

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: October 24, 2024

Members via Zoom: Brittany Bearden (Martin County Farm Bureau), Hilarie Davis (US Sailing Center), Kevin Hinkle (St. Lucie Audubon), Rip Fisher (Sailfish Point Yacht Club), Tiffany Kincaid (Keep Martin Beautiful), Bob Mathias (FOS), Greg Braun (Guardians of Martin County).

Members in person: Mark Perry-Valentina Miele (Florida Oceanographic Society), Darrell Brand (Palm Cove Yacht Club), Todd Thurlow (North River Shores Property Assn), Eve Samples-Allie Hartmann-Mitchell Latzman (Friends of the Everglades), Gil Smart-Jason Bultman(VoteWater), Merritt Matheson (IRK), Casey Kniffin (FWF), Diane Goldberg (St. Lucie Audubon), Paul Gray (Audubon Florida), Annie Potts (Treasure Coast Rowing Club), Joe Gilio (LORI), Kelli Doré (River Kidz), Walter Deemer (League of Women's Voters of MC), Paul Uttormark (Sandhill Cove), Jim Harter (Stuart Rod & Reel Club), Richard Hall (River Warriors), Carol Ann Leonard (Martin County Democratic Environmental Caucus)

Non-members via Zoom: Pat LaBalbo, Terrie Bates, Lisa Interlandi, Heather Schott (Rep. Toby Overdorf), Tim Gysan (USACE), Stacy Weller Ranieri (Firefly).

Non-members in person: Maj. Cory Bell-Jeff Prater (USACE), Lawrence Glenn (SFWMD), John Maehl-Elizabeth-Sarah Heard-Sarah Pillion-Amy Eason (Martin County), Eula Clarke-Sean Reed (City of Stuart), Laurie MacDougall, Marlee Matheson, Barbara Osborn, Steve Mahoney, H.M. Ridgely, Jim Snedeker (Martin County Forever), Thomas Witkop, William Witkop, Carrie Witkop, Mark Hill, Paula McLease (Right to Clean Water), Renée Lessard Moreshead.

Mark Perry called the meeting to order at 11:03 am. There were 45 attendees in person, 16 attendees on ZOOM call.

Minutes taken by Miki Blumenthal, Administrative Assistant

Opening Comments: Mark Perry welcomed everyone and thanked attendees representing the City of Stuart and Martin County.

Presentation: "Preserving Martin County Land"

Merritt Matheson, Co-Chair of Martin County Forever and board member of Rivers Coalition and Indian Riverkeeper, spoke about the Martin County ballot initiative, which proposes a half-cent sales tax. The proceeds will be used to purchase lands to protect water quality and natural and wildlife habitats in Martin County.

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 gave an update on the propagation of lucinid clams. He also addressed the concept of litigating solutions for stopping discharges.

City of Stuart: Eula Clarke stated the City of Stuart would give updates when available.

SFWMD: Lawrence Glenn, Director of SFWMD Water Resources Division, gave a presentation on water and ecological conditions in the aftermath of Hurricanes Helene and Milton.

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USACE: Maj. Cory Bell mentioned recent monetary awards for the Indian River Lagoon north reservoir and also EAA A-2. Lake releases will begin on Saturday, 10/26/24 to the Caloosahatchee.

Lake O Update: Paul Gray stated that the lake recovery strategy would occur this year due to the high lake level. He discussed strategies to deal with the marsh.

State and Federal Legislation: Gil Smart announced that the Florida legislative session would begin on 3/4/25 and continue through 5/2/25.

Eve Samples and Casey Kniffin discussed Amendment 2 and recommended a “no” vote, explaining their reasons why.

Coalition Reports:

River Kidz: Casey Kniffin stated the River Kidz had helped with beach cleanup after Hurricane Milton and are planning on attending the open house at the Environmental Studies Center this Saturday, Oct. 26th.

Speakers Bureau: Todd Weissing reminded the attendees that speakers can be requested at riverscoalition.org.

Water Quality Report: Mark Perry stated the water quality in the local estuaries is bad, mostly due to the local runoffs due to heavy rains.

No further comments. The meeting had to be cut short due to another event scheduled in the room.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:18 p.m.