

# Rivers Coalition

## Meeting Minutes: November 17, 2022

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**Members via Zoom:** Paul Gray (Audubon), Emma Haydocy (Surfrider Foundation), Allie Hartmann (Friends of the Everglades), Cheryl Bryson (Venture Three), Kevin Hinkle (St. Hilarie Davis/Lucie Audubon), Nic Mader (Dolphin Ecology Project), Annie Potts (Treasure Coast Rowing Club), Jennifer Reynolds (SFWMD), (US Sailing Center).

**Members in person:** Casey Kniffin (FOS), Todd Weissing (Lighthouse Point Assn.), Darrell Brand (Palm Cove Yacht Club), Blair Wickstrom (Florida Sportsman), Eve Samples (Friends of the Everglades), Gil Smart (VoteWater), Mike Glynn (Locks Landing), Jim Moir (Indian Riverkeeper), Jim Skeoch (Venture Three), Walter Deemer (League of Women's Voters of MC), Laura Vennard (League of Women's Voters of SLC), Jeanette Hartzell (Assn of University Women), Merritt Matheson (Indian Riverkeeper Board), Charles Grande (Pres. Council of H.I.), Jim Harter (Stuart Rod & Reel Club), Dan Merritt (Seagate Harbor HOA), Jim Wharton (Harbour Ridge Yacht Club), Todd Thurlow (North River Shores Property Assn), Diane Goldberg (St. Lucie Audubon).

**Non-members in person:** LTC Todd Polk (USACE), Allen Herskowitz (Sailfish Point Property Owners Assoc.), Paul Laura, Jan Robertson, Tom McCrudden (Great Florida Shellfish Co.), Ben Hogarth (City of Stuart), John Maehl-Sarah Phillion (Martin County), Samantha Rosenberg (District Aide for Toby Overdorf), Blake Faulkner, Carol Waxler, Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch (SFWMD), Joe Gilio, Newton Cook.

**Non-members via Zoom:** Renee Lessard-Moreshead, Barbara Osborn, Mac Stuckey-Ed Killer (TCPalm), Tom MacVicar, Bill Baker, Erica Skolte-Savannah Lacy-Tim Gysan (USACE), Doug Ashley, Scott Hennessy, Charles Murphy, Terri Bates, Elizabeth Ross, Lee Killinger (Florida Crystals), Bob Mathias, Mike Drog, Kevin Kerrigan, Pat LaBalbo, Stephen Chalmers, Bill Baker, Erica Welch, Kelly Cox, Rip Fisher (Indian River Plantation)

Charles Grande called the meeting to order at 11:03 am. There were 43 attendees in person, 31 attendees on ZOOM call.

Minutes taken by Miki Blumenthal, Administrative Assistant

**Opening Comments:** Charles Grande welcomed everyone and elected officials who were present.

### **Presentation: CAN WE HOLD OFF LAKE OKEECHOBEE RELEASES TO THE ST. LUCIE ESTUARY POST HURRICANE NICOLE?**

Lt. Col. Todd Polk, Deputy District Commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), presented information on the status of Lake Okeechobee and local waterways after Hurricane Nicole, and the conditions that would warrant discharges. Tim Gysan, LOSOM Project Manager for USACE, joined via Zoom to give a LOSOM update.

*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:**

Charles Grande announced that the Rivers Coalition recently received a \$10,000 donation from the Kahlert Foundation.

**Martin County:** John Maehl discussed the Interconnect, seagrass restoration and bivalves, upcoming Florida legislative session, Martin County legislative meeting (no date yet), and the status of the county's sewage treatment infrastructure projects.

**City of Stuart/LOSOM-** Ben Hogarth mentioned that City Commissioners were not present at today's Rivers Coalition meeting because they were participating in a boot camp about the city's sustainability plan and grants. He also talked about the City of Stuart's progress on septic-to-sewer conversions.

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**FWMD:** Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch showed recent photos of the IRL/SLR and the effects of Hurricane Nicole. She emphasized that we must find a way to send the water south and the need to change legislation.

**USACE:** See LTC Polk's presentation.

**Indian Riverkeeper Update: (out of order because Jim Moir has a prior commitment):** Jim Moir discussed the horrible water quality in the outer estuaries post Hurricane Nicole. He will be participating in a manatee project with Earthjustice in Titusville in a couple of weeks.

**Lake O Update:** Dr. Paul Gray discussed the current "messy" Lake Okeechobee after the hurricanes and the need to have a patient approach with regard to weather.

**State and Federal Legislation:** Gil Smart said the Federal legislature is in a lame-duck session, and he updated us on the status of NERP (Northern Estuaries Restoration Plan) and WRDA (Water Resources Development Act).

### **Coalition Reports:**

**River Kidz:** Nic Mader had to leave early. Barbara Osborn mentioned that Nic will be giving up her position as head of River Kidz and is looking for someone to take the reins. Barbara thanked her for her service, and Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch gave a brief history of the River Kidz and thanked Nic profusely for all her work with River Kidz.

**Speakers Bureau:** No update.

**Seagrass Update:** Todd Thurlow gave an update on and showed recent photos from his site [www.eyeonlakeo.com](http://www.eyeonlakeo.com).

**Water Quality Report:** Casey Kniffin from the Florida Oceanographic Society gave the latest water quality report which is level C (satisfactory). Recovery is expected soon. Click here for the latest report from 11/16/2022: [Water Quality Report 11/16/2022](#).

**Indian Riverkeeper Update:** See above.

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

A member reminded us that today is "Give Miami Day" and that donations could be doubled or even tripled today if made to Friends of the Everglades.

Jim Harter spoke about fish habitats and the importance of seagrass in relation to them.

Merritt Matheson reiterated the importance of sending the water south and that we have not yet mastered the art of restoring seagrass.

Charles Grande reminded us that there would be no December public meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 pm.