

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: November 18, 2021

Charles Grande called the meeting to order at 11:00 am. 57 people on ZOOM call
Minutes taken by Barbara Osborn, Administrative Assistant

Opening Comments:

Darrell Brand posted a photo of Bud Jordan, a 1998 founding member of the St. Lucie River Initiative (precursor to Rivers Coalition, who recently died. Charles spoke for a few minutes on Bud's contributions to our Community and our River.

Presentation: Jim Moir introduced Nikki Fried, Commissioner of Florida Dept of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs. Nikki spoke for 15 minutes and addressed the following questions which were sent to her prior to the meeting.

- 1) *Clean water was one of the three campaign platforms. What did FDACS do or recommend during the LOSOM process to try to improve water quality in the northern estuaries? Why is agricultural water supply guaranteed improvement and prioritized over the needs of all other stakeholders?*
- 2) *There are BMAP sub-basins that drain into tributaries where there is reported 15 times the target amounts of nutrient runoff. How are the revised FDACS Best Management Practices going to address these hotspots, and assist the farmers in reducing their pollution? We are downstream stakeholders and we need more protection, not simply offsetting regulatory responsibility to other agencies.*

Chris Pettit, Director of the Office of Agricultural Water Policy then spoke on related topics and answered more questions. Nikki and Chris had to leave the meeting due to their packed schedules.

Eve Samples then continued by giving the update on LOSOM and how it affects our local waters.

11.16.21 a "Preferred Model #260467" was accepted by USACE. Eve said it is not as good as Plan CC but it is the least bad of the Optimized Model runs. The Lake will have more times when the Lake level is over 16-17 ft. High levels will mean more discharges to the East and West. The "Conservation Mode" puts priority of water supply to the EAA over preventing harmful discharges to the St Lucie Estuary. (see Eve's slides on RC website)
ZOOM RC meeting recording can be seen at www.riverscoalition.org

Discussion: (summary of discussion-not verbatim)

Government & Agency Reports:

Martin County: Dianne Hughes' comments and slides can be seen on the Rivers Coalition website

City of Stuart/LOSOM- Ben Hogarth said we should avoid the "Conservation Mode" in the Preferred Model #260467. Questioned the "Lake Recovery Mode" and its operation.

SFWMD: Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch said that there are a lot of positive things happening after 25 years of hard work by people like Maggy Hurchalla, who is on this ZOOM meeting. SFWMD has purchased land for the C-25 (Taylor Creek) reservoir. Tomorrow is the ribbon-cutting for C-44 reservoir. The C-23, C-24, C-25 reservoirs are all moving forward.

Blair Wickstrom asked if the STA's will always be "in repair" mode so the water can't move south. JTL said that they will "always" be some STA's under repair but the most resonating message is to "Move the water south."

USACE: n/a

Lake O Update: Dr. Paul Gray wrote in the chat "Lake O has leveled off and we hope to see it start dropping soon."

Coalition Reports:

Speakers Bureau: Darrell Brand gave Todd Weissing's report on the successful Poker Run sponsored by the Stuart Yacht Club.

Water Quality Report: Mark Perry had to attend another meeting for FOS.

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Seagrass Update: Jim Moir stated that this year 1,000 manatees have starved to death in Florida due to lack of seagrass. "Our estuaries are failing; we are NOT recovering."

Todd Thurlow said the water clarity is good because there has not been recent basin run-off. People have been reporting seagrass growth but is only the brown algae on the sandflats. see www.eyeonlakeo.com

Indian Riverkeeper Update: n/a

Public Comments:

Charles Grande wanted to mention that JTL, Mayor Eula Clarke, Maggy Hurchalla and Joe Katz, Toby Overdorf's assistant were on today's ZOOM meeting.

Jim Moir-since there won't be another RC meeting this year, he wished everyone Happy Holidays.

Darrell Brand- Next meeting is on January 27, 11:00 IN-PERSON at Stuart City Hall Chambers.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 pm