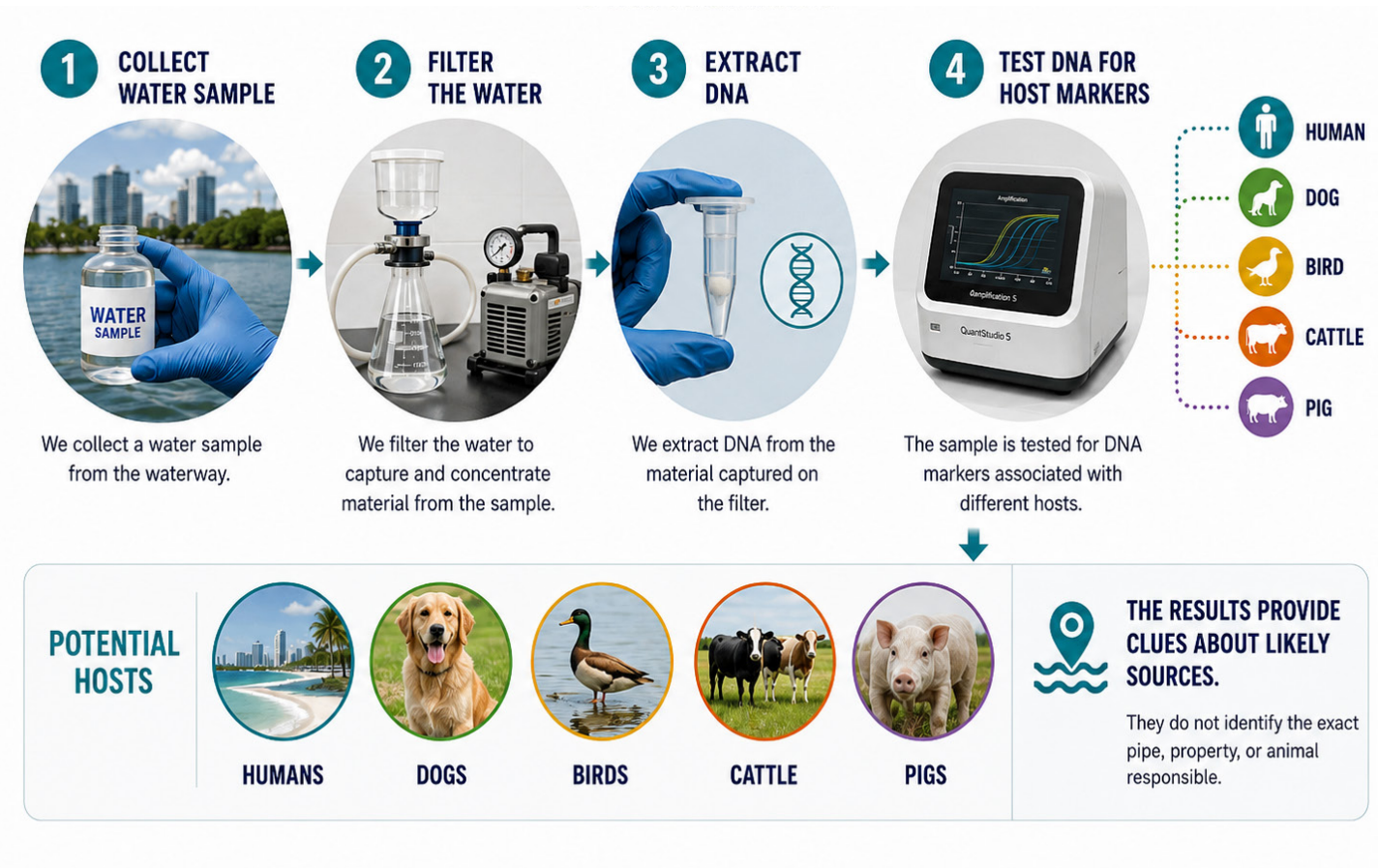
To investigate possible sources, scientists can use Microbial Source Tracking, or MST. MST looks for host-associated microbial DNA markers, genetic signatures from microorganisms that are commonly associated with the feces of particular host groups, such as humans, dogs, or birds.

MST does not identify the exact pipe, property, animal, or event responsible for contamination. It adds clues that help communities, utilities, and agencies decide what to investigate next.

Miami Waterkeeper uses MST in selected projects when more information is needed to understand what may be affecting water quality.

How microbial source tracking (MST) works

MST looks for DNA clues in a water sample that can point to likely sources of fecal contamination.



*Some illustrative graphics in this report were created with the assistance of generative AI and reviewed by Miami Waterkeeper staff.

How Can Rainfall Affect Bacteria Levels?

Rain can move pollution from land to water.

As rainwater flows over streets, sidewalks, yards, parks, and parking lots, it can pick up pet waste, sewage from leaks or overflows, fertilizer, trash, and other pollutants. Storm drains, canals, and rivers can then carry that pollution into Biscayne Bay and the ocean.

That is why bacteria levels often rise after rain. But not every site responds the same way. Some locations show clear rain-related patterns. Others stay elevated even during dry conditions, which may point to more persistent sources of contamination.

Long-term monitoring helps reveal these patterns and helps identify where follow-up action may be needed.

What We Found in 2025

In 2025, Miami Waterkeeper collected 1,652 water-quality samples across 33 active monitoring sites in Miami-Dade and Broward counties. The main analysis in this report focuses on 1,369 routine samples used to evaluate recreational water quality; the remaining 283 samples were resamples.

These monitoring locations included inland waterways, Biscayne Bay and the Intracoastal Waterway, beaches, and other recreational waters.

Miami Waterkeeper's sites are selected based on program needs, partnerships, grants, public use, and local water-quality concerns. Because the sites are not chosen through a randomized regional study, the results describe conditions at the locations we monitored. They should not be interpreted as representing every waterway or beach in Miami-Dade and Broward counties.

Elevated Bacteria Were Most Common in Inland Waterways

One pattern stood out in 2025: elevated bacteria levels were most common in inland waterways.

Across the active monitoring locations, 52% of routine samples from inland waterways were above the Florida Healthy Beaches Program benchmark of 70 MPN/100 mL. Exceedance rates were lower in Biscayne Bay and Intracoastal waters, where 22% of routine samples were above the benchmark, and lowest at monitored ocean beaches, where 10% were above the benchmark.

