

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: June 25, 2020

Mark Perry called the ZOOM meeting to order at 10.35 am.

Members In attendance: 47 people present on ZOOM call

Chairman's Comments: Mark Perry commented that this meeting time was altered to accommodate Friends of Everglades FB meeting at noon with Mike Grunwald "The Swamp" and LOSOM PDT meeting at 1:00 p.m. Recent rains have flooded into canals.

Special Presentation: Michael A Conner, Indian River Keeper started his presentation with a five minute video on The Water Keeper Alliance. There are 275 Water Keepers in 34 countries.

Mike gave credit to the previous Indian River Keepers that went before him, Kevin Stinnett, George Jones and Marty Baum. Mike reminded us that Water Keepers live in their areas, they are not mercenaries shipped in. Mike stated that the role of Water Keepers is to monitor, document and represent people and critters. As of now they are all closely watching the newly drafted USACE dredging from The Crossroads to Lake O.

Reinaldo Diaz, Lake Worth Water Keeper, introduced himself as an environmental law attorney. He said that his job consists of two parts- Law/Policy and also Fieldwork. The Water Keeper Alliance is not shy in creating lawsuits. The fieldwork is summer camps "Lagoonies". Reinaldo spends most days doing samples and research programs.

John Cassini, Calusa Water Keeper, Has been active on the West Coast for 20 years. They have a "Ranger" program. Mike Conner said that they have a similar "Osprey" programs here on the East coast.

Mike said that we need to support our Waterkeepers "keeper@theindianriverkeeper.org" (772) 631-5827

Reinaldo Diaz stated that he is running for State Senate.

See ZOOM presentation at Facebook and RC website.

Martin County Report: Katie Bowes, MC Environmental Specialist, said that the estuary is stressed from all the fresh rainwater. Since June 1 70,000 acre feet have gone back into the Lake O. There are contracts out for Water Quality Needs Assessments. There are stormwater treatments projects, i.e. Cypress Creek and retrofits. If you see any algae bloom contact her at: kbowes@martin.fl.us . <https://www.martin.fl.us/LOSOM>
<https://www.martin.fl.us/WaterQuality>.

City of Stuart Report: Ben Hogarth presented a letter signed by the Stuart City Commission to Col Kelly, USACE, to reject any effort to apply the "Savings Clause" to the LOSOM policy document. City Commissioner, Merritt Matheson, stated that the City of Stuart wants ONLY local basin run-off into our estuary, none from the canals. FDOT is working on opening up two lanes each way on the Roosevelt Bridge by this weekend.

SFWMD Report: Jackie Thurlow-Lippisch was not present due to her being in the Everglades finding safe locations for animal crossings. Mark Perry read her highlight notes. SFWMD is asking for more funds for C-43 and C-44 reservoirs. There is a workshop with Steve Collins to prevent the cattle leases from being allowed to fertilize lands.

Next Governing Board is July 9th.

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State and Federal Agencies: n/a

Lake O. Update: Dr. Paul Gray said the Lake is at 12.4 ft. One foot lower than when releases will be needed to resume. Dr. Gray thinks the backflow from C-44 is causing the algal bloom on the Lake.

Mark Perry and Ed Lippisch flew over the Lake and the St. Lucie Inlet. There was a brown plume of rain runoff into the Atlantic and covering the reef south of the St. Lucie Inlet. The water over the seagrass beds is turbid. There is Blue green algae at Port Myaca but no discharges at this point.

State Legislation Report: n/a

River Coalition Committee Reports:

River Kidz: Nic Mader encouraged the kids to get in the water now before the discharges start.

Local Issues & Estuary Water Quality: Mark Perry stated that the water quality is at “D” “Poor.”

Dr. John Reed, 35 years at Harbor Branch, said the 42 miles on each side of Hutchinson Island are being spraying with herbicide which stays more active, longer salt water.

Members Comments: The USACE has a 65 page report on the upcoming dredging from the Crossroads to Lake O. This report can be found on the RC website.

Todd Thurlow has great satellite photos of the Lake O algae on “Eye on Lake O” webpage

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 pm