

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: February 25, 2021

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

Members in attendance: 70+ people were present on ZOOM Call.

Chairman's Comments: The water is clear, but it shows that the oysters and seagrass are missing. There is slit and sediment on the flats.

Presentation:

Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch introduced Drew Bartlett, Executive Director of South Florida Water Management.

Prior to this meeting, Eve Samples had requested Drew comment on the following items:

- *Water Flows from Lake O through the STAs to the WCAs and Everglades*
- *LOSOM: Where does the District stand on alternatives, iterations and plan formulation?*
- *Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Plan/40E-61 Implementation*
- *Any SFWMD state Legislative priorities*
- *EAA Storage Reservoir Project*
- *WRDA 2020 Project implementation*

Drew spoke on the **EAA Reservoir**, then **Lake O**. and how La Nina would make the dry season even drier but that hasn't happened yet, too many fronts came through.

Sending the water south: Not a lot going south right now. It is a challenge trying to prevent harmful discharges this season, when Tropical Storm ETA came through it bumped the Lake Level up 2X because of the wide watershed. The STA's are challenged now from putting so much water in them. The plants are floating to the surface in "tussocks" – Floating mats of uprooted vegetation. SFWMD has deployed temporary pumps to get STA's on-line.

LOSOM: There have been 120,000 model runs.

Development of Conceptual Plans (July 2020-Oct 2020)

Evaluation of Conceptual Plans (Nov 2020-Jan 2021)

Iteration 1- Initial Array of Lake Schedules (Jan 2021-May 2021) –down to 13 schedules

Iteration 2-Balanced Array of Lake Schedules (May 2021-July 2021) – best 3

Iteration 3-Recommended Lake Schedule (Aug 2021-Sept 2021)

We are between Development and Evaluation stages. This year is a critical year for LOSOM. The new schedule will take effect in 2022 or 2023

BUDGET: Governor DeSantis pledged \$2.5 Billion for Everglades Restoration and statewide water quality in his first term (2019-2023), \$1 billion over 4 years

Fiscal Year 2021-2022

- \$469M Everglades and Northern Everglades Restoration
- \$361M Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP)
- \$32M Restoration Strategies
- \$71M Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection
- \$5M Dispersed Water Storage/"Water Farms"
- \$100M+ Statewide Water Quality Improvements
- \$40M Alternative Water Supply
- \$10M Innovative Solutions to Algae
- \$180M Resilient Florida

Finished the C-44 STA. Saw snail kites. Establishing "grow-in" plants.

The C-44 Reservoir looks good to come on-line this year.

Blair Wickstrom: said that in the Everglades Forever Act 28% of the water going into South should be Lake O water. We have a disaster in the works. In 2018 we had 14 ft in the Lake now in Feb 2021 we have over 15 ft, it can happen again.

Drew B.- This keeps me awake at night. Has spoken with Col. Kelley and neither wants a 2018 redux. In 2015 the STA's were open to take water; now the STA's haven't had a rest and are damaged. SFWMD is trying to get the STA's ready to take more water.

Greg Braun: Is there land acquisition in the Governor's budget (i.e. Loxa-lucie Headwaters)?

Drew B.- Land acquisition of C-25 going into Pot St. Lucie is happening. There is land acquisition for wetland restoration in Northern Estuaries and Biscayne Bay.

Dr. Joe Gilio: Put tape grass into the STA's there is photosynthesis down to 15 ft after 45 years.

There is no need to ASR wells if the Lake Level stays at 16.5. Use ASR wells are emergency usage to reduce discharges to St. Lucie. ASR wells are not designed to handle water quality in Lake.

Drew B.- Gov De Santis gave SFWMD a cornerstone charge to improve water quality and they are doing that in Taylor Creek and Indian Basin who are biggest contributor of phosphorus to Lake O. There is an emphasis to improve water coming into the Lake from the north (i.e. Lakeside Ranch STA).

Diane Goldberg: Is there a millage increase to pay for all this?

Drew B.- Millage has tripled.

Charles Grande: Thanked the SFWMD for having an "A Team." Asked about the Brian Mast Bill which put Human Health and Safety as a priority in the LOSOM process.

