

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: June 22, 2023

Members via Zoom: Kevin Hinkle (St. Lucie Audubon), Tiare Fridrich (Save the Manatee Club), Hilarie Davis (US Sailing Center), Regina Wood (Treasure Coast Unitarian Universalist Church), Allen Herskowitz (Sailfish Point POA).

Members in person: Mark Perry (FOS), Darrell Brand (Palm Cove Yacht Club), Eve Samples (Friends of the Everglades), Gil Smart (VoteWater), Nic Mader (Dolphin Ecology Project), Todd Weissing (Lighthouse Point Assn.), Todd Thurlow (North River Shores Property Assn), Annie Potts (Treasure Coast Rowing Club), Diane Goldberg (St. Lucie Audubon), Jim Skeoch (Venture Three), Dan Merritt (Seagate Harbor HOA), Walter Deemer (League of Women's Voters of MC), Jim Harter (Stuart Rod & Reel Club), Paul Uttormark (Sandhill Cove), Charles Grande (Pres. Council of H.I.), Jim Snedeker (Guardians of Martin County), Casey Kniffin (FOS), Zoe Glover-Asher Glover-Sabrina Glover (River Kidz), Paul Laura (Hutchinson Island Preservation Initiative).

Non-members via Zoom: Pat LaBalbo, Deanna Thurlow, Alyssa Hoffman, Stephen Chalmers, Robert Mathias, Ernie Barnett, John Amerling, Kelly Cox (Audubon Florida), Stanley Wiegand, Tom MacVicar, Terri Bates, Laura Vennard, Abbie Flood-Kelli Dore (FOS), Richard Sanchez, Michael Conner, Elizabeth Ross.

Non-members in person: LTC Todd Polk (USACE), Ben Hogarth-Becky Bruner-Campbell Rich (City of Stuart), Diane Morgan, Gabrielle Tullock (FOS), John Warner, Natalie Thomas, Blake Faulkner, Amanda Purnell, Ed Gardner, Patrick Foley, Dana Kimberly, Barbara Osborn, Sarah Phillion-Elizabeth Kelly-John Maehl (Martin County), Joe Gilio, Anne Cox, Mike Knepper, Samantha Rosenberg (Rep. Overdorf), Amy Gallant (Rep. Mast), Laue MacDougall, Alicia Butler, Ed Killer-Katie Delk (TCPalm), Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch.

Mark Perry called the meeting to order at 11:05 am. There were 49 attendees in person, 23 attendees on ZOOM call.

Minutes taken by Miki Blumenthal, Administrative Assistant

Opening Comments: Mark Perry welcomed everyone and acknowledged City Commissioners Becky Bruner and Campbell Rich, County representatives, and LTC Polk from the USACE. He encouraged all those present to encourage Rivers Coalition members, as well as the public, to get involved and participate in upcoming meetings.

Presentation: What's the Plan for a Toxic Wave?

Ben Hogarth, Community Liaison for the City of Stuart, began the presentation by mentioning current lake levels and going through explanations of El Nino and extremely high sea-surface temperatures. John Maehl, Restoration and Management Manager for Martin County, acknowledged Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch's service on the SFWMD board. He discussed what the county would do in the event of another lost summer, emphasizing that we are much better prepared than we were in 2018 with regard to working together as a team with the DEP, the Department of Health, and the SFWMD. The county will continue its role to monitor, communicate, and advocate. He talked about the difference in lake management strategies under the current LORS system versus the upcoming LOSOM system.

A Q&A session with LTC Polk, Mark Perry, Ben Hogarth, and John Maehl 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: See presentation above.

City of Stuart/LOSOM: See presentation above.

SFWMD: Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch received a standing ovation from the attendees in the room for her service on the SFWMD board. She encouraged everyone to continue to communicate with those on the board of the SFWMD and directed them to the website to locate email addresses and phone numbers and to reach out weekly. The next SFWMD meeting will be a hybrid one on July 13, 2023.

USACE: See presentation above.

Lake O Update: Dr. Paul Gray was not present, but the lake levels were discussed in the presentation.

State and Federal Legislation: Eve Samples gave a legislative update, encouraging everyone to look closely at the money allocated for Everglades restoration and water quality, as it includes many benefits to agriculture. Additionally, the budget passed by Governor DeSantis included a ban on new fertilizer ordinances for a year. She also discussed SB540 and the fact that the majority of the BGATF's (Blue Green Algae Task Force) recommendations from 2019 have yet to be enacted. Gil Smart discussed two bills he is following that are still in limbo—SB 718 and SB170.

Mark Perry elaborated on the BGATF recommendations that have not been implemented.

Coalition Reports:

Diane Goldberg gave an update on the Right To Clean Water petition.

River Kidz: Sabrina Glover and Casey Kniffin gave an update on River Kidz's upcoming activities this summer. River Kidz Zoe and Asher Glover presented the Rivers Coalition with a check for \$3000—the proceeds from the Toxic Trail run last year and this year.

Speakers Bureau: Todd Weissing recently held a Zoom presentation with the Conservation Alliance of St. Lucie County that was well attended. The Speakers Bureau is available upon request.

Riverkeeper Update: Jim Moir was not present.

Water Quality: Mark Perry talked briefly about the current water quality report. Also, see presentation above.

Seagrass Update: Todd Thurlow showed updated images from his website eyeonlakeo.com and also discussed the USACE page with a map that has links to data. He discussed the high levels of phosphorus.

Public and Closing Comments:

Mark Perry read an announcement from Greg Braun (Guardians of Martin County) that the Loxa-Lucie Headwaters Conservation Initiative is in the final stages of fundraising for their acquisition of 20 acres on the south side of Bridge Road and are accepting donations. Contributions may be made on their website here.

Eve Samples announced the establishment of the Karen Mashburn Environmental Scholars Program. More information on applying for the \$10,000 scholarship is available here.

Darrell Brand thanked the City of Stuart for the use of their facility and for their assistance with technology in setting up our hybrid meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:36 pm.