

# Rivers Coalition

## Meeting Minutes: October 27, 2022

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**Members via Zoom:** Paul Gray (Audubon), Kevin Hinkle (St. Lucie Audubon), Emma Haydocy (Surfrider Foundation), Allie Hartmann (Friends of the Everglades), Carol Ann Leonard (Martin County Democratic Environmental Caucus).

**Members in person:** Mark Perry-Casey Kniffin (FOS), Todd Weissing (Lighthouse Point Assn.), Darrell Brand (Palm Cove Yacht Club), Blair Wickstrom (Florida Sportsman), Gil Smart (VoteWater), Mike Glynn (Locks Landing), Jim Skeoch (Venture Three), Merritt Matheson (Indian Riverkeeper Board), Charles Grande (Pres. Council of H.I.), Jim Harter (Stuart Rod & Reel Club), Greg Braun (Guardians of Martin County), Todd Thurlow (North River Shores Property Assn), Mike Glynn (Locks Landing), Diane Goldberg (St. Lucie Audubon).

**Non-members via Zoom:** Renee Lessard-Moreshead, Barbara Osborn, Deb Drum (PB County), Mac Stuckey (TCPalm), Paul Linton, Tom MacVicar, Bill Baker.

**Non-members in person:** LTC Todd Polk (USACE), Vincent Encomio, Mike Berger, Ben Hogarth-Chris Collins-Campbell Rich-Becky Bruner (City of Stuart), William Lippisch, Sandra Thurlow, John Maehl-Elizabeth Kelly-Sarah Phillion (Martin County), Samantha Rosenberg (District Aide for Toby Overdorf), Blake Faulkner, Anne Cox, Drew Bartlett-Anna Wachnicka-John Mitnick-Kathy LaMartina-Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch (SFWMD), Joe Gilio, Bob Lowery, Newton Cook.

Mark Perry called the meeting to order at 11:00 am. There were 41 attendees in person, 28 attendees on ZOOM call.

Minutes taken by Miki Blumenthal, Administrative Assistant

**Opening Comments:** Mark Perry announced this month marks the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act and mentioned that numerous organizations are involved in bringing awareness to what the CWA accomplished and work yet to be done.

Mark introduced today's speaker, Drew Bartlett, Executive Director of the SFWMD. Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch commented (before the presentation) on how wonderful it is for the Rivers Coalition to have so many well-credentialed speakers at the meetings, and thanked Drew Bartlett and John Mitnik for being here.

### **Presentation: DRY SEASON STARTS NOV. 1ST - WHAT IS THE LIKELIHOOD THE DISTRICT WILL BE SENDING LAKE O WATER SOUTH?**

Drew Bartlett, Executive Director of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) began by mentioning that an additional presenter would be Dr. Anna Wachnicka, Lead Scientist at SFWMD. Both Drew and Dr. Wachnicka talked about the conditions of Lake O, the estuaries, and the STAs pre- and post-Hurricane Ian. Drew stated he thinks we can get through this without discharges.

A Q&A session followed the presentation, and John Mitnik, Assistant Executive Director and Chief District Engineer for SFWMD, added his reflections on Hurricane Ian.

LTC Polk (USACE) agreed that there is no need for discharges right now, but it is too soon to predict if they will be needed in the near future, as the rainy season is not over yet.

*The above presentation in its entirety can be seen at [www.riverscoalition.org](http://www.riverscoalition.org).*

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

### **Government & Agency Reports:**

Mark Perry acknowledged the presence of City Commissioners Becky Bruner, Campbell Rich, and Christopher Collins, as well as John Maehl (Ecosystem Division Manager of Martin County). Florida Representative Toby Overdorf's district aide, Samantha Rosenberg, also introduced herself.

**Martin County:** John Maehl relinquished his time to allow more Q&A time for the main presentation.

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**City of Stuart/LOSOM-** Ben Hogarth also relinquished his time. Ben did announce, however, that the City of Stuart had recently spoken to the Women's Coalition at Stuart Congregational Church. Since the City is unable to accept payment for speaking, he was presented with a \$100 check to give to the Rivers Coalition.

**SFWMD:** Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch thanked her husband, Ed Lippisch, for his support and for his photography of local waterways, and showed one of his most recent photos of the IRL/SLR from 10/22/2022. Seagrass beds are still there, but there is a concern how this will look once the "time of dark water" passes. The next SFWMD meeting is 11/10/2022.

**USACE:** Lt. Col. Polk mentioned that the working draft of the 2022 Integrated Delivery Schedule has been released. The release and presentation of the final schedule will be on 11/28/2022. He gave an update on what the USACE has been doing post-Hurricane Ian, including pumping water out of the Kissimmee chain of lakes, and their temporary roofing mission on the west coast. No water is being sent east right now. Ribbon cutting in Clewiston will be 01/25/2023.

**Lake O Update:** Dr. Paul Gray praised the USACE and SFWMD for their response to Hurricane Ian.

**State and Federal Legislation:** Gil Smart had nothing to report.

### Coalition Reports:

**River Kidz:** Not present.

**Speakers Bureau:** No update.

**Water Quality Report:** Mark Perry went over the latest water quality report which is still at a C to C- level, satisfactory. Recovery is expected soon. Click here for the latest report from 10/20/2022: [Water Quality Report 10/20/2022](#)

**Seagrass Update:** Todd Thurlow did not have a recent seagrass report since nothing has changed. He did show photos from his site [www.eyeonlakeo.com](http://www.eyeonlakeo.com).

**Indian Riverkeeper Update:** *Not present.*

### **Public and Closing Comments:**

Diane Goldberg reminded us of the petition for The Right to Clean Water and the importance of getting the word out to all members, friends, family, etc. Click here for more information about the petition: [Right to Clean and Healthy Waters](#).

Diane also mentioned the upcoming Pelican Island Audubon Conference on 01/21/2023. The focus will be on plants for cleaning our water. Ticket price is \$25. Free tickets will be available for any HOA President. More information can be found here: [Transforming Landscapes for a Sustainable Future](#).

Greg Braun of The Guardians of Martin County announced that the Loxa-Lucie Headwaters Initiative is hosting the premier of "Because There is Still Hope" on Wednesday, 12/07/2022. Anyone interested in water quality is invited. More information will be forthcoming. Click here for more information on the [Loxa-Lucie Headwaters Initiative](#).

Mark Perry announced that the Everglades Coalition (EVCO) conference will be in January at Coral Springs. Registration information will be available 11/1/2022.

The next Rivers Coalition meeting will be Thursday, 11/17/2022.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:43 pm.