

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: March 24, 2022

Members via Zoom: Rich Hall (River Warriors), Carol Ann Leonard (Martin County Democratic Environmental Caucus), Diane Goldberg (St. Lucie Audubon), Allie Hartmann (Friends of the Everglades), Jeanette Hartzell (Assn of University Women).

Members in person: Mark Perry (FOS), Charles Grande (Pres. Council of H.I.), Darrell Brand (Palm Cove Yacht Club), Todd Thurlow (North River Shores HOA), Nic Made (River Kidz), Eve Samples-Gil Smart (Friends of Everglades), Brittany Bearden (MC Farm Bureau), Rip Fisher (Indian River Plantation), Jim Wharton (Harbour Ridge Yacht Club), Joann Swann (St. Lucie Sailing Club), Greg Braun (Guardians of MC), Dr Paul Gray (Audubon), Jim Skeoch (Venture Three), Jim Harter (Stuart Flyrodders)

Non-members via Zoom: Terrie Bates, Rebecca Elliott, Robert Mathias

Non-members in person: Merritt Matheson-Becky Bruner (Stuart City Council), Ben Hogarth (City of Stuart), Sarah Heard (Martin County Commission), Dianne Hughes, Dr. Leesa Souto-Ken Parks-Steve Sharkey (MRC), Renee Lessard-Moreshead, Anne Cox, Joan Bausch, Sandy Thurlow, Alexandra de Laski, Michael Yustin, David Foster, John Maehl, Ben Lovelace, Jan Robertson, Gretchen Dewey, Doug Barnes, Sarah Phillion, Barbara Osborn, Scott Navitsky

Mark Perry called the meeting to order at 11:05 am. 28 attendees in person, 8 attendees on ZOOM call. Minutes taken by Miki Blumenthal, Administrative Assistant

Opening Comments:

Mark Perry recognized attendees County Commissioner Sarah Heard, City Commissioner Becky Bruner, and Mayor Merritt Matheson.

Presentation:

Indian River Lagoon Report Card - Dr. Leesa Souto, Executive Director of the Marine Resources Council:
Dr. Souto discussed the IRL 2022 report card.

Florida Oceanographic Water Quality Program - Mark Perry

Mark discussed FOS's water quality program, including the weekly water quality report, the 2021 annual report, and the detailed weekly water quality report available on the FOCC website and to subscribers. Short Q&A session regarding the presentation.

Both Dr. Souto's and Mark Perry's PPT presentation and ZOOM RC meeting recording can be seen at www.riverscoalition.org

Additionally, read more about the IRL Report Card [here](#) and the FOS 2021 Annual Water Quality Report [here](#).

Discussion: (summary of discussion-not verbatim)

Government & Agency Reports:

State and Federal Legislation: - Gil Smart gave an update on the recently adjourned Florida legislative session and went over the status of various bills that impacted water management. Mark emphasized the poor treatment by the legislature of the people who showed up in Tallahassee to protest SB2508. All the local legislators voted for SB2508.

Martin County: Dianne Hughes passed on giving a full report, stating there are no discharges now during the dry season and no reports of algae blooms.

City of Stuart/LOSOM- Ben Hogarth said LOSOM is in stages of operational components now. The City of Stuart believes there is lots of improvement needed in the USACE's recovery plan and is communicating their concerns to the USACE.

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Mayor Matheson went into more detail explaining what is meant by the “recovery plan” and the City’s stance on the current plan being discussed by the USACE.

Lake O Update: Dr. Paul Gray said current Lake Okeechobee level is 14 feet. He continued the discussion regarding the USACE’s recovery plan. He believes their present approach is poor. He reminded us that the deadline is April 4th for public comments on the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project and encouraged the audience to participate, emphasizing points that they should mention in their comments.

USACE: n/a - **USACE not in attendance**

SFWMD: Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch not present. Mark Perry discussed the slide that Jacqui sent regarding the working draft of the water supply deliveries in LOSOM. Next SFWMD meeting is the 2nd Thursday in April in West Palm Beach.

Coalition Reports:

River Kidz: Nic Mader reminded us of the River Kidz event at the Lyric tonight, sponsored by the ESC, with a lecture by Patrick Rose of the Save the Manatee Club. Eve Samples will be a moderator. This is a free event. Donations at the event will go to Save the Manatee club. She also mentioned that ESC is having an open house on Saturday, April 2nd. River Kidz will be there promoting getting manatees back on the endangered species list.

Speakers Bureau: n/a

Water Quality Report: Mark Perry spoke in the main presentation.

Seagrass Update: Todd Thurlow and Mark Perry mentioned S308 is open at the lake and releasing water into canal, but nothing is being released from S80 into the estuary. The water being released into the canal is most likely due to testing and/or filling up reservoir. Larger volumes of water are being released south of the lake but not into the STAs or the Everglades, but rather going to the water supply for agriculture.

www.eyeonlakeo.com

Indian Riverkeeper Update: Mike Conner unable to attend.

Public Comments:

Charles Grande - SB2508 has no positive features. We should reach out to the governor and encourage him to veto the bill.

Greg Braun - Brief update on Guardians of Martin County. They asked for funding from legislation to acquire more land within the Loxaloosee corridor but were refused. Sponsoring a workshop next Tuesday to discuss the proposed rural lifestyle zoning by Martin County.

Ben Hogarth - Waterfest is Saturday, March 26th, in Memorial Park 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Diane Goldberg - Inquired as to where to send information on what is being used in canals in Port Saint Lucie County. Mark said Rivers Coalition will share Dr. Souto’s contact information to RC members.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 pm.