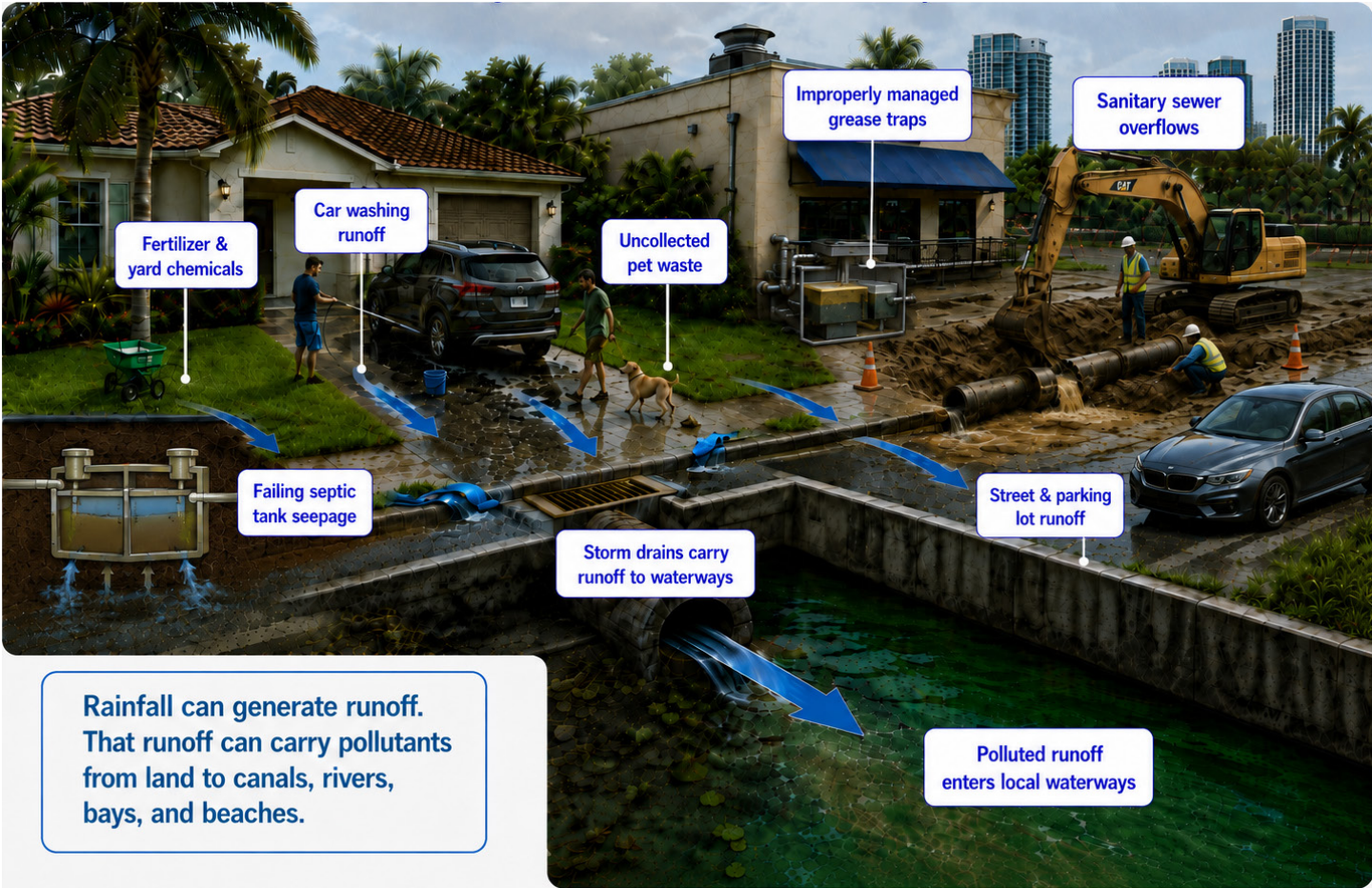
This pattern is important, but it should be understood in context. Inland canals and rivers often receive runoff from streets, neighborhoods, parks, storm drains, and other parts of the watershed. These waterways can also have less tidal flushing, less mixing, and less dilution than more open coastal waters. In contrast, ocean beaches and open coastal sites are often influenced by greater water movement, wave action, tides, and exchange with the Atlantic Ocean, which can help disperse or dilute bacteria.

That does not mean coastal waters are free from pollution, or that inland waterways are always unsafe. It means that different types of waterways behave differently. Understanding those differences helps explain why bacteria concerns are often more common upstream, in canals and rivers, before water moves toward Biscayne Bay, the Intracoastal Waterway, and the ocean.

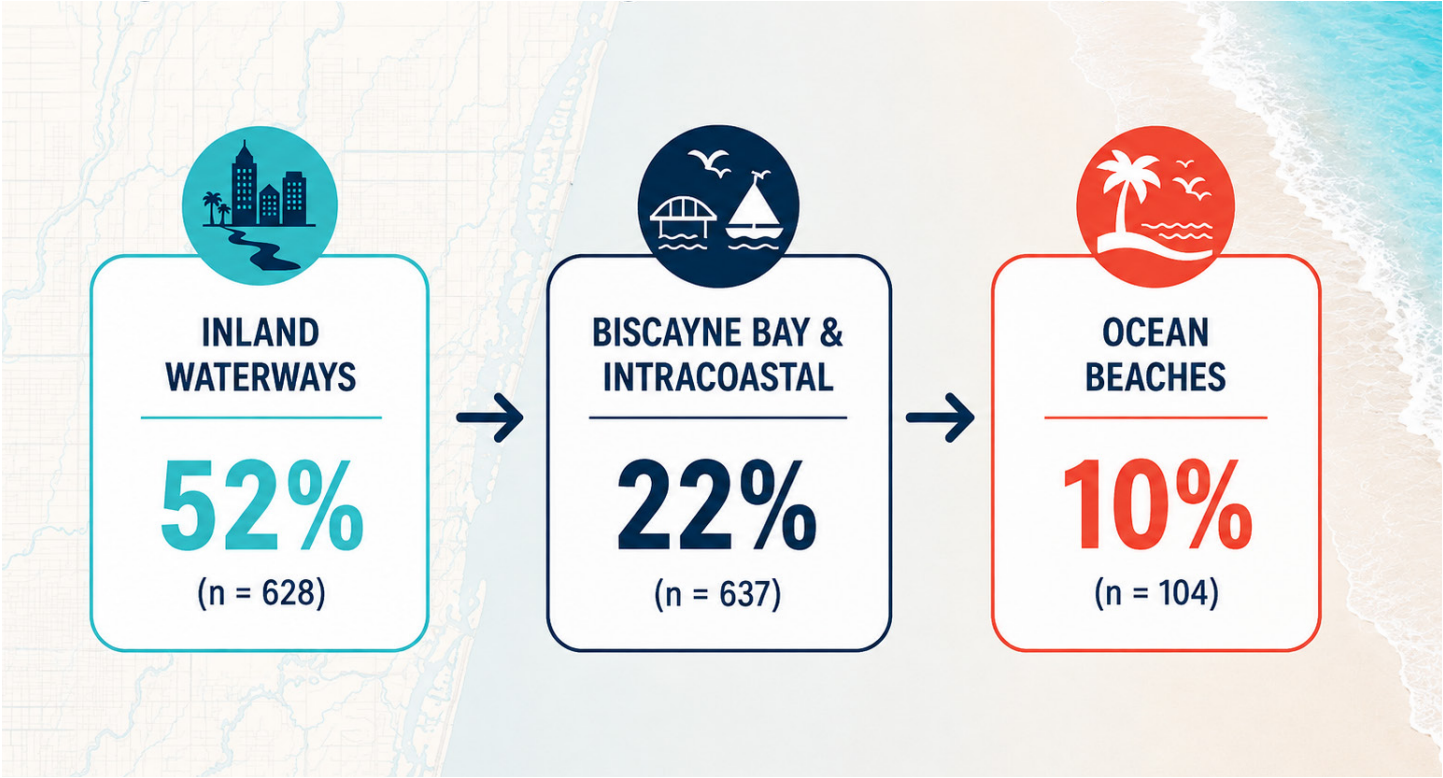
This pattern matters because South Florida's waterways are connected. Rivers, canals, storm drains, and urban runoff can carry pollution from neighborhoods, streets, parks, and commercial areas toward Biscayne Bay, the Intracoastal Waterway, and the ocean.

