

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: September 22, 2022

Members via Zoom: Mike Conner (Indian Riverkeeper Board), Brittany Bearden (MC Farm Bureau), Jim Wharton (Harbour Ridge Yacht Club), Kevin Hinkle (St. Lucie Audubon), Emma Haydocy (Surfrider Foundation), Allie Hartmann (Friends of the Everglades), Annie Potts (Treasure Coast Rowing Club), Carol Ann Leonard (Martin County Democratic Environmental Caucus).

Members in person: Mark Perry-Casey Kniffin (FOS), Darrell Brand (Palm Cove Yacht Club), Gil Smart (VoteWater), Tiare Fridrich (Save the Manatee Club), Paul Gray (Audubon), Jim Skeoch (Venture Three), Merritt Matheson (Indian Riverkeeper Board), Charles Grande (Pres. Council of H.I.), Todd Thurlow (North River Shores Property Assn), Janet Jordan (27/80 Paddlers), Rosanne Ryba (Joe's Point HOA), Mike Glynn (Locks Landing), Rich Hall (River Warriors), Diane Goldberg (St. Lucie Audubon).

Non-members via Zoom: Caitlin Newcamp, Jacob Zehnder (USACE), Lisa Krinsky, Rebecca Elliott, Deb Drum (PB County), Max Chesnes (TCPalm), Douglas Ashley, Paul Linton, Jake Fotjik, Michele (Conservancy of Southwest Florida), Matt DePaolis-Paul Julian (Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation), Tom MacVicar, Bill Baker, Abbie Flood (FOS), Bradley Watson (Everglades Foundation), Erin Deady, Brad Davey, Ernie Barnett.

Non-members in person: Tom Baker (Martin County Realtors of the Treasure Coast), Ben Hogarth-Chris Collins-Campbell Rich-Becky Bruner (City of Stuart), SueAnne Hall, John Maehl-Elizabeth Kelly-Sarah Phillion (Martin County), Eric Eikenberg-Sarah Perry Kearney-Keely Weyker (Everglades Foundation), Renee Lessard-Moreshead, Carly Sciandra, Becky Harris, Samanta Rosenberg (District Aide for Toby Overdorf), Blake Faulkner, Peter Upton, Anne Cox, Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch (SFWMD), Paul Laura, Barbara Osborn, Joe Gilio, Ed Killer (TCPalm), Boo Lowery, Newton Cook, Mike Knepper.

Mark Perry called the meeting to order at 11:03 am. There were 39 attendees in person, 28 attendees on ZOOM call.

Minutes taken by Miki Blumenthal, Administrative Assistant

Opening Comments: Mark Perry announced that National Estuaries Week is this week (September 17-24). He recognized new Stuart City Commissioners Christopher Collins and Campbell Rich, along with incumbent Becky Bruner, in attendance. Mark thanked the City of Stuart staff for their ongoing efforts to help protect our water quality. Merritt Matheson, former Mayor of Stuart, has joined the Rivers Coalition board.

Mark welcomed new Rivers Coalition member Tiare Fridrich of the Save the Manatee Club, who gave a brief overview of the club.

Diane Goldberg has copies of the "Right to Clean and Healthy Water" petition. Signed copies can be returned to her or dropped off at the Supervisor of Elections office.

Mark mentioned that the USACE is not in attendance today due to their relief efforts in Puerto Rico.

Presentation: THE IMPACT OF THE EAA RESERVOIR AND CERP PROJECTS ON THE ST. LUCIE ESTUARY

Eric Eikenberg, CEO of The Everglades Foundation, began by commending Mark Perry and Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch for their ongoing efforts in fighting for water quality, and then proceeded to give a briefing on the EAA Reservoir and CERP (Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan), explaining what they were, how they came about, and the current status of the projects.

Q&A session followed the presentation.

The above presentation in its entirety can be seen at www.riverscoalition.org.

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Discussion: (summary of discussion-not verbatim)

Government & Agency Reports:

Martin County: John Maehl introduced Dr. Elizabeth Kelly, Martin County's new Environmental Programs Coordinator. John just returned from meetings in Washington, D.C. and gave updates on funding for USACE's Everglades Restoration, as well as WRDA 2022 (Water Resources Development Act).

City of Stuart/LOSOM- Ben Hogarth thanked Merritt Matheson for his service on the City Commission and welcomed new City Commissioners who have expressed their willingness to help with water quality advocacy. The City of Stuart is currently working on a master stormwater plan.

USACE: Mark Perry mentioned that the public comment period for LOSOM is now finished. A final EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) is expected in February 2023, and the final plan is expected in April 2023.

SFWMD: Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch thanked Eric Eikenberg and the Everglades Foundation for helping to amplify our situation with regard to toxic discharges. Updates on the SFWMD include passing of a budget of over \$1 billion (with millage rate unchanged for the past 12 years), ribbon cutting of the 8-½ square mile area in Miami-Dade County, and the likely upcoming approval of the Interconnect Canal. Jacqui also mentioned the upcoming County Coalition meeting in Okeechobee on Friday, September 23rd.

Mark Perry reminded and encouraged the public to attend SFWMD meetings either in person or virtually.

Lake O Update: Dr. Paul Gray mentioned the lake is in good shape at a level still below 13'. He reminded us that CERP had a slow start but right now is moving along with unprecedented support and unity.

State and Federal Legislation: Gil Smart had nothing to report since John Maehl had already given an update on WRDA 2022.

Coalition Reports:

River Kidz: Barbara Osborn mentioned the recent coastal cleanup that River Kidz participated in. She reminded us of the new River Kidz workbook that is available for free.

Speakers Bureau: Mark Perry mentioned that the Rivers Coalition is available to give presentations.

Water Quality Report: Mark Perry went over the latest water quality report which is good right now. Click here for the latest report from 9/14/2022: [Water Quality Report 9/14/2022](#)

Seagrass Update: Todd Thurlow showed current lake views on his site www.eyeonlakeo.com. Lake level is just shy of 13'. The St. Lucie is being spared right now compared to a level of 15' last year. He discussed the Interconnect Canal and how it would help.

Indian Riverkeeper Update: *Not present.*

Public and Closing Comments:

Mark Perry announced upcoming dates for delivery schedule meetings of October 19th and November 19th. Mark thanked Todd Thurlow for his work and updates on his site, and reminded us all of the importance of continuous monitoring.

Mark reminded us to give completed/signed petitions to Diane Goldberg.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:28 pm.