

# Rivers Coalition

## Meeting Minutes: February 23, 2023

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**Members via Zoom:** Rip Fisher (Sailfish Point Yacht Club), Jeanette Hartzell (Assn of University Women), Brittany Bearden (MC Farm Bureau), Paul Gray (Audubon), Carol Ann Leonard (Martin County Democratic Environmental Caucus), Darrell Brand (Palm Cove Yacht Club), Melissa Zolla (Keep Martin Beautiful).

**Members in person:** Nic Mader (Dolphin Ecology Project), Todd Weissing (Lighthouse Point Assn.), Greg Braun (Guardians of Martin County), Eve Samples (Friends of the Everglades), Gil Smart (VoteWater), Todd Thurlow (North River Shores Property Assn), Diane Goldberg (St. Lucie Audubon), Rich Hall (River Warriors), Jim Skeoch (Venture Three), Bobbie and Walter Deemer (League of Women's Voters of MC), Paul Uttormark (Sandhill Cove), Jim Wharton (Harbour Ridge Yacht Club), Charles Grande (Pres. Council of H.I.), Jim Harter (Stuart Rod & Reel Club), Blair Wickstrom (Florida Sportsman), Merritt Matheson (Indian Riverkeeper).

**Non-members via Zoom:** Allen Herskowitz (Sailfish Point Property Owners Assoc.), Mike Burke, Dr. Lippisch, John Amerling, Paul Linton, Nyla Pipes, Robert Mathias, Caitlin Newcamp, Tom MacVicar, Doug Ashley, Kim Dinkins, Erica Welch, Terri Bates, Kelly Cox, Stacy Weller Ranieri, Stephen Chalmers, Deanna Thurlow.

**Non-members in person:** LTC Todd Polk-Kim Vitek (USACE), Gary Metal, Brad Thomas, Thoma Gidus, Amy Vopal, Becky Harris, Mac Stuckey (TCPalm), Ben Hogarth-Chris Collins-Eula Clarke-Campbell Rich (City of Stuart), Sarah Philion, Renee Lessard-Moreshead, Melissa Burke, Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch (SFWMD), Sandra Thurlow, Alan McPherson, Blake Faulkner, Heidi Rich, Alicia Butler.

Charles Grande called the meeting to order at 11:05 am. There were 44 attendees in person, 25 attendees on ZOOM call.

Minutes taken by Miki Blumenthal, Administrative Assistant

**Opening Comments:** Charles Grande welcomed everyone and introduced Diane Goldberg, who reminded the group of the Right to Clean Water Petition and announced that the 501(c)(3) that gets the most eligible signatures over 1000 for the petition will get a \$1000 donation.

**Presentation:** "IT WAS A WORLD SET OUT TO DRAIN THE EVERGLADES AND A TREMENDOUS DETERMINATION TO CREATE AN EMPIRE OF AGRICULTURE," A HISTORY OF THE ST. LUCIE CANAL  
by Jacqui Thurlow Lippisch.

Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch, along with the help of her brother, Todd Thurlow, gave a fascinating presentation on the history of the St. Lucie Canal. She covered the reasons for the construction of the canal, as well as the political climate at the time. Maps and photos depicted the changes over the years since its construction.

***\*\*Unfortunately, due to technical difficulties, a recording of the presentation is not available.\*\****

A Q&A session followed the presentation, after which Charles Grande recognized the presence of City Commissioners Eula Clarke, Chris Collins and Campbell Rich.

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

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

**Martin County:** John Maehl announced that the county had recently completed the Golden Gate septic-to-sewer conversion, and the county was recently awarded \$18 million from the state to complete funding for septic-to-sewer conversions in Old Palm City and Coral Gardens. The county also received funding for the project to elevate Mockingbird Lane.

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**City of Stuart/LOSOM-** Ben Hogarth thanked the City Commission for being proactive and mentioned that the city had already completed the public septic-to-sewer conversions in 2020 but needs help with connections for residents. The city is hoping to get money from the state.

**SFWMD:** Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch announced that the groundbreaking ceremony for the EAA Reservoir took place the day before and that it never would have happened without the efforts of Stuart, FL and Joe Negron. The stormwater treatment area will be done this year.

**USACE:** LTC Todd Polk discussed the lake levels and discharges. Discussion ensued regarding how the current lake level would have been handled if LOSOM changes were currently in place.

**Lake O Update:** Dr. Paul Gray mentioned that the lake is just too deep right now and that any decision is going to have a harmful result. The same arguments have been going on since 1926; we need to build more tools to manage the water better.

**State and Federal Legislation:** Gil Smart said that VoteWater is currently tracking dozens of bills in the Florida legislature and highlighted a couple of good and bad ones that they are keeping an eye on.

### **Coalition Reports:**

**River Kidz:** Nic Mader said that River Kidz will have a presence at the upcoming Waterfest on 3/25/23.

**Speakers Bureau:** Todd Weissing recently spoke at a meeting of the Humanists of the Treasure Coast and has some upcoming presentations. The Speakers Bureau is available upon request.

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

Charles Grande thanked the USACE for being at the meeting, as well as all who attended in person and via Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:51pm.