

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: May 26, 2022

Members via Zoom: Jim Wharton (Harbour Ridge Yacht Club), Annie Potts (Treasure Coast Rowing Club), Emma Haydocy (Surfrider Foundation), Eve Samples (Friends of the Everglades), George MacLean (Guardians of Martin County), Hilarie Davis (US Sailing Center), Jim Moir (MRC and IRK), Diane Goldberg- Kevin Hinkle (St. Lucie Audubon), Jeanette Hartzell (Assn of University Women), Jennifer Reynolds (SFWMD), Cheryl Bryson (Venture Three)

Members in person: Mark Perry (FOS), Darrell Brand (Palm Cove Yacht Club), Charles Grande (Pres. Council of H.I.), Todd Weissing (Lighthouse Point), Todd Thurlow (North River Shores Property Assn), Blair Wickstrom (Florida Sportsman), Rich Hall (River Warriors), Paul Gray (Audubon), Jan Robertson (Atlantic Point Yacht Club & Marina of Stuart), Nic Mader (Dolphin Ecology Project), Leisa Bee (Surfrider Foundation), Jim Skeoch (Venture Three), Greg Braun (Guardians of Martin County), Gil Smart (VoteWater), Jo Anne Gillespie (Humanists of the Treasure Coast).

Non-members via Zoom: Tim Gysan (USACE), Caitlin Newcamp, Rip Fisher (Indian River Plantation), Charles Murphy, Adnan Alghita, Brian McGann, Max Chesne (TCPalm), Vincent Econmio, Tom MacVicar, Douglas Ashley, Ernie Barnett, Erica Welch

Non-members in person: Merritt Matheson-Eula Clarke-Becky Bruner (Stuart City Council), LTC Todd Polk - Eva Velez (USACE), Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch (SFWMD), Dianne Hughes (Martin County), Harvey Alligood, Walter Deemer (League of Women Voters of MC), Joe Gilio, Anne Cox, Paul Laura, Sarah Phillion, Barbara Osborn, Blake Faulkner, Faith Monti (Children's Museum of the Treasure Coast), Glenn Kellis, Mike Knepper, Becky Harris.

Mark Perry called the meeting to order at 11:03 am. There were 36 attendees in person, 29 attendees on ZOOM call.

Minutes taken by Miki Blumenthal, Administrative Assistant

Presentation: WANT TO KNOW IF THE ST. LUCIE ESTUARY IS GOING TO GET BOMBED BY TOXIC WATER IN 2022? The level of Lake Okeechobee on June 1st may be all you need to know.

Merritt Matheson, Mayor of Stuart, discussed a 20-year period of record June 1st elevations.

Todd Thurlow, Rivers Coalition board member, discussed his website www.eyeonlakeo.com and how he gathers the data and what it means.

Lt Col Polk, Deputy District Commander for South Florida of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), gave a brief talk on the current lake level of 12.6' and the new app that is shared between the SFWMD and the USACE.

Eva Velez, the Chief of the Ecosystem Branch of the USACE discussed the revision of the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual (LOSOM), what it means, goals and objectives, and an update on the process. A Q&A session followed the presentation.

Eva Velez's Powerpoint presentation and Mayor Matheson's presentation can be seen at www.riverscoalition.org.

Discussion: (summary of discussion-not verbatim)

Business Matters:

Mark Perry welcomed new Rivers Coalitions members, Jan Robertson of the Atlantic Point Yacht Club and Marina of Stuart, and also Jo Anne Gillespie of the Humanists of the Treasure Coast. Both representatives introduced themselves and gave a brief description of their respective organizations.

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Government & Agency Reports:

Martin County: Dianne Hughes gave an update on the southern IRL, St. Lucie River, and Estuary water conditions. Estuary salinity is getting high in May and is in the optimal range for oysters. Enterococcus levels are in a mostly good range.

City of Stuart/LOSOM- Mayor Merrit Matheson discussed the city's push towards a cultural shift and what that entails.

SFWMD: Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch showed recent photos of the waterways and emphasized celebrating the WINS such as the fact there have been no major discharges since 2018. She also discussed SFWMD's role in working hard to ensure other agencies do their part in water management. Jacqui recognized Mike Knepper for his part in updating Facebook pages with regard to spraying.

USACE: *See main presentation.*

Lake O Update: Dr. Paul Gray agreed with Jacqui that we should celebrate the wins and mentioned the lake level is 12.6'.

State and Federal Legislation: Gil Smart of VoteWater gave an update on SB 2508 and the call to action to sign petition to Governor DeSantis to veto the bill.

Coalition Reports:

River Kidz: Nic Mader announced that the River Kidz had received the Youth Champion Award at the Keep Martin Beautiful 2022 Environmental Stewardship Awards, and the Florida Oceanographic Society received the Environmental Education Award for its recently opened Ocean EcoCenter.

Speakers Bureau: Todd Weissing mentioned that he is available to speak and simplify the complicated matter of water management issues.

Water Quality Report: Mark Perry gave a water quality update. Overall good.

Seagrass Update: *See presentation.* Todd discussed STA inflows and Lake O releases to the STAs. See www.eyeonlakeo.com

Indian Riverkeeper Update: Jim Moir was welcomed as the new Indian Riverkeeper. He introduced himself and gave a brief bio and discussion of his plans as the new IRK.

Public Comments:

Mark Perry discussed the Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) meeting and his suggestion that we use actual data rather than modeling. He also announced that June is World Ocean Month.

Darrell Brand thanked the Harbour Ridge Yacht & Country Club for their generous donation to the Rivers Coalition this month.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:03 pm.