

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: May 27, 2021

Mark Perry called the ZOOM Meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Members in attendance: 55+ people were present on ZOOM Call.

Chairman's Comments: Mark Perry introduced today's presentation of a panel of citizens and how their vocations have been economically impacted by the toxic discharges. Thanks to Blair for setting this panel up. A lot of attention has been brought to the Lake and the recent algae in Pahokee Marina and how it affects the people working there.

Brian Mast gave opening remarks regarding the Emergency Declaration of the Lake. He has been speaking to FDEP and they have funds that they can release to clean up the algae without the Emergency Declaration. He said that he has been out to the Pahokee Marina and surrounding areas and it is disgusting.

He couldn't breathe and even inside the buildings at Port Mayaca it was hard to breathe.

The USACE General Spellman has acknowledged that it was toxic and way above EPA 8 parts per million as a toxic level and has been measured that this is 100X more toxic on the Lake. Brian Mast confronted two star General that uniformed servicemen under his command are being forced to work at the dam and being poisoned 10-12 hours a day. Would he bet his command that they aren't being poisoned? He then got it and understood it to some degree. This should be an emergency situation that should be addressed immediately.

We need to do absolutely everything humanly possible to keep this alga out of our waterways. It is not even summertime and it is close to a disaster again.

He said if they try to dump it into our waters then he will lock his boat to the St. Lucie Locks to block them from opening. They will have to sink my boat to open the locks. We cannot allow them to poison us.

Brian encouraged all to give live video testimony on the plans for LOSOM. Everybody on this call has a voice. But there are only a few of us in a position to make law and regulations. We need to make enforceable standards for water going into the Lake. We need to make our voice known before LOSOM is down to one plan. He supports AA and CC. BB is written by Sugar lobbyists.

Call the USACE: LisaE.Aley@usace.army.mil to say which LOSOM plan you want and why.

Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch thanked Brian Mast for being our representative and hero. Reach out to the State Reps across the state.

There was a discussion on bio solids brought up by Diane Goldberg. How bio solids are being put on pastures in the north of Brevard County, it is in the IRL watershed. Mark Perry said that it is a state issue especially Noah Valenstine of FDEP.

Presentation: **Blair Wickstrom** introduced **Ed Stout**, owner of South River Outfitters, established in 2001, Stuart's headquarters for kayaks, canoes, and tons of paddling & outdoor accessories. Ed moved off the river when toxic discharges made it impossible to run rentals on the South Fork of the St. Lucie River.

Stef Hughes, Berkshire Hathaway Home Services Florida Realty. When asked about how the toxic discharges have affected the real-estate market, Hughes said, "As our agency discussion went on about a new required disclosure for notifying prospective buyers about the toxicity of our town and the poison flowing through it, I realized I personally would be morally required to share the information that would certainly run buyers away. Realtors are relied upon for sharing about public health and safety."

Gary Oster, VP Sales, General Manager, Renaissance Hotels, Marriott as well as Executive Vice President of the US Travel Association. Gary has spent decades boosting profits for Fortune 500 corporations and nonprofit businesses. When it comes to a travel dependent, tourist dependent state the last thing you want to do is poison the well that all of our local businesses drink from, Gary said.
Florida's #1 industry is tourism, it the basis of jobs, revenue, tax generation.
Blair said this disaster is of our own making, the FDEP mismanagement the water and Big Sugar has infiltrated our commerce.

To see ZOOM recording of presentation go to www.rivercoalition.org or *Rivers Coalition Facebook page*.

Martin County Report: **Dianne Hughes:** No discharges since April 10th. She looks at 5 observation stations.
Salinity: looks good
Chlorophyll levels are low except neat St. Lucie inlet.
Dissolved oxygen levels look good
Turbidity is good except South Fork where dredging is happening
Temperature: 80-81 degrees
Field Staff observed seeing to the bottom of IRL, baby conch at sandbar, Johnson seagrass 2-3"

City of Stuart: **Merritt Matheson** spoke on the 5 models of LOSOM. He is backing plan CC.

SFWMD: **Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch** : STA project near Taylor Creek doing removal of algae.
But why aren't we cleaning it up at the pollution source?
LOSOM is heating up. Possibly a June 29th workshop
Pahokee Marina: Are we going to turn into a vacuum company?
Caloosahatchee is getting the brunt of the Lake O water.

Lake O Update: **Dr. Paul Gray** said that the Lake is below 13'. May was dry month it dropped a foot. Good news in case we have a rain event. It is a failure of FDEP, SFWMD to get the Lake nutrients in balance. Ag needs to clean up their waste. Snail kites had 150 nests this year 0 in past two years.

State and Federal Legislation: n/a

Coalition Reports:

River Kidz: **Nic Mader** was absent so Barbara Osborn gave the report on the RK event yesterday at Town of Sewall's Point. Goal was to write letters to Dept of Interior to put Manatees back on Endangered Species List. (Dept of Interior Office of the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks Attn: Shannon Estenoz 1849 C Street NW Washington DC 20240). Very well attended by children, parents and media. Was on CBS news last night at 5:45 and on front page of today's TC Palm.

Speaker Bureau: **Todd Weissing** had a ZOOM meeting with St. Lucie Sailing Club. We need the community informed.

Local Issues & Estuary Water Quality:

Mark Perry -FOS Water Quality Report the water quality is A- seagrass starting to recover.

Seagrass Update: **Todd Thurlow** water going to west coast is just "going to tide." Seagrass images show paddle grass and shoal grass, still very sparse.

Jim Moir: The Marine Resource's Report Card for lower IRL is "F+." The IRL is a desert under the water. June 3rd will be MRC rollout of report card. Write to USACE and tell them you live on the coast and are a stakeholder. The pollution is impacting your waterways and lifestyle.

Indian Riverkeeper: Mike Conner macro algae in IRL, looks like Sargasso weed. It is from Walton Rd up to Old Fort Park in Ft. Pierce.

Lake Worth Riverkeeper: n/a

Member Comments and Announcements:

Diane Goldberg is working with St Lucie Commissioners to rewrite landscape ordinances. To use 20% less lawns. To limit fertilizer run off.

Next RC meeting June 24, 2021 11:00 in person meeting at City of Stuart Chambers

Adjourned 1:00 p.m.