Runoff can carry pollution

Rainfall can generate runoff that picks up pollutants from land and carries them through storm drains and into local waterways.



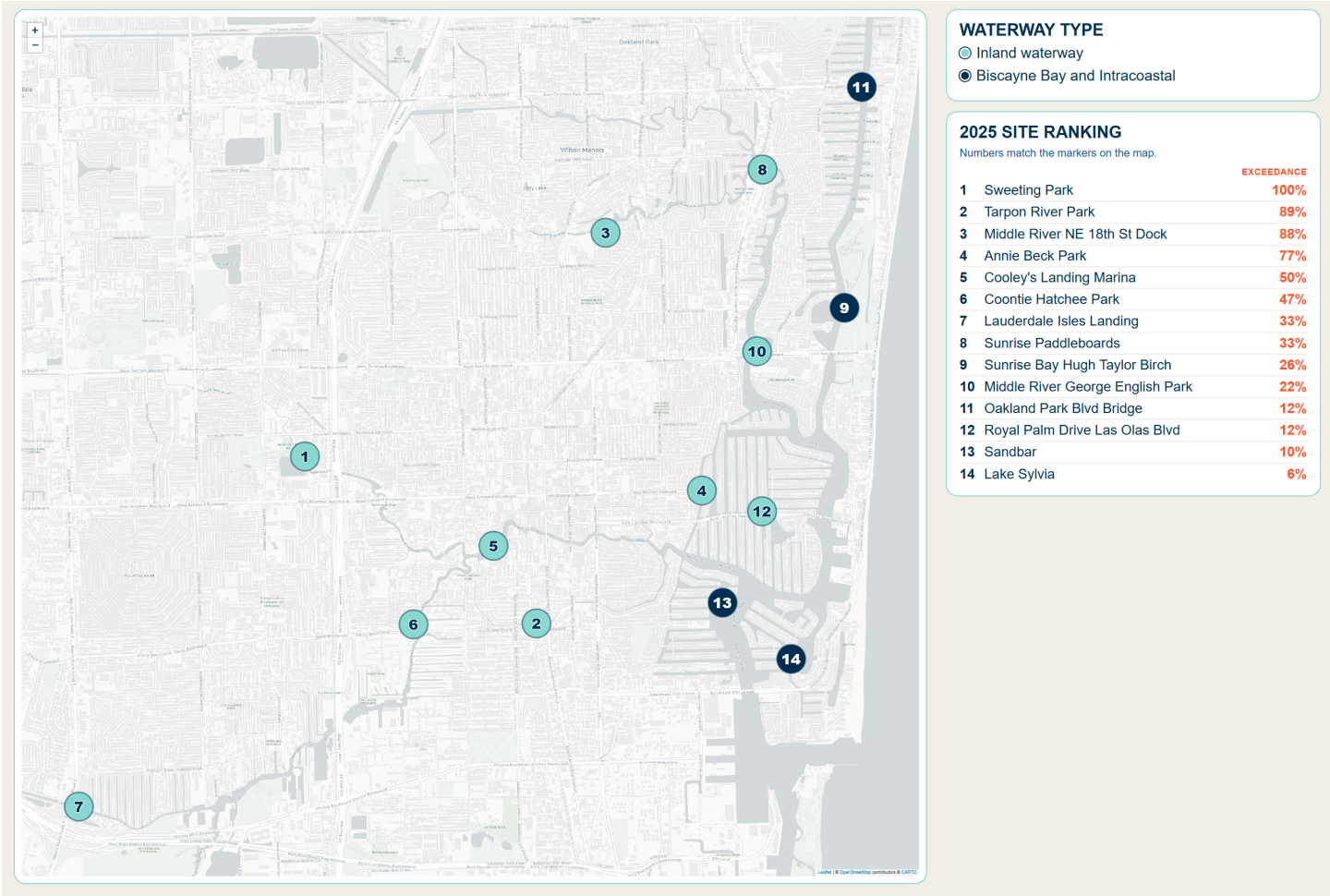
Percentage of routine samples above the water-quality benchmark by waterway type



Broward County

In Broward County, the highest exceedance rates were concentrated along inland waterways in Fort Lauderdale, especially the North Fork of the New River, Middle River, and Las Olas Isles canals. Sweeting Park had the highest exceedance rate in the 2025 monitoring record, with 100% of routine samples above the water-quality benchmark.

