

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes

Date: January 27, 2011

Called to Order: 11:04

Attendance: Ben & Joanne Swann, Henry Caimotto, Todd Weissing, Frank Pryzbylski, George Jones, Jim Harter, Ted Guy, Mark Perry, Karl Wickstrom, Leon Abood, Paul Gray, Marge Ketter, Phil & Gerry Tafoya, Dennis Buford, Rob Ranieri, John O'Brien, John Marshall, Toby Overdorf, Douglas Ashley, Max Quackenbos, Susan Smyth, Ken Baker, Mike Myers, Kevin Henderson, Morris Crady, Michael Towner

Chairman's Comments:

Leon Abood; before we get to Karl's presentation we will review the direction you would like to see the Coalition, after all it is your Coalition.

State of the Coalition – 2010 Review 2011 Direction:

Leon Abood; Over the last couple of the months I have met with many of you and I have gotten a lot of input. I want to make sure we have the Coalition pointed in the right direction. We are approaching a critical juncture with the lawsuit wrapping up and we want to talk about where we are headed. What would the community look like if the Rivers Coalition went away? After everyone that I have talked to since my meeting with Robin; we all agreed that the community needs the RC. So with that being said, this is our mission statement: To fight for a safe, healthy and ecologically balanced St. Lucie River Estuary and Indian River Lagoon, natural resources that are vital to the economy and quality of life of Martin County and the Treasure Coast. We crafted the mission statement in 1998, a lot of the comments that I have received from our members is that they do not like the word "fight" in the mission statement. Folks this is a fight, it's been a fight since 1998. We do not want to make our position as an adversarial position. It is a fight. This is what we did in 1998; I think the mission statement is even more relevant now than in 1998. Leon reviewed the organizational breakdown, representing over 300,000 people. We have the Chamber of Commerce and the Audubon Society right here. We are able to put our differences aside in order to stick with our mission. The tribute to this organization is that we have such different groups of organizations with such different agendas that are so varying that we can come together for the single purpose of cleaning the River for our long term economic sustainability and our quality of life. We are able to put our differences aside.

Leon Abood; reviewed the Rivers Coalition Defense Fund: back in 2005 with overwhelming support we decided to file a lawsuit as a result of the discharges from Lake Okeechobee which rendered the St. Lucie River unhealthy. We were advised to avoid contact with the water in the St. Lucie River. We formed the Rivers Coalition Defense Fund as the legal arm of the organization to add a little more teeth and to put a degree of separation between the Rivers Coalition and the entity that is doing the lawsuit. Leon acknowledged the RCDF board of directors. We couldn't ask for a better group.

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes

Leon Abood; what I want to do is to define what you want the organization to look like moving forward. In meeting with a lot of you, I have gotten a lot of input. I want to take that input and make the organization better, stronger and more importantly more effective. Some of our Business members have been giving us some very good and positive members. We had a crisis back then that was able to galvanize us. Thank you to Joe Catrambone and the Stuart/Martin County Chamber for being there in the beginning when we filed the lawsuit and for supporting our efforts.

Leon Abood; reviewed the 3 point approach. Public Information: we would like to continue our Public information and make it better. Leon reviewed all of the programs from 2010. Leon reviewed all of the Speakers Bureau presentations. Legal Action: We appealed Judge Bush's ruling and we are awaiting the decision of a federal 3 Judge appellate court ruling. Government & Agency Cooperation: this is an area that we really need to improve on. The Rivers Coalition continues to work closely with our local government entities specifically; Martin County, City of Stuart, St. Lucie County and the Town of Sewall's Point. Advocate: Storage Flowway South – ROGER “River of Grass Everglades/Estuary Restoration”, Local Water Shed Projects – examples: C-44, C-23, C-24, and the IRL South Project. Storage Projects North of Lake Okeechobee, Any Position or Project that Benefits the Health of the St. Lucie Estuary. In 2011 we will strive to have a better working relationship with our State and Federal government bodies and agencies.

Patrick Hayes; vastly approaching the point where if we do not get the funds to dredge the inlet the coast guard will shut down our inlet. The depth is going and we will not get through another season. We need letters and articles written on behalf of the dredging.

John Marshall; would like to see us replace a balanced St. Lucie River Estuary with a Productive Ecosystem in the mission statement.

Leon Abood; I want everyone to know that I have heard you loud and clear. Reviewed the words used to describe the Rivers Coalition: Champions for the St. Lucie Estuary, True Voice for Clean Water, Effective & Highly Credible, Focused, Unrelenting, Hostile Environment, Combative & Adversarial, Hijacked, Abrasive, Militant – Not Militant Enough. These words are no different than what they called us in 1998. We will change how we do business; we have always prided ourselves for asking the tough questions and putting them on the spot. We will continue to do this.

John O'Brien; speaking for the chamber we felt that things were unbalanced. We felt like more needed to be done and that there were too many areas that we were missing. We need to thank more organizations for the good deeds, nit just criticize.

Paul Gray; we need more help from business and private land owners.

Douglas Ashley; we need more Public Relations.

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes

Bob Voisinet; most of the public doesn't know what the Rivers Coalition is and what they can do to help. We defiantly need to be more visible to the public.

Rob Ranieri; motion made, seconded and passed to create a clear agenda for the Rivers Coalition and to find a Public Relations person willing to help the Rivers Coalition.

Stacey Hetherington volunteered to help the Rivers Coalition.

Rob Ranieri; it would be very helpful for the Rivers Coalition to do a SWOT analysis a sort of Strategic plan. My wife, Stacy Ranieri and I would be willing to help. This would dig into who we are and where we want to go. This will generate committees we will need to move forward with our plan.

Marge Ketter; we need to approach our schools and get the word to our children.

Toby Overdorf, our focus was the discharges, we have a greater issue now and we need to get at the very least 4 point to focus on.

Douglas Ashley; we need national news coverage.

Patrick Hayes; how do we fight? We need groups at all of the meetings.

Henry Caimotto; we are moving in the right direction. Ag has been very good with their PR and now its time we do it, we need to be vocal and out there in the community.

Strategic Plan Volunteers; Rob Ranieri, George Jones, Toby Overdorf, Bob DeSantis, Stacey Hetherington, Bob Voisinet, Frank Pryzbylski.

Kevin Henderson; we need to inventory our accomplishments, accept our history of success.

Special Presentation - "Everglades Restoration Makes Dollars and Sense":

Karl Wickstrom

Legal Update:

Karl Wickstrom; we are maybe 2 months before we get a decision on the lawsuit. The government isn't saying they did not pollute the St. Lucie Estuary; they are saying there is a statute of limitations, navigational servitudes triumphs all other obligations, and that we do not have riparian rights to have pollutant free water under the constitution.

WRAC "Water Resources Advisory Commission":

Mark Perry; the next meeting is next Thursday. The new Chairman is Kevin Powers.

Speakers Bureau:

Todd Weissing; tonight is the Sailfish Point speaking engagement, and next Thursday is the Sunrise Rotary.

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes

ROGER “River of Grass Everglades/Estuary Restoration:

Ted Guy; this is a Coalition of Coalitions the East and West coasts. Next meeting is open to the public and is on January 31st at 1PM at the Belle Glade UF IFAS Research Station.

Water Quality:

Mark Perry; Lake is down to 12.5, no water is coming out of the Lake.