

# Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: April 23, 2026

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**Members via Zoom:** Sherri Anker (Conservation Alliance of SLC), Annie Potts (Treasure Coast Rowing Club), Caitlin Newcamp (Audubon Florida), Allie Hartmann-Dana Espinosa (Friends of the Everglades), Kelli Doré (River Kidz), Carol Ann Leonard (Martin County Democratic Environmental Caucus), Paul Laura (HIPI), .

**Members in person:** Mark Perry-Valentina Miele-Michelle Byriel-Anthony Brunet-Dick Landrum (Florida Oceanographic Society), Ed Killer (Florida Sportsman), 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 (IRK), Casey Darling-Kniffin (River Kidz), Darrell Brand (Palm Cove Yacht Club), Lyn Aal-Magee (Audubon of Martin County), Paul Uttormark (Sandhill Cove), Joe Gilio (LORI), Richard Hall (River Warriors), Greg Braun (Guardians of Martin County), Walter Deemer-Gloria Gronowicz (League of Women Voters of MC), Dave Derrenbacker (Realtor Association of Martin County), Bianca Bernhard (Martin Oyster Restoration Initiative), Diane Goldberg (St. Lucie Audubon), Dave Alexander (Ballantrae Anglers Club).

**Non-members via Zoom:** Mary Starzinski, Allen PH, Denise Devotta (Moleaer), Lisa Interlandi (Everglades Law Center), PJS, Pat LaBalbo, Carmen, Susie, Terrie, Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch.

**Non-members in person:** Chris Stephan-Erin Klores (Moleaer, Inc), Miki Blumenthal, Maj. Cory Bell-Jeff Prater (USACE), Justin Nolte-Sherry McCorkle (SFWMD), Amy Eason-Sarah Phillion (Martin County), Laura Giobbi-Ruth Holmes-Christopher Collins (City of Stuart), Will Gideonse, Linda Gideonse, Renee Lessard-Moreshead, Tom Bausch, James Martin, Mac Stuckey, Sergei Kelley, Mike Holliday-Hannah Angelo-Walker (Captains for Clean Water), Sunny Walker, Blake Faulkner, H.M. Ridgely, Anne Cox, Julie Bielecki, Barbara Osborn.

Mark Perry called the meeting to order at 11:02 am. There were 54 attendees in person, 19 attendees on ZOOM call.

Minutes taken by Miki Blumenthal, Administrative Assistant.

## **Business Matters:**

Member roll call was taken. Mark Perry welcomed new Rivers Coalition member, Martin Oyster Restoration Initiative (MORI).

Bianca Bernhard introduced herself as the representative of MORI and gave a brief overview of the organization, which is a student-led nonprofit based at South Fork High School. Its goal is to restore local oyster populations.

## **Presentation: More on Muck, From Dredging to Tiny Bubbles**

Jim Moir, Indian Riverkeeper, briefly spoke about the historical context of muck, and the fact that the DEP is funding various proposals for muck removal in Lake Okeechobee. He talked about some of the organizations and methods proposed, and Chris Stephan of Moleaer, Inc., the meeting's featured speaker.

Chris, Global Director of Surface Water for Moleaer, along with coworkers Erin Klores and Dr. Denises Devotta (via Zoom), gave a presentation on Moleaer's proposal to use nanobubbles to deliver oxygen in a cost-effective way to the bottom level of waterbodies where it is most needed.

*An extended Q&A session followed the presentations. The above presentations in its entirety can be seen at [www.riverscoalition.org](http://www.riverscoalition.org).*

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## Government & Agency Reports:

**Martin County:** Amy Eason, Martin County's Environmental Resource Engineer, gave updates on Martin County Forever, the Hutchinson Island Shore Protection Project, and the Indian Riverside Park Living Shoreline.

**City of Stuart:** Ruth Holmes, the city's environmental attorney, introduced Julie Bielecki, an engineer with the water consulting firm, Hazen and Sawyer. The City of Stuart has contracted with the firm to better understand CERP project capacities.

**FWMD:** Justin Nolte announced he had recently been appointed Bureau Chief of the Everglades and Estuaries Protection Bureau, which is a sister program to the CERP efforts. He gave updates on projects and upcoming meetings.

**USACE:** Maj. Cory Bell Lake stated the lake level is 11.87 feet, which is still above the water shortage band. He mentioned the muck removal project has been authorized but as of yet has received no funding. LOSOM 2.0 will begin holding public meetings in 2027. The After Action Review (AAR) of the lake recovery operations is expected to roll out in May.

**Lake O Update:** Caitlin Newcamp (via Zoom) updated the members on Lake Okeechobee levels, which are currently good for lake recovery. More burns are planned on the lake.

**State and Federal Legislation:** Gil Smart stated the Florida legislature will hold a special budget session the week of May 11. Florida Forever funding is up in the air. On the federal level, the Endangered Species Act bill was pulled.

Casey Kniffin mentioned later in the meeting that NOAA is facing a 30% budget cut in the President's proposal. Rivers Coalition did sign on to a letter advocating for NOAA funding.

## Coalition Reports:

**River Kidz:** Casey Kniffin mentioned that the River Kidz will be participating in the Earth Day soccer tournament on April 26 in J.V. Reed Park with the Hobe Sound Boys and Girls Club. They recently enjoyed the Environmental Science Center's Grandparents and VIP Day.

**Speakers Bureau:** Ed Killer will be speaking to the SMARTS club in May or June and has been reaching out to the Rotary Clubs in the area.

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

**Seagrass Update:** Mark Perry talked about ongoing seagrass programs by the Florida Oceanographic Society.

**Riverkeeper Update:** Jim Moir stated the Indian Riverkeeper has been busy with multiple speaking engagements. The IRK has joined the EPA lawsuit against DEP for microcystin health criteria acceptance.

## Member Comments and Announcements:

Eve Samples stated Friends of the Everglades is hosting a screening of the film *River of Grass* on May 6 at the Lyric Theatre. A Q&A session will be held afterwards.

Mark Perry mentioned 2 upcoming events at the Lyric Theatre:

1. A presentation on Oculina Bank Reef threats will be on June 2.
2. The International Ocean Film Festival will be on June 11.

Diane Goldberg brought up a recent lecture by Dr. Holly Sweat at the Smithsonian Marine Station and her discussion about pollution in inland waterways extending into the ocean.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:36 p.m.