Broward: 2025 Monitoring Results

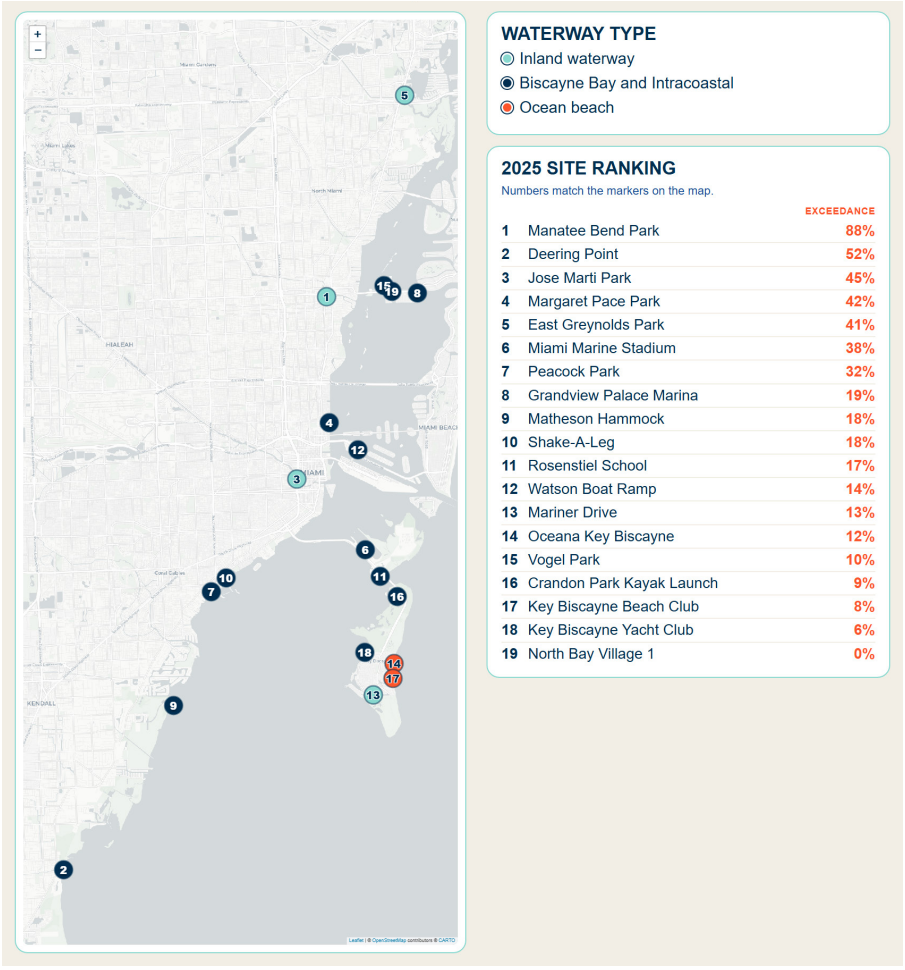


Number of sites sampled	Total number of routine samples	Total number of exceedances	Overall exceedance rate
14	591	254	43%

Miami-Dade County

In Miami-Dade County, the highest exceedance rates were observed at inland and nearshore sites connected to urban drainage areas, including Manatee Bend Park on the Little River and Jose Marti Park on the Miami River. Several Biscayne Bay sites also had recurring exceedances, showing that elevated bacteria were not limited to rivers and canals.

Miami-Dade: 2025 Monitoring Results



Number of sites sampled	Total number of routine samples	Total number of exceedances	Overall exceedance rate
19	778	222	28.5%

Together, these results show that bacteria concerns were most persistent in inland waterways, but they were not limited to those areas. Continued monitoring across the connected water system helps identify where problems are recurring and where follow-up investigation may be needed.

Long-Term Patterns Across the Monitoring Network

The 2025 results show conditions observed during a single monitoring year. Long-term monitoring helps show whether those results are isolated or part of a recurring pattern.

The heat maps below show how often each site was above the recreational water-quality benchmark over time. Four heat maps are presented: one for Broward County and three for Miami-Dade County.

Miami-Dade sites are grouped using Florida DEP's Estuary Nutrient Regions. Although this report focuses on bacteria rather than nutrients, many of the same pollution sources affect both. Using these regions provides a familiar and consistent way to compare water-quality patterns across different parts of Biscayne Bay.

Because MWK's monitoring program is adaptive, sites may be added or discontinued as grants, partnerships, and priorities change. Some earlier sites, especially in North North Bay and South North Bay, were monitored through grants focused on understanding pollution inputs. Over time, MWK has increasingly prioritized sites with direct recreational access, strong public use, and importance to municipalities based on resident feedback.

How to Read the Heat Maps

- Each row is a monitoring site.
- Each column is a year.
- Red means more exceedances, green means fewer, and yellow falls in between.
- Gray means there was not enough data or the site was not monitored that year.
- Each number shows the percentage of routine samples that were above the water-quality benchmark that year. For example, 50% means that half of the routine samples collected at that site that year were above the water-quality benchmark.



