

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: October 22, 2020

Mark Perry Called the ZOOM Meeting to order at 11:01 a.m.

Members in attendance: 54 people were present on ZOOM Call.

Chairman's Comments: We have had 19.62" of rain in October. The average is 6", so we have had 3 times the rainfall. This has caused the Lake O to rise to 16.2". Discharges to SLR - 1,800 cfs and 4,000 cfs to Caloosahatchee. This is devastating to our River and Estuary. South Florida Ecosystem Task Force ZOOM call is happening concurrently to this meeting. This Task Force was set up in 1996 to implement CERP.

Presentation: Jennifer Reynolds. District Director of SFWMD, formerly of USACE. The ongoing Lake Releases are Activities of the SFWMD. The Lake is at 16.27'. The reason the water cannot go south is because the STA's and WCA's are all full. That is why we need CERP. The water should be going into reservoirs not to the coast Col Kelly, USACE, said there will be another week of releases. Lake O is still rising due to recent rainfall and the District can't move water south, the releases are now to keep the Lake under 16'. We are at the end of the wet/hurricane season so it should be drying out soon. We are in La Nina so there are increased chances of a dry-dry season. The releases can stop soon since we don't have to anticipate extremes in the dry season

The District is trying to curb the algae going into C-44. There are Disbursed Water Projects under construction and will be ready for next wet season. S-333 North Structure will double capacity to move water to Everglades Nat'l Park through L-29 canal. There is a SEP structure under construction to increase sheet flow to the Everglades and Florida Bay. Water Quality: there is now 243 monitoring sites.

"What to Expect?" Lots of projects are moving forward. There is \$360 million now in Everglades Restoration Budget. Now there is Climate Change and Sea-Level Rise taken into consideration in planning efforts. Jennifer encouraged us to make EPA/ FDEP/SFWMD agencies accountable.

Questions:

Jim Packer: He hasn't seen any data on algae reduction.

Mark Perry: We haven't seen any Environmental Impact Reports.

Charles Grande: Is hydrogen peroxide affecting the "good algae?"

Mark Perry: Doesn't know but it is a real concern.

Mike Conner: In closed systems the hydrogen peroxide is non-discriminating what algae it kills. We need more accountability.

Eve Samples: Why are the STA's used for EAA water and not Lake O water?

Jennifer R.: A-2 STA is designed to handle Lake water to reduce discharges.

Eve Samples: Is SFWMD legally bound to take EAA water, what percentage?

Jennifer R.: SFWMD is just legally to do Flood Control

Diane Goldberg: When hydrogen peroxide kills the cyanobacteria then it releases microsystems

Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch: She said that she is now in the opposite position being a governor of SFWMD. She believes the district is working hard to keep the least amount of water from being released into canal. She met with Israeli Scientists "Blue Green Water Technologies" with Gov De Santis. They have high tech solutions to protect us. The technology breaks the cyanobacteria cycle. Tom Fraser, DEP, says the relatively simple chemical based on hydrogen peroxide breaks down in the water to oxygen. The lifetime in the water is relatively short. There is good potential for least environmental impact.

Mark Perry: Seems that the best treatment is to stop the algae first before it gets into the water system.

JTL: We all know that the algae will probably get into the river. We have to be ready for a bad situation.

Mark Perry: When they treat it will they then release it?

JTL: That is not the ideology at all.

Mark Perry: If there is any algae in C-44 then it cannot be released into SLR.

JTL: Or not release it if it is over 8 parts per million. USACE can now release if over World Health Organization levels. That needs to be changed.

Diane Goldberg: "They" are now saying not to put hydrogen peroxide on a cut, it damages the cells and take longer to heal.

Jim Harter: Why should the taxpayer pay to clean sugar water?

Jennifer R: That is hard to answer. Storm water runoff is from various sources. We now have development on wetlands that used to help with flood protection.

Jim Harter: St Lucie basin has become worse, destroying the estuary. Agriculture is dumping into C-23,C-24 from 300,000 extra acres of watershed.

Jennifer R: We have projects in the design phase to deal with that. Disbursed Water projects to take runoff from SL basin.

Joe Gilio: If the SEP increase of flow into the catchment there is 10 parts per million of phosphorus? (*sorry, didn't understand question- Barbara*)

Jennifer R: We have projects to meet those water quality standards.

You can see the ZOOM meeting recording and PPT at RC website: <http://riverscoalition.org>

Martin County Report: Dianne Hughes said the estuary is in a bad situation due to the crazy wet season. No Blue-green algae in water samples. If anyone sees it, contact her or John Maehl. County tried to keep the discharges at bay as long as they could. Thankful for the extended time of no discharges.

City of Stuart: Ben Hogarth said the USACE rule change of Plan Deviation was approved. It allows USACE is future to deviate from LORS 2008 to release more or hold back water in emergency situations.

Federal Congress deleted the Savings Clause from the Water Bill. That was successful on the Federal Level. LOSOM will be wrapping up next year and ready for public comment. There will be new discharge schedule and performance levels. They will run new models to make it best for everyone. The City is not happy about getting the discharges but appreciate the USACE holding off for two years.

SFWMD: Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch said it is heart breaking that there are discharges. There is hope because small incremental changes, such as:

- 1) SFWMD transparent on "District Action to Reduce Harmful Discharges" website showing operations, CFS, Todd Thurlow maps and photos.
- 2) SFWMD is sending water south through four canals trying not to send it to St Lucie River
- 3) EAA reservoir to "bank" and reserve water

JTL said the "District is hearing you."

Lake O Update: Dr. Paul Gray says the Lake O level is above 16', it is bad for a healthy lake. He is hoping the wet season will stop, there are high flows today to keep dike safe. The Lake is too deep but the estuaries have been harmed more than the Lake.

Coalition Reports:

River Kidz: Nic Mader said not much activity other than the Sunday Rally on the bridge, she would like to have rallies monthly during the discharges. She wants to do video snip-its for FB.

Speaker Bureau: Todd W. said there was no report.

Local Issues & Estuary Water Quality:

Mark Perry said the water quality is C-, POOR.

The South Fork salinity is low. It is Zero at Roosevelt Bridge.

Seagrass Update: Seagrass will die after 5 days of no salinity. The seagrass was finally coming back and they will die off now. Growth season is over. SFWMD is supposed to be monitoring the seagrass at Sailfish Flats but hasn't done it. Todd Thurlow showed the overlays of aerials and SFWMD charts to show loss of seagrasses. Mark Perry thinks we should get down and "ground truth" the seagrass.

Indian Riverkeeper: Mike Conner said this year has been the worst due to run off from local basin. In his water samples, it is depressing how low the salinity is, even in Ft. Pierce. Port Canaveral and North IRL is suffering due to nano plankton bloom that has made the turbidity so thick you cannot see 6" into the water. It was good to see the "Old Guard" at Sunday's rally on the ridge. IRK website has been revamped, a lot of Facebook activity.

Dredging of Crossroads: Looks like the flats are being removed. Jim Moir said this is to be only a maintenance project. Mark Perry said we need to find out what is going on.

Member Comments and Announcements:

Diane Goldberg: We should get on our government to stop all fertilizers and use ground cover instead of lawns.

Jim Harter reminded us of the importance of seagrasses being the nursery for 20,000-40,000 juvenile fish, crab and shrimp.

Eve Samples: Friends of Everglades is getting together a petition to send the water south.

Next RC meeting November 19thnd 11:00 via ZOOM.

Adjourned 12:45 p.m.