

Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: March 26, 2026

Members via Zoom: Greg Braun (Guardians of Martin County), Paul Julian (Everglades Foundation), Bob Mathias (FOS), Jim Wharton (Harbour Ridge Yacht Club), Ed Killer (Florida Sportsman), Paul Laura (HIPI), Carol Ann Leonard (Martin County Democratic Environmental Caucus).

Members in person: Mark Perry-Valentina Miele (Florida Oceanographic Society), Eve Samples-Peter Upton (Friends of the Everglades), Gil Smart (VoteWater), Todd Thurlow (North River Shores Property Assn), Charles Grande (Pres. Council of H.I.), Jim Moir-Merritt Matheson-Melissa Burke (IRK), Casey Darling-Kniffin (River Kidz), Darrell Brand, Darrell Brand (Palm Cove Yacht Club), Joe Gilio (LORI), Angela Pantinella (HIPI), Richard Hall (River Warriors), Trae Jennings (Ballantrae Anglers Club), Walter Deemer-Gloria Gronowicz (League of Women Voters of MC), John Paterson (Estuary at North River Shores), Harvey Nation (Rio Civic Club).

Non-members via Zoom: P.A. Jones, Jenifer Crespo, Rosbet, Terrie ?, J. Smith, Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch, Luna Phillips, Paul ?.

Non-members in person: Miki Blumenthal, Maj. Cory Bell-Jeff Prater (USACE), Thomas Hurley-Sherry McCorkle (SFWMD), John Maehl (Martin County), Laura Giobbi-Sean Reed-Ruth Holmes-Christopher Collins-Campbell Rich-Milton Leggett (City of Stuart), Hannah Angelo-Walker (Captains for Clean Water), Doug Ashley, Stephen Mahoney, Anne Cox, Tim O'Hara (TCPalm), Blake Faulkner, Dick Tuschick (Seagate HOA), Bianca Bernhard (Martin Oyster Restoration Initiative), Greg Gardner, Newton Cook, James Martin Barbara Osborn.

Mark Perry called the meeting to order at 11:00 am. There were 44 attendees in person, 15 attendees on ZOOM call.

Minutes taken by Miki Blumenthal, Administrative Assistant.

Business Matters:

Member roll call was taken. Merritt Matheson announced that the Jupiter Island Garden Club gave a generous donation to Rivers Coalition after he gave a presentation to them on behalf of Martin County Forever. Mark Perry gave a short slide introduction on the history of the muck in our waterways.

Presentation: Muck 101: Understanding the "Black Ooze"

Jim Moir, Indian Riverkeeper, introduced Joe Gilio, President of Lake Okeechobee Restoration Initiative, as the main speaker. Joe spoke in depth about muck, what it is, how it impacts our waterways, and possible solutions to cleaning it up.

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

Government & Agency Reports:

Martin County: John Maehl stated the County had submitted comments on the draft manual for the C-44 project. He also gave updates on Martin County Forever. On April 1, the Environmental Lands Oversight Committee will have a meeting at 3:30 pm at the County Commission Chambers. On April 17, there will be a celebration of the acquisition of Bar-B Ranch at Timers Powers Park in Indiantown at 9:00 am.

City of Stuart: Ruth Holmes, the city's environmental attorney, mentioned that the City had also submitted comments on the C-44 draft manual after consulting engineers.

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SFWMD: Tom Hurley, SFWMD Governing Board Member, mentioned an upcoming NEEPP (Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program) workshop on April 16 at the SFWMD District Headquarters in West Palm Beach.

USACE: Maj. Cory Bell gave an update on lake levels, projected rainfall, and the USACE “muck” projects. Mark Perry stated that the Rivers Coalition Board of Directors has written a letter in support of extending Maj. Bell’s tour of duty in our area.

Lake O Update: No update given other than the USACE update.

State and Federal Legislation: Gil Smart stated the legislative session has ended and gave an update on bills that passed. Friends of the Everglades will give an in-depth update at their upcoming “FOE Live” on April 2 at noon.

Coalition Reports:

River Kidz: Casey Kniffin stated the River Kidz have been nominated to receive an Environmental Stewardship Award. Upcoming events include Grandparents’ and VIP Day at the Environmental Studies Center on March 28, and 2 Earth Day events in April.

Speakers Bureau: Ed Killer (via Zoom chat) mentioned there may be an opportunity to speak at the Rotary Club in Palm City.

Water Quality Report: Mark Perry presented the latest weekly and year-to-date water quality reports.

Seagrass Update: Todd Thurlow discussed seagrass and chart updates on his website [eyeonlakeo](http://eyeonlakeo.com).

Riverkeeper Update: Jim Moir mentioned the upcoming Memorial Service for Bob Matheson on March 28 at the Flagler Center at 2:00 pm.

Member Comments and Announcements:

Barbara Osborn stated that the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) Conservation Committee will be presenting their National Conservation Award to Eve Samples on April 10 at Miles Grant Country Club.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:43 p.m.