




Memorandum

Memorandum No: 24-004

Date: January 8, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Commissioners

From: Greg Chavarria, City Manager 
Greg Chavarria (Jan 16, 2024 08:28 EST)

Re: **North Fork of New River Waterway Quality**

The City of Fort Lauderdale's (City) weekly waterway quality monitoring for fecal-indicating bacteria continues to measure high levels of *Enterococci* bacteria at Sweeting Park located on the North Fork of the New River (North Fork), especially after rain events. The most recent sample taken on January 2, 2024 recorded *Enterococci* bacteria at 404 MPN (most probable number). This value is lower than the average value for City weekly sampling at this location in 2023 (659 MPN) and in 2022 (502 MPN). All these values exceed the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (FDEP) *Enterococci* standard for Class III water bodies set at 130 MPN. The waterway quality impacts in the North Fork are not coming from a single point source that we can identify and eliminate. The bacteria are generated from numerous non-point sources in multiple jurisdictions which will take continued vigilance to gradually attain better quality in this waterway.

The North Fork has a long history of waterway quality concerns, including being on the FDEP list of impaired waterways for fecal coliform. The Broward County Quarterly Waterway Quality Monitoring data from March 2019 – March 2022 for the North Fork at Sistrunk Boulevard shows regular non-compliance with the FDEP standard and an average bacteria count of 418 MPN. But this level of bacteria is not limited to the waterway near Sweeting Park. Further downstream at the intersection of the North Fork with Broward Boulevard, the average bacteria count for this same period was 638 MPN and downtown at the New River and Andrews Avenue, the average was 444 MPN. Historically, Broward County has dredged the areas near the outfalls to reduce sediment-laden pollutants without a resultant improvement in overall waterway quality.

Over the course of the last four years, the City's NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) permit activities have focused on pollution investigation in the North Fork watershed including generating a Bacteria Pollution Control Plan. To the west of the City's borders, the C-12 canal receives stormwater from municipalities like Plantation and Sunrise. Those stormwater discharges then flow into the North Fork near the Swap Shop. The North Fork also flows through multiple jurisdictions. Broward County and Lauderhill also identified the North Fork as a priority basin to be addressed for non-point source pollution in their NPDES permits.

The City has implemented large scale efforts in the North Fork basin targeted at reducing human sources of fecal coliform. Waterworks 2011 eliminated most of the septic systems in this area. There are still pockets of properties on septic in this basin (primarily in unincorporated Broward County). More recently, the City also replaced and installed a redundant 30-inch sanitary sewer force main along Sistrunk which had previously been a source of sanitary sewer overflows. The City has also lined gravity sanitary sewer mains (I &I) in this basin and performed smoke testing to identify broken public and private sanitary sewer gravity lines. The City continues to work toward placing persons into permanent housing that occupy encampments on the banks and under the I-95 bridge running over the North Fork.

The City has numerous programs that target reducing bacterial pollution and improving stormwater quality entering inputs into this waterway including regular canal debris removal, street sweeping, cleaning of catch basins and maintaining two large pollution control structures in this basin. The City has designed and funded the Durrs and Dorsey-Riverbend Stormwater Master Plan Projects with construction beginning this spring. These infrastructure improvements include stormwater treatment and dedicated pollution control structures. The City has implemented the Watershed Asset Management Program to include clarifying the jurisdiction of certain stormwater infrastructure, investigated retrofitting catch basins with pollution control devices, and is actively rehabilitating swales which capture pollutants from runoff. The natural banks and natural shorelines of the North Fork are rich in wildlife which, unfortunately, also contribute to higher levels of bacteria in the water. Code Compliance supports the waterway quality improvements by enforcing our codes related to illegal dumping. All of these efforts are required to achieve incremental improvements in waterway quality in the North Fork. Using the data from the weekly waterway quality monitoring and the City's pollution prevention programs, we hope to continue to make inroads in improving waterway quality in the North Fork.

Should you have additional questions, please contact Nancy J. Gassman, Ph.D., Assistant Public Works Director - Sustainability at ngassman@fortlauderdale.gov, or call 954-828-5769.

c: Anthony G. Fajardo, Assistant City Manager
Susan Grant, Assistant City Manager
Thomas J. Ansbro, City Attorney
David R. Soloman, City Clerk
Patrick Reilly, City Auditor
Department Directors
CMO Managers