



SEPTIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

LONG TERM

- Eliminate conventional septic tanks in Miami-Dade County; a 50-year-old goal that has yet to be fulfilled.
 - It was recommended in the 1970 Federal Water Quality Administration (DOI) report, “Pollution of the Waters of Dade County, Florida,” which led to the construction of our three waste treatment plants.
- Convert existing septic tanks to sewer systems.
- In areas where a sewer extension is not feasible, upgrade existing conventional septic tanks by elevating the drainfield area and creating “mounded” systems. Use of advanced or hybrid systems may also be appropriate.

SHORT TERM

- Implement a county-wide septic system inventory and assessment program.*
 - An accurate inventory and assessment of existing septic systems in MDC would allow the county to implement a phased approach by prioritizing those areas reliant on septic systems which are most urgently in need of conversion.
- Enact septic inspection and maintenance regulations.*
- Eliminate the 12,000 septic tanks that immediately abut sewer mains and connect them*
 - Sections 32-76 to 32-82 require owners with properties that abut a sewer main to connect to the main within 90 days of receipt of notice, or else MDC’s Department of Environmental Management (DERM) “shall cause” the property to be connected at the owner’s expense.
- The DERM GOFAST program should be adopted for expedited connections, coordination of public laterals with all departments, removal of burdens from property owners, reduced construction disruption, and cost savings.*
 - Because only 1% of notice appeals are denied, DERM developed the Global Opportunity for Abutting Sewer Tie-In (GOFAST) to streamline the process for homeowners seeking to comply with the connection ordinance.
- Prioritize elimination of septic tanks near waterways and in low-lying areas.*
- No new septic permits in urban areas.
- Lobby legislators to extend the protections of the Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act of 2016 (Springs Act) to the watersheds of Biscayne Bay.
 - The Springs Act instituted a ban on conventional septic tank installations in areas highly sensitive to the impact of discharges.
- Implement regulations that require consideration of depth of separation of groundwater and vulnerability to flooding and sea level rise when making “feasible distance” and/or variance determinations under Miami-Dade County code, Chapter 24, Section 24.43.1*
 - This code section requires properties to connect to the public sewer system when they are within a “feasible distance” of a public sanitary sewer.*



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- Institute statewide disclosure requirements in Florida for a seller to disclose to a buyer whether there is a septic system on a property and whether the property is connected to public sewer.
 - The disclosure should explain what a septic system is and the difference between a septic system and connection to a sanitary sewer system. It should provide detailed information about the maintenance required for a septic system and the potential for failure.
 - In addition, a seller should be required to provide a buyer with a recent inspection report completed by a certified inspector.
- Property appraisals should include valuation of the benefit of switching from septic to sewer.
- A government-run program should be developed to include all relevant agencies in order to provide assistance and resources for the implementation of a septic conversion.*
- Designate a county official to be responsible (and be held accountable) for overseeing implementation of the recommendations in Miami-Dade County's Septic Report, dated 12/10/20.
- Develop funding sources for septic to sewer conversion costs.
 - Amend F.S. 163.08, and make septic conversion expenses eligible for financing under the Property Assessed Clean Energy Program (PACE), which would afford long-term, low-interest financing leveraging non-ad valorem property assessments.
 - Financial assistance programs for lower-income households.

*Items are also recommendations in Miami Dade County's Septic Report 12/10/20