Drew B.- Stopping Harmful Algal Blooms is in the framework of LOSOM, there are two models specific to Public Health.

Charles Grande: Algal Blooms are a real problem but fresh water into our system is a problem ALL water from Lake O should be stopped.

Eve Samples: It is hard to feel confident about water quality. Read from "Everglades Forever Act" which states that 28% to Water Conservation Areas needs to be from Lake O.

Drew B.- Will need to speak to legal team because he is not familiar with this. He will get back to Eve with what he finds.

Martin County Report: Dianne Hughes: Salinity in the river is 21, Northern River is 15.

Dissolved oxygen looks good 6-7. Turbidity is 6 but middle estuary is 78, state limit is 21.

Enterococcus is good except at Roosevelt Bridge, where it is moderate.

Phytoplankton "nothing seen."

City of Stuart: Ben Hogarth thanked Drew Bartlett for his presentation.

Merritt Matheson is in the Everglades today.

Last Monday City of Stuart Commission passed a resolution to the Florida Legislation to support the continue funding of the EAA reservoir.

Also sent a letter to SFWMD supporting more water moving south to STAs

Ben is drafting written comments regarding LOSOM to USACE expressing what Balanced Array Model is best for our waters. Ben would like the RC to be "joint signers."

Mark Perry agreed to get together with RC BOD and work with the City on position paper. Plan 4C1-3307 is best with NO discharges coming to St. Lucie.

Mark shared the RC letter sent today to Lisa Aley of USACE saying just that.

SFWMD: JTL: Thanked Drew Bartlett for being so open with his answers today. JTL has total confidence in the direction he is taking.

There are three agencies: DEP, FDAS and SFWMD. We all need to work together and talk together at the same time. We must remain connected and be positive.

Lake O Update: Dr. Paul Gray said that the Lake is at 15.4 ft. The shorebird survey saw only one killdeer which needs 1" of water. Migratory birds can't use the lake if it is too high. He wants the Lake at 13' by June 1st. Use the Blue Green Algae deviation to lower the Lake. It is a trade-off if there is wet summer, we are in trouble.

Coalition Reports:

River Kidz: Nic Mader said Thanks to Drew, JTL and Mark Perry for giving our kids in the future hope for clean water. Will print up workbooks this spring. Contact her for how many you want so she can get quotes on the printing expense.

Speaker Bureau: Todd W. said 10 of last 17 years there have been releases and 60% of the time there is Health warnings. This is why we educate the public. Next event is an outdoor event.

Local Issues & Estuary Water Quality:

FOS Water Quality Report the water quality is B GOOD. Thanks to 40+ water monitor volunteers.

Seagrass Update: Todd Thurlow Seagrass is "simply gone."

Showed comparison satellite images.

We have lost 2 to 3 years of recovery on the flats.

Indian Riverkeeper: Jim Harter spoke for Mike Conner. There is a Indian Riverkeeper fundraiser pompano fishing "shoot-out" on Hutchison Island this Sat-Sun. Register Sat 9:00 a.m. \$30 entry fee. Raffle and prizes.

Lake Worth Riverkeeper: Reinaldo Diaz spoke on the Bahamas Off-Shore Drilling <https://ourlandsourfuture.org>

Rodney Barreto, chairman of FWC, wants to develop a 300+ residence with deck and marina.

He wants to fill in the mangroves and seagrass.

He is asking the USACE to not enforce the FWC's own laws. It has long standing effects.

FWC meeting 2 /25/2021 9:00 a.m.

From Kelli Doré-Everglades Law (kelli@evergladeslaw.org)

*FWC Meeting link: Want to comment? AFTER the presentation you want to comment on is complete, call 800-832-0736. Enter room number 1594848# Press *# to enter the queue. This info will also be posted to the screen when phone lines are open. [#FWC2021](https://www.facebook.com/FWC2021)*

Watch on Adobe Connect: <http://adobe.ly/3sqdZ3W>

Agenda: <https://bit.ly/2Yzry46>

Member Comments and Announcements:

Next RC meeting March 25, 2021 11:00 via ZOOM.

Adjourned 12:45 p.m.