

# Rivers Coalition

## Meeting Minutes: April 28, 2022

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**Members via Zoom:** Jim Moir (MRC), 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), Dr Paul Gray (Audubon), Todd Thurlow (North River Shores HOA), Brittany Bearden (MC Farm Bureau), Cheryl Bryson (Venture Three)

**Members in person:** Mark Perry (FOS), Charles Grande (Pres. Council of H.I.), Todd Weissing (Lighthouse Point), Rich Hall (River Warriors), Mike Conner (Indian Riverkeeper), Annie Potts (Treasure Coast Rowing Club), Jim Skeoch (Venture Three), Eve Samples (Friends of the Everglades), Gil Smart (VoteWater), Jim Wharton (Harbour Ridge Yacht Club), Jim Skeoch (Venture Three)

**Non-members via Zoom:** Terrie Bates, Rebecca Elliott, Max Chesnes (TCPalm), Julie Siegele, Charles Murphy, Adnan Alghita

**Non-members in person:** Merritt Matheson-Eula Clarke-Becky Bruner (Stuart City Council), Ben Hogarth (City of Stuart), Stacey Heatherington (Martin County Commission), Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch (SFWMD), LTC Todd Polk (USACE), Dianne Hughes (Martin County), Ken Parks (MRC), Renee Lessard-Moreshead, David Armellini, Harvey Alligood, Joe Gilio, Anne Cox, Paul Millar, Greg Gardner, Tom Bausch, Joan Bausch, Brain McGann, Daniel Kolodny (IRLNEP), Jerry Hoge, LWVMC, Mike Knepper, Ed Killer (TCPalm), Sarah Philion, Barbara Osborn, Jan Robertson, Oz Vasquez

Mark Perry called the meeting to order at 11:04 am. There were 42 attendees in person, 15 attendees on ZOOM call.

Minutes taken by Miki Blumenthal, Administrative Assistant

### Opening Comments:

Mark Perry recognized Merritt Matheson and Eula Clarke from the City of Stuart, County Commissioner Stacey Heatherington, and LTC Polk from the USACE. Dr. Duane De Freese is sick so is unable to give the presentation. Daniel Kolodny will give it in his place.

**Presentation: Update on the Indian River Lagoon and National Estuary Program - A Story of Progress and Challenging Work Ahead.** Daniel Kolodny, COO and CFO of IRL Council and IRLNEP, discussed the 2021 update on the IRLNEP.

A short Q&A session followed the presentation.

*Dan Kolodny's PPT presentation and ZOOM RC meeting recording can be seen at [www.riverscoalition.org](http://www.riverscoalition.org). Additionally, read more about the IRLNEP at [One Lagoon](#), and view their 2021 Annual Report [here](#).*

### Discussion: (summary of discussion-not verbatim)

#### Government & Agency Reports:

**Martin County:** Dianne Hughes gave an update on the southern IRL, St. Lucie River, and Estuary water conditions. We are in the dry season now and the lake appears to be receding at 1' per month, putting it on target to reach 12' by June 1st. Forecast is for an active hurricane season. The county's recommendation to the USACE is to send as much water possible south and west for beneficial use to get the lake at level to prevent harmful discharges later.

**City of Stuart/LOSOM-** Ben Hogarth mentioned the City of Stuart adopted a resolution in support of Congressman Mast's recently introduced legislation, NERP (Northern Everglades Restoration Plan).

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**SFWMD:** Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch said that at the district's last meeting they passed a resolution proclaiming April as Water Conservation Month, and discussed various methods, including watering restrictions. Discussion ensued as to how to enforce the restrictions.

**USACE:** Lt. Col. Polk talked about the lake levels dropping, few algal blooms, and good structural safety ratings. He mentioned his supervisors had recently been to Washington D.C. to speak to legislators about Florida concerns. He also brought up a new "algal bloom potential" app to keep agencies in sync with each other.

**Lake O Update:** Dr. Paul Gray (via Zoom chat) said Lake Okeechobee is dropping quickly, which is a problem for nesting birds but allows low levels to help SAVs.

**State and Federal Legislation:** Eve Samples gave an update on SB2508 which has not gotten to Governor DeSantis' desk yet. She also praised the Martin Commission (and the specific commissioners) for voting against the Rural Lifestyles Amendment.

Mark Perry reminded us that this is an election year and to pay attention to VoteWater's efforts.

### **Coalition Reports:**

**River Kidz:** Nic Mader absent. Mark Perry praised the manatee event at the Lyric Theater. River Kidz are doing a great job with advocacy.

**Speakers Bureau:** Todd Weissing reiterated what the speakers bureau does and emphasized that they are available for in-person, as well as Zoom, meetings.

**Water Quality Report:** Mark Perry mentioned current water quality is looking good, but resources are missing—seagrass, oysters, etc.

**Seagrass Update:** Todd Thurlow unavailable. See [www.eyeonlakeo.com](http://www.eyeonlakeo.com)

**Indian Riverkeeper Update:** Mike Conner announced his resignation as Indian Riverkeeper effective June 1st and resignation from the Rivers Coalition board immediately. He thanked all Riverkeeper board members, advisory board, and all the businesses and people who have generously supported him. The new Indian Riverkeeper will be Jim Moir.

### **Public Comments:**

Mayor Merritt Matheson thanked Mike Conner on behalf of the City of Stuart.

Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch also praised Mike Conner and wished him well.

Mike Conner commented on the positive coordinated efforts with the USACE.

Barbara Osborn announced that the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) is presenting Mike Conner with their National Conservation Award at their next meeting in May.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:38 pm.