

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: June 27, 2024

Members via Zoom: Brittany Bearden (Martin County Farm Bureau), Hilarie Davis (US Sailing Center), Kevin Hinkle (St. Lucie Audubon), Paul Gray (Audubon Florida).

Members in person: Todd Thurlow (North River Shores Property Assn), Jim Moir-Merritt Matheson (Indian Riverkeeper), Charles Grande (Pres. Council of H.I.), Todd Weissing (Lighthouse Point Assn.), Gil Smart-Jason Bultman (VoteWater), Allie Hartman-Carol Waxler (Friends of the Everglades), Diane Goldberg (St. Lucie Audubon), Valentina Miele (FOS), Carol Ann Leonard (Martin County Democratic Environmental Caucus), Harvey Nation (Rio Civic Club), Walter Deemer (League of Women’s Voters of MC), Joe Gilio (LORI), Paul Uttormark (Sandhill Cove).

Non-members via Zoom: Pat LaBalbo, Paul Linton (Palm Beach County), Stephen Chalmers, Douglas Ashley, Tim Gysan (USACE), John Amerling, Derek Cox.

Non-members in person: Renee Lessard-Moreshead, Barbara Osborn, Jaz Levario (USACE), Kathy LaMartina (SFWMD), John Maehl-Elizabeth Kelly-Sarah Philion (Martin County), Becky Bruner-Chris Collins (City of Stuart), Blake Faulkner, Sean Reed, John Paterson-Paula McCleave (Right to Clean Water), Gloria Gronowicz, Lyn Aal-Magee, Peter Upton, Laurie MacDougall, Linda Horstmyer, Cathy Rethmeier, Deb McKone, Dana Kimberly, Laura Giobbi.

Charles Grande called the meeting to order at 11:05 am. There were 46 attendees in person, 14 attendees on ZOOM call.

Minutes taken by Miki Blumenthal, Administrative Assistant

Opening Comments: Charles Grande welcomed everyone and thanked Becky Bruner, Mayor of Stuart, for attending.

Presentation: “The State of Lake Okeechobee”

Todd Thurlow, Stuart attorney, Rivers Coalition board member, and creator of the “Eye on Lake O” website, gave an overview of current Lake Okeechobee conditions and what we can expect as we head into the summer months. He has updated information on his website at eyeonlakeo.com.

A Q&A session followed the presentation.

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

Government & Agency Reports:

Martin County: John Maehl, Martin County Ecosystem Division Manager, thanked Todd Thurlow for his extensive work on his website and data analysis. He discussed 4 main areas that Martin County is currently working on:

1. seagrass planting update
2. salinity modeling
3. Bathtub beach
4. maintenance dredging at the inlet

A copy of his presentation can be seen at www.riverscoalition.org.

City of Stuart/LOSOM: No updates given.

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USACE: Tim Gysan, USACE Senior Project Manager, announced that the new District Commander, Colonel Bowman, would take office in July 26th. Tim discussed the target date of August 12th for the new LOSOM and discussed the transition process. He also gave an update on the C44 canal.

SFWMD: Kathy LaMartina, SFWMD Project Manager, gave an update on the future public use/recreational activities proposed for the C-44 stormwater treatment area.

Lake O Update: Paul Gray, via Zoom, stated that the lake is in the 13-foot range, with 25% of the marshes dry and 20% less than 6" deep, which is good for the wading birds.

State and Federal Legislation: Gil Smart stated the Florida legislature is not currently in session but did mention that Governor DeSantis had just vetoed HB165, which would have required the Dept. of Health to issue health advisories, and/or close access, if water quality of beaches and other bodies of water was a danger to the public.

Coalition Reports:

River Kidz: No update given.

Speakers Bureau: No report given. Speakers can be requested at riverscoalition.org.

Seagrass Update: See main presentation.

Riverkeeper Update: Jim Moir stated they are moving forward with a lagoon action assembly on July 24-25. a

Member Comments and Announcements:

Diane Goldberg stated that the FDACS does not test for PFAS, and she reminded the group about the Right to Clean Water petition. Carol Ann Leonard is assisting Diane Goldberg with collecting petitions. More information is available here: [Florida Right to Clean Water](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 12:21 p.m.