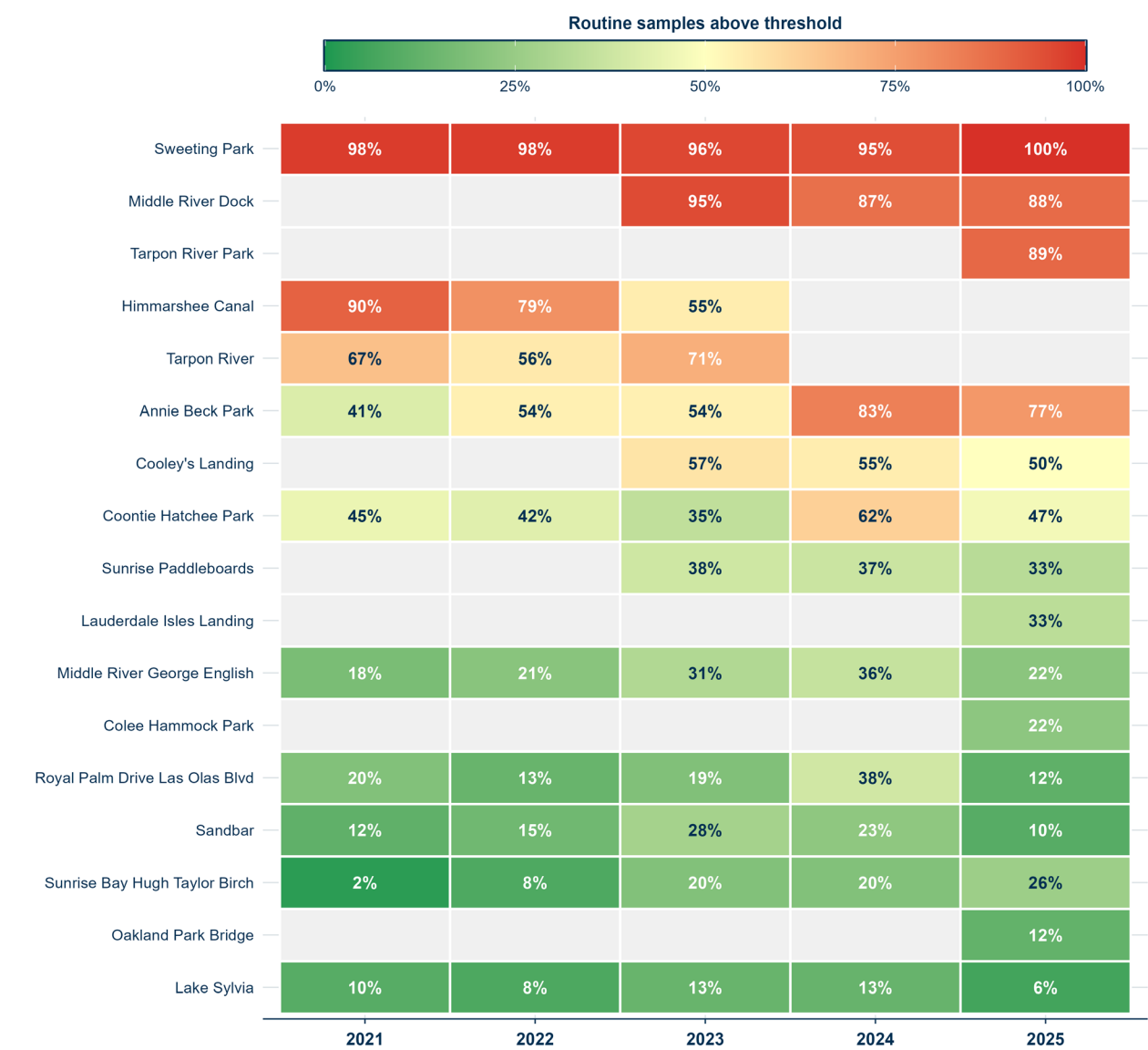
Broward County: Fort Lauderdale Region

In Fort Lauderdale, Sweeting Park showed the clearest persistent elevated bacterial levels, with at least 95% of routine samples above the water-quality benchmark every year shown and 100% in 2025. Middle River Dock also remained high during monitored years, with exceedance rates above 85%.

Other sites showed more variable patterns. Annie Beck Park increased in 2024 and remained elevated in 2025, while Cooley's Landing stayed around half of routine samples above the water-quality benchmark in recent years. Coastal and Intracoastal sites such as Lake Sylvia and Sandbar were generally lower.

Fort Lauderdale long-term patterns of routine samples above the water-quality benchmark

Annual percentage of routine samples above 70 MPN/100 mL



Gray cells indicate no reportable annual percentage: the site-year has fewer than 3 valid routine Enterococci observations.

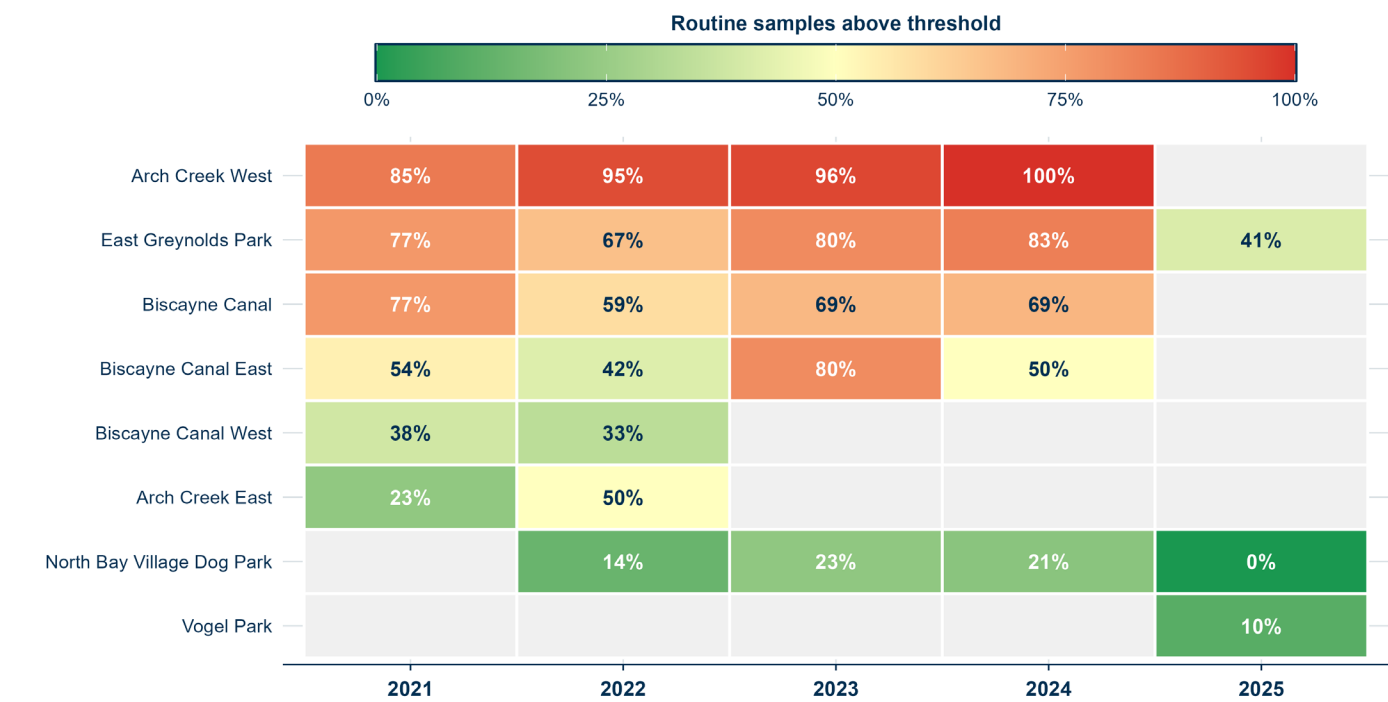
Miami-Dade County: North North Bay

In North North Bay, several canal and tributary sites showed recurring elevated bacterial levels during the years they were monitored, including Arch Creek West (85%–100%), Biscayne Canal (59%–77%), and East Greynolds Park (41%–83%).

In 2025, East Greynolds Park remained the main active elevated site, with 41% of routine samples above the water-quality benchmark, down from 80% in 2023 and 83% in 2024. Vogel Park was added in 2025 and showed lower exceedances (10%), adding coverage at a public waterfront park.

Miami-Dade North North Bay: Long-term patterns of routine samples above the water-quality benchmark

Annual percentage of routine samples above 70 MPN/100 mL



Gray cells indicate no reportable annual percentage: the site-year has fewer than 3 valid routine Enterococci observations.

