


Memorandum



Date: August 25, 2021

Agenda Item No. 2(B)(8)
October 5, 2021

To: Honorable Chairman Jose “Pepe” Diaz
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Daniella Levine Cava 
Mayor

Subject: Report on Conducting an Educational Campaign as to Septic System Maintenance-Directive No. 210738

On May 4, 2021, and in response to the December 2020 report entitled “Plan of Action Report: A Risk-Based Approach to Septic Systems Vulnerable to Sea Level Rise” which estimated that there were 120,000 septic systems in use throughout Miami-Dade County, the Board of County Commissioners (Board) adopted Resolution No. R-464-21, sponsored by Commissioner Raquel Regalado, directing the County Mayor or County Mayor’s designee to conduct an educational campaign regarding septic system maintenance and submit a report to the Board within 90 days of the effective date of Resolution No. R-464-21. This first report has been prepared by staff of the Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources (RER) – Division of Environmental Resources Management (DERM). Pursuant to Ordinance No. 14-65, this report shall be placed on the next available Board meeting agenda.

DERM, in collaboration with RER Communications and the office of the Chief Bay Officer, has developed a multi-phase outreach strategy to both disseminate information regarding septic system care throughout our community and to engage our citizens in broader discussions concerning the critical role that a healthy, functioning septic system serves in the protection of our water resources. The foundation of the outreach strategy is the implementation of a County Septic System Care webpage, which will serve as an in-depth resource of information regarding septic systems. Visitors to the webpage will learn how to identify if a property is served by a septic system, what the components of the septic system are and how these systems work to treat domestic sewage. The webpage will focus on what should or should not go into a septic tank, how to keep a drain field operating properly, the critical importance and cost/benefit of routine septic system inspections with waste removal and how to find a DERM-permitted liquid waste hauler who can perform septic system maintenance.

Visitors to the Septic System Care webpage will also learn the role septic systems play in the health of our groundwater, drinking water, and the waters of Biscayne Bay. Additional information will include the introduction to Miami-Dade County’s long-term plan for converting septic systems to public sanitary sewers and the process and importance of abandoning a septic system and converting to public sewer utility when sanitary sewers are made available. The Septic System Care webpage will be developed in concert with the Water and Sewer Department’s (WASD) septic-to-sewer outreach efforts for consistency in branding and messaging and will contain direct links to both Miami-Dade County WASD’s pending septic-to-sewer web portal and the Biscayne Bay webpage. At the time of this report, a draft of the County Septic System Care webpage is under development and the webpage is anticipated to “go live” during the first quarter of FY21-22.

While the release of the Septic System Care webpage will provide a valuable resource of information to our citizens, it will require additional initial and continual long-term outreach efforts to engage our citizens and direct them to this resource. The high number of septic systems in use throughout Miami-Dade County represents a widespread audience for the outreach campaign. The “Septic System Density” maps attached to this report demonstrate the varying concentrations of septic systems in use throughout incorporated and unincorporated Miami-Dade County. While the initial approach anticipates a global outreach campaign, the density maps will also help direct targeted outreach efforts toward areas of highest septic system concentrations and to areas where septic systems are in close proximity to our water resources where care and maintenance is most critical.

DERM will promote the Septic System Care webpage resource and the importance of septic system care to our citizens through multiple delivery mechanisms and marketing campaigns. The messaging will be conducted through a staggered distribution to commence with the rollout of the Septic System Care webpage using primarily electronic distribution means to minimize physical printing and maximize budgetary resources. The following outreach messaging vehicles will be considered:

- Social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram
- Targeted web advertising
- Miami-Dade County Transit bus wraps
- Development of marketing “Tool Kit” for regulatory and industrial partners to access, brand, and promote a consistent messaging for septic tank care
- Targeted outreach utilizing Community Based Organization partnerships
- Advertising in local municipal periodicals through the Community Periodicals Program

This initial Septic System Care outreach campaign will be conducted through April of 2022, at which time a formal assessment of the campaign will be made in order to determine the outreach effectiveness and to develop the Septic System Care outreach strategy moving forward. Website analytics and questions and comments received through the website portal will be the primary source of data analyzed for the campaign review. Pursuant to Resolution No. R-464-21, a final assessment report on the Septic System Care campaign will be delivered to the Board of County Commissioners on or before May 14, 2022.

Should you have any questions concerning the above, please contact Lee N. Hefty, Assistant Director, Division of Environmental Resources Management in the Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources at (305) 372-6754 or by email at Lee.Hefty@miamidade.gov.

Attachment: 2021 Miami-Dade County Septic Tank Density

cc: Geri Bonzon-Keenan, County Attorney
Gerald Sanchez, First Assistant County Attorney
Jess McCarty, Executive Assistant County Attorney

Honorable Chairman Jose “Pepe” Diaz
and Members, Board of County Commissioners
Page 3

Office of the Mayor Senior Staff

Lourdes M. Gomez, Director, Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources

Lee N. Hefty, Assistant Director, Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources

Yinka Majekodunmi, Commission Auditor

Jennifer Moon, Chief, Office of Policy and Budgetary Affairs

Melissa Adames, Director, Clerk of the Board

Eugene Love, Agenda Coordinator

Irela Bagué, Chief Bay Officer

DENSITY OF SEPTIC SYSTEMS by Commission District

