

# Rivers Coalition

Meeting Minutes: May 28, 2026

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**Members via Zoom:** Greg Braun (Guardians of Martin County), Jeanette Hartzell (Humanists of the Treasure Coast), Annie Potts (Treasure Coast Rowing Club), Jim Wharton (Harbour Ridge Yacht Club), Carol Ann Leonard (Martin County Democratic Environmental Caucus), Tiare Fridrich (Save the Manatees Club), Kelli Doré (River Kidz), Paul Laura (HIPI) .

**Members in person:** Mark Perry-Valentina Miele-Anthony Brunet (Florida Oceanographic Society), Ed Killer (Florida Sportsman), Eve Samples-Mitchell Latzman (Friends of the Everglades), Gil Smart-Jason Bultman (VoteWater), Todd Thurlow (North River Shores Property Assn), Charles Grande (Pres. Council of H.I.), Jim Moir-Merritt Matheson (IRK), Casey Darling-Kniffin-Hazel Kniffin (River Kidz), Darrell Brand (Palm Cove Yacht Club), Paul Gray (Audubon Florida), Allen Herskowitz (Sailfish Point HOA), Rip Fisher (Sailfish Point Yacht Club), Lyn Aal-Magee (Audubon of Martin County), Paul Uttormark (Sandhill Cove), Gloria Gronowicz (League of Women Voters of MC), Tiffany Kincaid-Amanda Barry (Keep Martin Beautiful), Hannah Angelo-Walker (Captains for Clean Water).

**Non-members via Zoom:** Patricia Higginbotham (for Stacy Heatherington), Brynne Talas, Vinson Bannon, Ernie Barnett, Rosbet, Philip S., Pat LaBalbo, Vincent Encomio, Tom MacVicar, Elizabeth Pigman (SFWMD), Jen Smith, Robert Stephen Mahoney.

**Non-members in person:** Miki Blumenthal, Maj. Cory Bell (USACE), Thomas Hurley-Sherry McCorkle (SFWMD), Amy Eason-John Maehl (Martin County), Laura Giobbi-Ruth Holmes-Michael Giardino (City of Stuart), Will Gideonse, Linda Gideonse, Jim Packer, Howie Watkin, Clay Scherer, Sunny Walker, Carl Stewart, Susan Hemmes (Jupiter Island Garden Club), Greg Gardner, John Dial, Anne Cox, Alexander Cooke, Bianca Cooke, Barbara Osborn.

Mark Perry called the meeting to order at 11:01 am. There were 42 attendees in person, 20 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, Captains for Clean Water.

Hannah Angelo-Walker introduced herself as the representative of Captains for Clean Water and gave a brief overview of the organization.

## **Presentation: I Had No Idea the Lake Was Like That!**

Paul Gray, Science Coordinator for Audubon Florida, shared insights into the wildlife, plants, and natural beauty of Lake Okeechobee, reminding attendees that the lake is much more than the source of discharges that impact our estuaries.

*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:

**City of Stuart:** Laura Giobbi, City of Stuart Commissioner, discussed the City's position on a proposed recovery map.

**Martin County:** Amy Eason, Martin County's Environmental Resource Engineer, updated attendees on 2 projects: (1) the Martin County Shoreline Protection Project (which has already won a beach renourishment award), and (2) Martin Forever, whose next meeting will be on June 8.

**SFWMD:** Governing Board Member Thomas Hurley reported on the C-23 diversion canal project which will be opening soon, with a ribbon cutting planned for next week. The next SFWMD Governing Board Meeting will be on June 11.

**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.

**USACE:** Maj. Cory Bell stated that Lake Okeechobee level is still above the water shortage line, and he gave updates on other projects, including much removal, relief-well system, and blue-green algae testing. Public meetings on LOSOM 2.0 are still about 1-2 years out.

**State and Federal Legislation:** Gil Smart gave a Florida legislative update, mentioning that there is supposed to be a budget tomorrow. He listed some unfortunate budget cuts.

## Coalition Reports:

**River Kidz:** Casey Kniffin introduced her own River Kidz, Hazel. The River Kidz participated in the Hobe Sound Boys and Girls Club Earth Day celebration and are looking forward to a summer of adventure.

**Speakers Bureau:** Ed Killer reminded attendees how to request a speaker.

**Riverkeeper Update:** Jim Moir talked about the current dredging going on and the importance of coming up with a plan to address dredge spoils.

**Water Quality Report:** Mark Perry presented the latest weekly water quality report.

**Seagrass Update:** Todd Thurlow shared images from his website, [eyeonlakeo.com](http://eyeonlakeo.com), showing water shortage lines, current fires, and satellite images of Sailfish flats.

## Member Comments and Announcements:

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.

Jim Moir stated the Marine Resources Council has proposed July be designated as "Mangrove Month."

Greg Gardner, former Surfrider member, congratulated Friends of the Everglades on their work to close Alligator Alcatraz.

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