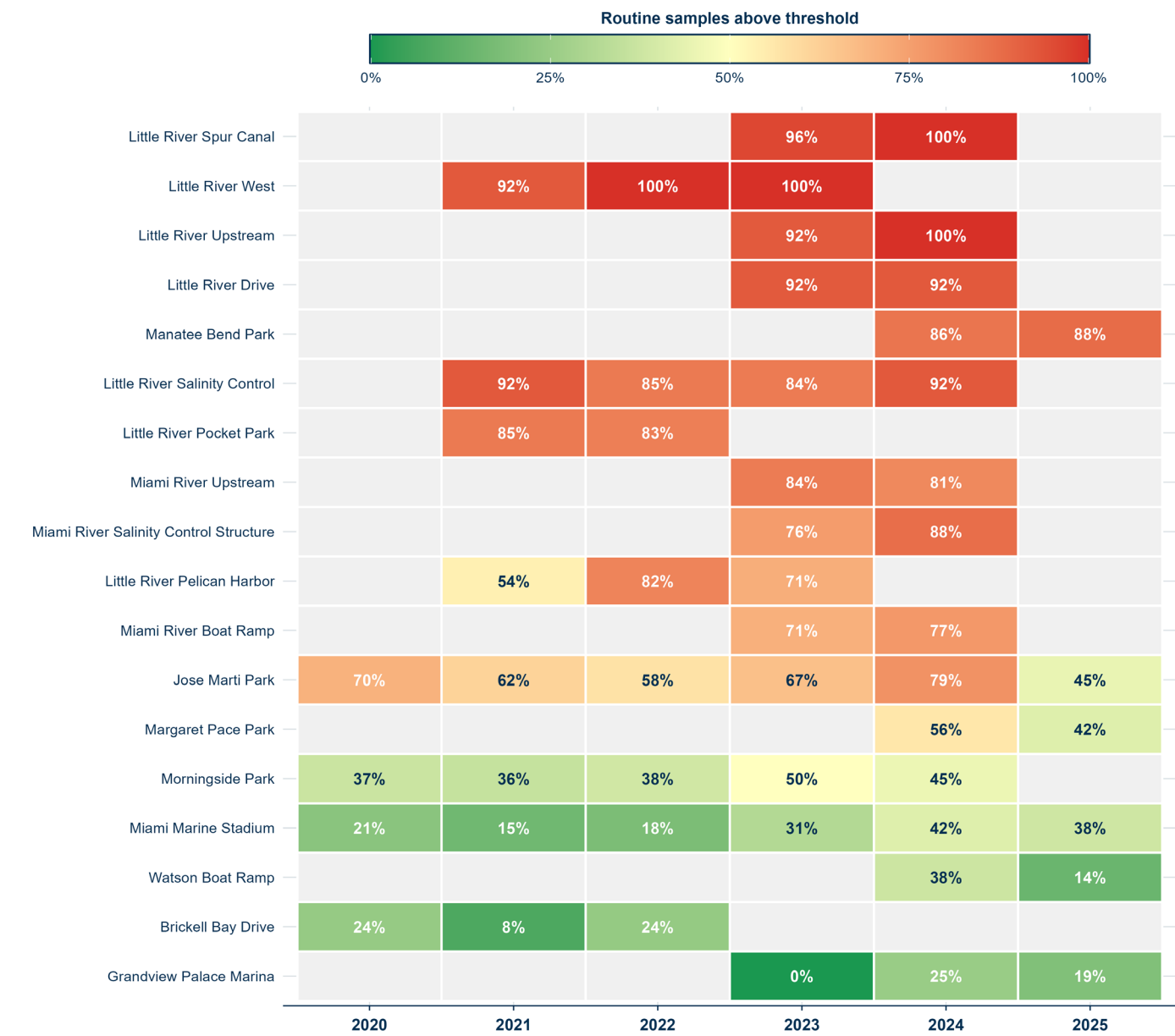
Miami-Dade County: South North Bay

In South North Bay, elevated bacterial levels were most persistent at Little River and Miami River sites during the years they were monitored. Several Little River sites were above the water-quality benchmark in 84%–100% of routine samples, while Miami River sites such as Miami River Upstream and the Miami River Salinity Control Structure ranged from 76%–88%.

In 2025, Manatee Bend Park had the highest active exceedance rate in this region (88%). Jose Marti Park decreased from 79% in 2024 to 45% in 2025, but still showed recurring exceedances. Margaret Pace Park also remained elevated in 2025 (42%).

Miami-Dade South North Bay: Long-term patterns of routine samples above the water-quality benchmark

Annual percentage of routine samples above 70 MPN/100 mL



Gray cells indicate no reportable annual percentage: the site-year has fewer than 3 valid routine Enterococci observations.

Miami-Dade County: North Central Bay

For this report, North Central Inshore and North Central Outer-Bay sites were combined into one broader reporting region, referred to here as North Central Bay. DEP’s numeric nutrient criteria distinguish these as two separate estuarine regions.

In North Central Bay, elevated bacterial levels were generally less frequent than in the canal and tributary regions, but several sites still showed recurring exceedances. Deering Point had the highest active 2025 exceedance rate in this region, with 52% of routine samples above the water-quality benchmark, following 47% in 2024. Peacock Park was also elevated, but decreased from 59% in 2024 to 32% in 2025.

Many Key Biscayne and coastal sites had lower exceedance rates in 2025, including Key Biscayne Yacht Club (6%), Key Biscayne Beach Club (8%), Oceana Key Biscayne (12%), and Mariner Drive (13%).

Miami-Dade North Central Bay: Long-term patterns of routine samples above the water-quality benchmark

Annual percentage of routine samples above 70 MPN/100 mL



Gray cells indicate no reportable annual percentage: the site-year has fewer than 3 valid routine Enterococci observations.

Featured Monitoring Locations

A red Swim Guide result tells us bacteria levels were elevated when the sample was collected. It does not tell us why.

To better understand what may be influencing bacteria levels, Miami Waterkeeper also records environmental conditions such as rainfall, salinity, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, chlorophyll-a, weather, and tides. These measurements do not prove what caused a high bacteria result. Instead, they help describe the conditions surrounding each sample and point to patterns that may need follow-up investigation.

The two case studies below show how long-term monitoring can reveal different patterns at different sites. Jose Marti Park and Sweeting Park both ranked among higher-concern sites in 2025, but the patterns were not the same.

Environmental data help interpret bacteria results and point to possible patterns. They do not prove cause.

JOSE MARTI PARK

Miami River | Miami-Dade County

Bacteria pattern	Frequent exceedances; more common after rain
Waterway setting	Lower Miami River; closer to Biscayne Bay
Other clues	Human + dog markers; brackish water
What it helps managers investigate	Stormwater pathways that may move bacteria into the river after rain

SWEETING PARK

North Fork of the New River | Broward County

Bacteria pattern	Persistently high in dry and wet conditions; 100% in 2025
Waterway setting	North Fork of the New River; farther inland
Other clues	Human + dog markers; higher chlorophyll-a; lower dissolved oxygen
What it helps managers investigate	Ongoing watershed inputs and other conditions affecting water quality between rain events

Photo credit: Images provided by Miami Waterkeeper.

Jose Marti Park (Miami River)

Jose Marti Park sits along the lower Miami River, just west of downtown Miami. The park is an important public access point along the riverfront, where people walk, boat, paddle, fish, and spend time near the water.

Miami Waterkeeper has monitored Jose Marti Park since 2020. Bacteria exceedances have remained common, ranging from 45% to 79% of routine samples above the water-quality benchmark each year. In 2025, 45% of routine samples were above the benchmark, the lowest annual exceedance rate in the monitoring record for this site.

