

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: October 23, 2025

Members via Zoom: Greg Braun (Guardians of Martin County), Carol Ann Leonard (MC Democratic Environmental Caucus), Rip Fisher (Sailfish Point Yacht Club), Paul Gray (Audubon Florida), Dana Espinosa (Friends of the Everglades), Laura Vennard (League of Women Voters of SLC).

Members in person: Mark Perry-Valentina Miele-Anthony Brunet (Florida Oceanographic Society), Eve Samples-Miki Blumenthal-Mitchell Latzmann-Peter Upton (Friends of the Everglades), Darrell Brand (Palm Cove Yacht Club), Charles Grande (Pres. Council of H.I.), Todd Thurlow (North River Shores Property Assn), Merritt Matheson (IRK), Ed Killer (Florida Sportsman), Casey Darling Kniffin (Florida Wildlife Federation), Walter Deemer (League of Women Voters of MC), Richard Hall (River Warriors), Trae Jennings-David Alexander (Ballantrae Angler's Club), Paul Laura (HIPI), Diane Goldberg (St. Lucie Audubon), Lyn Aal-Magee (Audubon of MC), Tom Bausch (MC Conservation Alliance), Harvey Nation (Rio Civic Club).

Non-members via Zoom: Alex Dew (FWC), Doug Ashley, Pat LaBalbo, Jennifer Smith, Stephen Mahoney, Lauren Smith, Kevin H., Natalie Howard, Rosbet, Todd Howard, Lana McClain.

Non-members in person: Sherry McCorkle (SFWMD), Amy Eason-Elizabeth Kelly-Eileen Vargas-Sarah Heard (Martin County), Christopher Collins (City of Stuart), Carl Stewart, Kara Muzia, Blake Faulkner, Barbara Osborn, H.M. Ridgely, Renée Lessard-Moreshead, Newton Cook, Jim Watt, Paul Uttormark (Sandhill Cove), Susan Hemmes, William Gideonse, Linda Gideonse, Paula McLease, James Martin, Mark Walsh, Jason & Henry Cromwell, Anne Cox.

Mark Perry called the meeting to order at 11:01 am. There were 43 attendees in person, 24 attendees on ZOOM call.

Minutes taken by Miki Blumenthal, Administrative Assistant.

Business Matters:

Member roll call was taken. Mark Perry welcomed everyone and recognized government officials present.

Presentation: Overview of FWC's Aquatic Plant Management with Special Focus on Lake Okeechobee

Alex Dew, FWC Aquatic Invasive Plant Program Administrator, discussed the impacts of invasive plant species and methods used to manage them, using Lake Okeechobee as an example.

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

Government & Agency Reports:

Martin County: Amy Eason, Martin County's Environmental Resource Engineer, talked about recent tidal events in Martin County. along with a slide presentation.

City of Stuart: No updates.

SFWMD: No updates. Sherry McCorkle stated the next SFWMD board meeting will be November 13 at 9 a.m.

FWC: See main presentation by Alex Dew.

USACE: No one present due to government shutdown.

Lake O Update: Paul Gray stated lake level will top out at 14 feet this year.

State and Federal Legislation: Eve Samples mentioned 2 important bills to keep an eye on in the Florida upcoming legislative session that starts in January 2026: HB 105 and SB 208.

Mark Perry reminded the attendees that the Saint Lucie County delegation meeting will be on October 29 at IRSC.

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Coalition Reports:

River Kidz: Casey Kniffin stated the River Kidz will be speaking at the Native Plant Society in November. The “Eyes on Seagrass” in the Indian River Lagoon project is ongoing and taking video/photo submissions. More information can be found here: [Eyes on Seagrass](#). River Kidz has a new email address: riverkidz@riverscoalition.org.

Speakers Bureau: No updates.

Water Quality Report: Mark Perry gave a water quality report. See slideshow presentation.

Seagrass Update: Todd Thurlow gave seagrass updates and showed new graphs available on his website: [eyeonlakeo.com](#).

Riverkeeper Update: No updates.

Member Comments and Announcements:

Casey Kniffin mentioned a website <https://www.floridahealthybeaches.com/> that gives water quality advisories.

Diane Goldberg stated she is giving a lecture for the St. Lucie Audubon Society on November 6 at 7 p.m. at the Oxbow Eco-Center. She will be discussing using native plants to attract birds and butterflies.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:28 p.m.