

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

Regional Biosolids Management Facility and Design Phase Interlocal Agreement

1. What are biosolids, and what does the City of Margate currently produce?

Biosolids are the treated organic solids generated during the wastewater treatment process. After wastewater contaminants are removed, the remaining solids are stabilized and dewatered in accordance with state and federal regulations.

The City of Margate currently produces **Class B biosolids**, which meet pathogen reduction requirements but do not meet the higher standards required for unrestricted reuse.

2. How does the City currently manage its biosolids?

Margate dewateres its biosolids onsite to approximately **15–16% solids** and hauls the material offsite under contract for **permitted land application or landfill disposal**. The City does not currently perform advanced biosolids treatment beyond dewatering.

3. How much biosolids does Margate generate annually (wet tons and solids content)?

Margate currently generates approximately **6,800 wet tons per year (WTPY)** of biosolids at an average solids content of **approximately 15.8%** following dewatering. This equates to roughly **1,070 dry tons per year**.

4. What is Margate's current permitted wastewater treatment capacity, and how does that relate to biosolids production?

Margate's wastewater treatment plant is currently permitted for **10.1 million gallons per day (MGD)**. At this permitted capacity, biosolids production is projected to reach approximately **8,700 WTPY**, with higher production possible during peak operating conditions.

5. Why is biosolids management becoming a growing challenge statewide and locally?

Biosolids management has become increasingly challenging due to a combination of regulatory changes and market constraints. Florida has experienced a **significant reduction in permitted land application sites**, increasing competition for disposal outlets, hauling distances, and costs. At the same time, regulatory requirements governing nutrients, pathogens, and emerging contaminants have tightened, increasing uncertainty for utilities that rely on traditional disposal methods.

6. How have recent Florida laws changed biosolids disposal options?

Florida Statute **403.0855** and **House Bill 1309** significantly altered biosolids management statewide by restricting Class B land application in certain areas, expanding Florida DEP oversight, requiring enhanced nutrient management, and increasing monitoring and testing requirements. These changes took full effect by **July 1, 2024**, and represent the most substantial biosolids regulatory shift in more than a decade.

7. What additional restrictions are proposed under Senate Bill 290 / House Bill 433?

Senate Bill 290 and House Bill 433 propose limiting land application to **Class AA biosolids only**. If enacted, this legislation would effectively eliminate land application of **Class B** biosolids and significantly restrict **Class A** disposal options. Even if not adopted in their current form, the bills reflect a clear legislative trajectory toward more restrictive biosolids regulation.

8. If SB 290 / HB 433 were enacted, how much of Margate's biosolids would require an alternative disposal method?

If only Class AA biosolids were allowed to be land applied, **essentially all of Margate's current biosolids production**—approximately **6,800 to 10,100 WTPY**, depending on operating conditions—would require an **alternative treatment or disposal method**, as the City currently produces Class B biosolids.

9. What is the City's plan if land application of Class B (or Class A) biosolids is no longer allowed?

The City is actively pursuing participation in a **regional biosolids management solution** led by Broward County. This approach would provide access to **advanced treatment technology** capable of producing **Class A, Exceptional Quality biosolids**, ensuring long-term regulatory compliance and disposal reliability.

10. What is the Regional Biosolids Management Facility, and why is the City participating?

The Regional Biosolids Management Facility is a proposed **multi-utility, cost-shared facility** designed to provide advanced biosolids treatment for participating wastewater utilities. Margate's participation allows the City to share costs, reduce risk, and secure long-term biosolids treatment capacity that would be difficult and costly to develop independently.

11. Why is the City participating in the design phase now rather than waiting?

Broward County has requested confirmation of participating utilities by **February 2026** in order to proceed with procurement of the design consultant. Early participation ensures Margate's needs are incorporated into facility design, secures proportional capacity, and helps avoid higher costs or limited availability if the City were to delay participation.

12. Why did the City select 10,000 wet tons per year (WTPY) as its reserved capacity?

The **10,000 WTPY reservation is directly supported by the City's consultant (Hazen) biosolids projections** and represents a balanced, risk-informed capacity selection.

Specifically:

- Current production is approximately **6,800 WTPY**.
- Long-term baseline projections estimate **~7,500 WTPY by 2045**.
- At the City's current permitted capacity of **10.1 MGD**, production is projected at **~8,700 WTPY**.
- Applying a **15% safety factor** to account for peak operations and variability results in a **high-end projection of approximately 10,100 WTPY**.

Selecting **10,000 WTPY** covers expected and high-end conditions while avoiding unnecessary over-reservation.

13. Is the 10,000 WTPY capacity speculative or oversized?

No. The 10,000 WTPY capacity is **data-driven and conservative**, not speculative. It closely aligns with Hazen's upper-bound projections and reflects prudent planning rather than growth assumptions or future plant expansions.

14. Does reserving 10,000 WTPY obligate the City to deliver that amount every year?

No. The current ILA uses capacity estimates as a **planning and design guide**. Any specific delivery commitments, thresholds, or penalties would be addressed in a **future interlocal agreement**, subject to City review and approval.

15. What are the City's costs under the Design Phase Interlocal Agreement?

Margate's proportional share of design costs is **capped at approximately \$1.85 million**, based on its reserved capacity and a total regional design cost not to exceed **\$50 million**. Costs will be funded through the Utility Enterprise Fund and Utility Bond.

16. Does this action commit the City to construction or operation of the facility?

No. Approval of the Design Phase ILA authorizes **design participation only**. Any future commitment to construction or operation would require a **separate interlocal agreement and City Commission approval**.

17. How long would it take to implement an alternative biosolids solution if current disposal options are lost?

Developing a standalone biosolids facility could take **8–12 years**, including site selection, permitting, design, financing, and construction. Participation in a regional solution significantly shortens this timeline and reduces risk.

18. What roadblocks would the City face if it attempted to develop its own biosolids facility?

Major roadblocks include land availability, permitting challenges, environmental review, public acceptance, high capital costs, and long development timelines. These barriers make individual facilities impractical for most mid-sized utilities.

19. What could the State do to reduce delays or risks in biosolids infrastructure development?

Potential actions include expedited permitting, regulatory clarity, funding incentives, and support for regional solutions that reduce duplication and promote economies of scale.

20. If the City could recommend changes to SB 290 / HB 433, what would they be?

The City would recommend a **phased implementation**, recognition of regional facilities, and flexibility for utilities actively transitioning to advanced treatment technologies, rather than immediate elimination of existing disposal options.

21. What happens if the City does not participate in the regional solution?

Without participation, the City would remain dependent on increasingly limited disposal options, face higher costs and regulatory risk, and lose the opportunity to secure proportional capacity in a regional facility.

22. What is staff's recommendation to the City Commission?

Staff recommends approval of the Interlocal Agreement. This action preserves long-term biosolids management options, positions the City for evolving regulations, shares cost and risk regionally, and does **not** obligate the City to construction at this time.