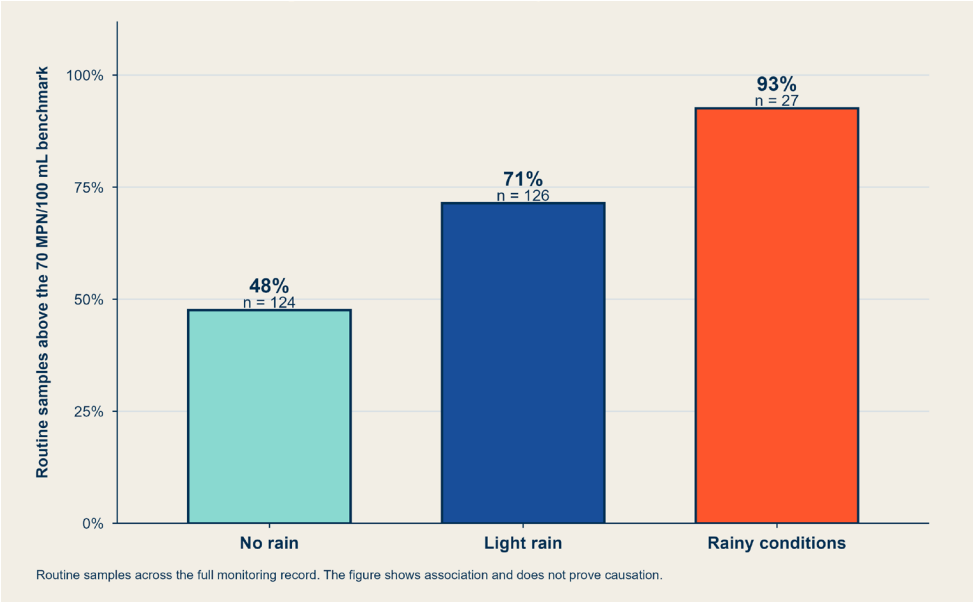
Rainfall conditions provide useful context at Jose Marti Park. Across the monitoring record, routine samples collected during wetter conditions were more often above the recreational water-quality benchmark than samples collected during drier conditions. This relationship does not identify where the bacteria came from or confirm that stormwater transported them into the river. Because Miami Waterkeeper’s routine monitoring was not designed as a controlled rainfall or seasonal study, the results should be interpreted as a pattern observed over time. Still, the findings are consistent with stormwater acting as one possible pathway for moving bacteria from land into the river.

Other measurements help describe the conditions at this site. Jose Marti Park is brackish, meaning the water reflects a mix of freshwater and saltwater influence. Annual average salinity ranged from about 8 to 16 ppt, showing that the site can vary in how much freshwater or saltwater influence is present. Dissolved oxygen was generally around 6 to 7 mg/L, which helps describe whether the water had enough oxygen to support aquatic life. These measurements do not identify the source of bacteria, but they help describe the water conditions surrounding elevated bacteria results and whether the site may be influenced by freshwater flow, runoff, mixing, or other watershed conditions.

Source-tracking research provides another clue. Through an EPA-funded study, Evaluating Sources of Nutrients and Enterococci in Biscayne Bay, Florida: Connections and Management Implications (available through [USAspending.gov](#)), Miami Waterkeeper worked with scientists and research partners to investigate possible sources of fecal pollution at Jose Marti Park. The study frequently detected MST markers associated with human and dog waste. Together, the bacteria results, rainfall context, environmental measurements, and source-tracking information suggest that this site may be influenced by multiple sources of fecal contamination, with stormwater acting as one possible pathway into the Miami River.

Rainfall and bacteria exceedances at Jose Marti Park

Jose Marti Park | Routine samples across the full monitoring record | 48-hour rainfall



Sweeting Park (New River North Fork)

Sweeting Park is located along the North Fork of the New River in Fort Lauderdale. The park provides public waterfront access, including fishing, a dock, benches, and space for passive recreation.

Miami Waterkeeper has monitored Sweeting Park since 2021. The results show a persistent concern. Every year, at least 95% of routine samples were above the Florida Healthy Beaches Program benchmark. In 2025, 100% of routine samples were above the benchmark.

At Sweeting Park, bacteria levels stayed high during both dry and wet conditions. This suggests that rainfall alone does not account for the recurring exceedances. Other measurements help describe the site’s broader water-quality conditions. Annual average salinity was low, ranging from about 1.9 to 5.2 ppt, showing that this inland site is strongly influenced by lower-salinity water. Dissolved oxygen averaged about 4.1 to 5.0 mg/L, lower than at Jose Marti Park. EPA considers dissolved oxygen an important measure of whether water can support aquatic life. Chlorophyll-a averaged about 9.9 to 14.4 µg/L, higher than at Jose Marti Park, suggesting more algae in the water. Higher algae levels can be associated with nutrient-rich conditions, and when algae or other organic material break down, that process can reduce dissolved oxygen. These measurements do not identify the source of bacteria, but they show that Sweeting Park has recurring water-quality concerns beyond a single high-bacteria result.

Source-tracking information from the [Broward County Environmental Monitoring Laboratory](#) provides another clue. Their monitoring has detected both human-associated and dog-associated markers at this location over multiple years. This suggests the bacteria concerns at Sweeting Park may reflect more than one source, including human wastewater influence, pet waste, and other urban watershed inputs.

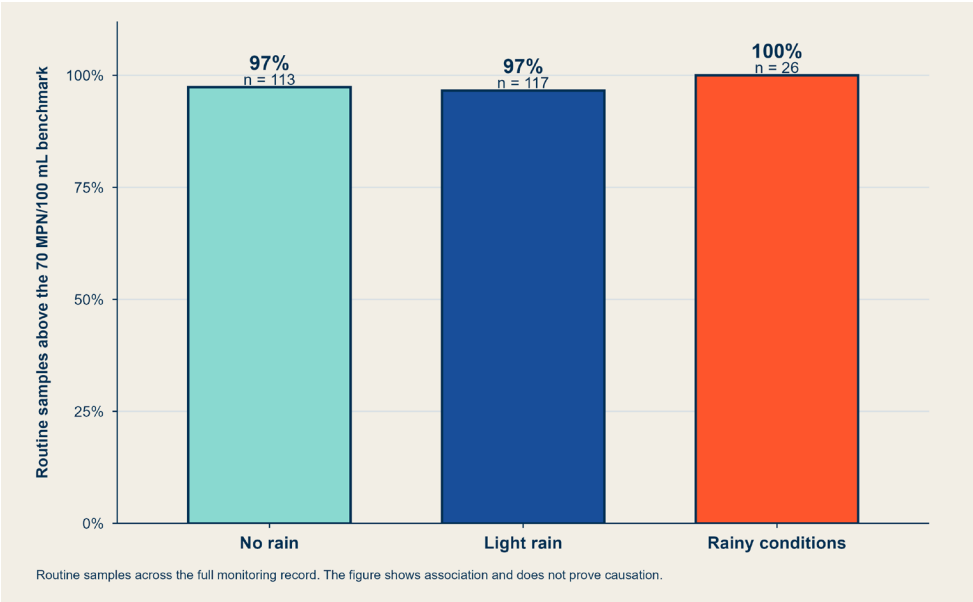
Why These Case Studies Matter

These sites show why Miami Waterkeeper looks beyond a single bacteria result. Rainfall, other water-quality measurements, and source tracking help put enterococci results in context. To explore rainfall patterns, samples were grouped by rainfall in the previous 48 hours: 0, >0–<1, and ≥1 inch. Jose Marti showed more exceedances under wetter conditions, while Sweeting remained elevated across conditions. Human- and dog-associated markers at both sites suggest multiple pollution sources.

