

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: June 26, 2025

Members via Zoom: Bob Mathias-Valentina Miele (FOS), Kevin Hinkle (St. Lucie Audubon), Brittany Bearden (Martin County Farm Bureau), Dana Espinosa-Amanda Purnell (Friends of the Everglades), Tiare Fridrich (Save the Manatee Club), Paul Gray (Audubon Florida), Jim Moir (IRK), Lyn Aal-Magee (League of Women Voters of MC).

Members in person: Eve Samples-Mitchell Latzman-Peter Upton (Friends of the Everglades), Charles Grande (Pres. Council of H.I.), Gil Smart-Jason Bultman (VoteWater), Todd Thurlow (North River Shores Property Assn), Merritt Matheson (IRK), Ed Killer (Florida Sportsman), Paul Uttormark (Sandhill Cove), Walter Deemer-Gloria Gronowicz (League of Women's Voters of MC), Robert Ryba-Angela Rantinella (HIPI), Regina Wood (TC Unitarian Universalist), Diane Goldberg (St. Lucie Audubon), Jim Harter (Stuart Rod & Reel Club), Trae Jennings (Ballantrae Angler's Club), Joe Gilio (LORI), Carol Ann Leonard (Martin County Democratic Environmental Caucus).

Non-members via Zoom: Lauren Smith, Ken Bradshaw (USACE), Terrie Bates, Ernie Barnett, Erin F., Nicholas Linehan (St. Lucie County), LMK, Ivennard, Risbet.

Non-members in person: Maj. Cory Bell-Jeff Prater (USACE), Sherry McCorkle (SFWMD), John Maehl-Sarah Phillion-Amy Eason-Elizabeth Kelley (Martin County), Christopher Collins-Ben Hogarth-Campbell Rich (City of Stuart), Dave Derrenbacker, Paula McLease, Tom Tomlinson, Barbara Osborn, Will Gideonse, Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch, Laurie MacDougal, Anne Cox, Evan Wesselman, Susan Hemmes, Nick Gulotta, Greg Gardner, Blake Faulkner, Roseanne Ryba, Linda Gideonse.

Eve Samples called the meeting to order at 11:01 am. There were 46 attendees in person, 20 attendees on ZOOM call.

Minutes taken by Miki Blumenthal, Administrative Assistant.

Business Matters:

Member roll call was taken. Eve Samples welcomed new Rivers Coalition members. Trae Jennings with the Ballantrae Anglers Club introduced himself and gave a brief description of his organization.

Presentation: ELOC Update and Legislative Recap

Merritt Matheson, Rivers Coalition board member and Vice Chair of the Environmental Lands Oversight Committee, along with John Maehl, Martin County's Environmental Resource Administrator, talked about the ELOC's work to guide conservation land purchases funded by the voter-approved surtax. Their first meeting was held on Wednesday, June 25th. The next meeting will be on September 5th.

Following the ELOC update, Eve Samples, Executive Director of Friends of the Everglades, and Gil Smart, Executive Director of VoteWater, gave a recap of the recent Florida legislative session. Eve gave an update on the status of the rock mine proposal and also the proposed "Alligator Alcatraz."

An extended Q&A session followed their presentation. The above presentations in its entirety can be seen at www.riverscoalition.org.

Government & Agency Reports:

Martin County: See main presentation.

City of Stuart: Ben Hogarth discussed SB180 and its potential impact if Governor DeSantis does not veto it. City Commissioner Chris Collins added comments.

SFWMD: No updates given.

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USACE: Maj. Bell stated that Lake O levels had met the recovery envelope goal. He discussed plans for algae testing and the status of Indian River Lagoon STAs.

Q&A followed his comments.

Lake O Update: Paul Gray, via Zoom, stated the lake level is just below 11 feet, which is ecologically wonderful for the lake. The level is nearing the water supply ration line, but there is no immediate hurry to ration water.

State and Federal Legislation: See main presentation.

Coalition Reports:

River Kidz: No updates.

Speakers Bureau: No updates. Speakers can be requested at riverscoalition.org.

Water Quality Report/Seagrass Update: Todd Thurlow gave water quality updates and seagrass update. He reiterated that the lake level has met recovery goals and is now in the water shortage management band.

Riverkeeper Update: Merritt Matheson announced that the Treasure Coast Waterway Cleanup is on Saturday, July 26th. The Indian Riverkeeper is sponsoring a tent at the trash dropoff located at the Jensen Beach Causeway. They will provide refreshments, and volunteers are welcome.

Member Comments and Announcements:

Gloria Gronowicz with the League of Women Voters asked a question with regard to "Alligator Alcatraz."

The meeting was adjourned at 12:33 p.m.