Rain can carry land-based pollutants into stormwater systems and waterways. MS4 permits require local governments to manage stormwater and reduce pollutant discharges. [Miami Waterkeeper’s Stormwater Report Card for Miami-Dade County](#) found progress, but gaps remain in inspections of key infrastructure. Keeping storm drains, canals, and other stormwater systems clean and well maintained helps reduce pollution carried into local waterways.

Rainfall and bacteria exceedances at Sweeting Park

Sweeting Park | Routine samples across the full monitoring record | 48-hour rainfall



Protect the Water You Love

Protecting clean water starts with understanding how pollution reaches our waterways. Small actions at home and in our neighborhoods can help reduce the bacteria, nutrients, and debris that wash into canals, rivers, Biscayne Bay, and the ocean.

Reduce Stormwater Pollution

Storm drains are direct pathways to local waterways. When it rains, water can carry oil, trash, pet waste, fertilizer, pesticides, and other pollutants from streets, sidewalks, lawns, and parking lots into canals, rivers, Biscayne Bay, and the ocean.

You can help by keeping litter, yard debris, chemicals, and pet waste away from storm drains.

Pick Up Pet Waste

Pet waste contains bacteria and nutrients that can wash into storm drains and waterways, even far from the coast.

Always pick up after pets, carry bags when walking your dog, and dispose of pet waste in the trash.

Use Fertilizer Responsibly

Excess fertilizer can wash into waterways and contribute to algal blooms, low oxygen, and harm to seagrass and marine life. In Miami-Dade County, fertilizers containing nitrogen or phosphorus are prohibited during the rainy season, May 15 through October 31. When fertilizer is used outside the rainy season, keep it away from storm drains, canals, wetlands, lakes, and Biscayne Bay. Learn more through [Miami Waterkeeper’s Fertilizer Awareness Toolkit](#).

Support Septic-to-Sewer Solutions

Miami-Dade County reports that approximately 120,000 septic systems are still in use across the county. This estimate may change as septic-to-sewer projects move forward. These systems can become a water-quality concern when they are aging, poorly maintained, or affected by high groundwater, flooding, and sea-level rise.

Residents can help by learning whether their property or neighborhood uses septic, maintaining existing systems properly, and supporting long-term investments that connect vulnerable areas to sewer where appropriate.

Recreate Responsibly

While recreating, keep trash out of the water, respect wildlife, and report unusual conditions. In Miami-Dade County, pollution concerns can be reported through DERM’s [Environmental Complaints](#) page, by emailing environmentalcomplaints@miamidade.gov, or through the 24-hour complaint line at 305-372-6955.

Miami Waterkeeper’s 1,000 Eyes on the Water program trains community members to recognize, document, and report common pollution problems. Learn more at miamiwaterkeeper.org/1000-eyes. Reports can also be submitted directly to Miami Waterkeeper [here](#).

Looking Ahead

Future Monitoring

Miami Waterkeeper will continue monitoring recreational waterways across Miami-Dade and Broward counties. Consistent sampling helps identify recurring concerns, track changes over time, and share timely information with the public through Swim Guide and reports like this one.

As resources allow, Miami Waterkeeper will continue strengthening long-term datasets, expanding monitoring where needed, and using additional tools to better understand why bacteria levels are elevated.

From Monitoring to Solutions

Future work will focus not only on where bacteria levels are high, but also on what may be contributing to those patterns. This includes looking more closely at rainfall, runoff, salinity, oxygen, algae, tides, and other conditions that help explain what is happening in the water.

When needed, Miami Waterkeeper will also continue using tools like microbial source tracking to help identify likely sources of fecal contamination, such as human wastewater, pet waste, birds, or wildlife. These tools can help guide follow-up monitoring, support local decision-making, and point communities toward more effective solutions.

The goal is not just to collect data. The goal is to turn science into action that protects people, wildlife, and the waterways we all depend on.

Protect the Water You Love

Clean water doesn’t stay clean on its own. It takes someone showing up, week after week, to test it and share what the results show, so you can make more informed choices about when and where to swim, paddle, fish, and enjoy the water.

Staying informed is the first step. But knowledge only protects our waterways if it turns into action.

You can help by following Miami Waterkeeper updates, joining cleanups, restoration projects, and workshops, and speaking up for local policies that protect our waterways.

Support from our community of people who love these waterways is what makes all of this work possible. Whether through a one-time gift, our A.N.C.H.O.R. monthly giving circle, or the PartnerSHIP crew, you power the science that keeps South Florida’s waterways healthy for everyone who loves them. To donate visit: miamiwaterkeeper.org/donate

Acknowledgments

This work would not be possible without the support of our municipal and foundation partners, including the City of Fort Lauderdale, City of Miami, North Bay Village, Village of Key Biscayne, and the Batchelor Foundation.

We also gratefully acknowledge funding provided through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Grant No. 02DO1821) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (Agreement No. C2107).

Finally, we thank the many supporters of Miami Waterkeeper whose generosity makes this work possible, including members of the PartnerSHIP Program, the A.N.C.H.O.R. Program, and our individual donors.





MIAMI

WATERKEEPER®

SCAN TO DONATE →



P.O. Box 141596, Coral Gables,
FL 33114-1596 | (305) 905-0856

 hello@miamiwaterkeeper.org

 [/miamiwaterkeeper](https://www.facebook.com/miamiwaterkeeper)

 [@miamiwaterkeeper](https://www.instagram.com/miamiwaterkeeper)

 [@miamiwaterkpr](https://twitter.com/miamiwaterkpr)

 [/miami-waterkeeper](https://www.linkedin.com/company/miami-waterkeeper)

 [@miamiwaterkeeper](https://www.youtube.com/miamiwaterkeeper)

miamiwaterkeeper.org



WATERKEEPER® ALLIANCE

Proud member of the Waterkeeper Alliance.