



Palm Beach County Water Resources Task Force



April 29, 2021
1:30pm

Clayton E. Hutcheson Agricultural Services Center (Exhibit Hall A)
559 North Military Trail, West Palm Beach, Florida 33415

Meeting Minutes

Water Resources Task Force Attendees

Seat ID	Member Name	Status	Alternate Name	Status
1	Monica Mayotte	Present	Vacant	
2	Vacant		Vacant	
3	Chip Block (Chair)	Present	Vacant	
4	Jason Haselkorn	Present*	Vacant	
5	Rachelle Litt (Vice Chair)	Present	Vacant	
6	Vacant		Vacant	
7	Gregg Weiss	Present	Melissa McKinlay	Absent
8	Vacant		Vacant	
9	Tommy Strowd	Absent	Vacant	
10	Vacant		Vacant	
11	Jay Steinle	Present	Mark Elsner	Present*
12	Vacant		Vacant	
13	Vacant		Vacant	
14	Michael Johnson	Absent	Greg Shafer	Absent

* attended remotely

1. Call to Order and Introductions

A quorum was observed and Chip Block (Jupiter Inlet Colony) called the meeting to order at approximately 1:30pm. The Palm Beach County (County) Water Resources Task Force (WRTF) members and alternates then introduced themselves. The attached attendee list provides both in-person and remote meeting attendees.

2. VOTING ITEM: Consider Approval of January 28, 2021 Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Jay Steinle (South Florida Water Management District or SFWMD) to approve the January 28, 2021 WRTF Meeting Minutes and seconded by Rachelle Litt (Palm Beach Gardens). The minutes were then approved unanimously by the WRTF.

3. Lake Worth Lagoon Update

Deb Drum (Palm Beach County) and Jeremy McBryan (Palm Beach County) provided a detailed presentation on the Lake Worth Lagoon (LWL) estuary, including its background, significance and

economic value, estuary and watershed characteristics and infrastructure, challenges, projects intended to improve the estuary, other related activities and opportunities for collaboration and support. The following are some of the key points communicated during the presentation:

- Palm Beach County has invested and continues to invest financial and staff resources on LWL estuary restoration activities and actively communicates information about these activities to stakeholders and the public.
- The protection and restoration of LWL habitat is critical to the protection and restoration of species biodiversity within the LWL.
- The LWL watershed is complex and diverse and the LWL estuary itself is ecologically important, provides recreational opportunities, and helps drive economic activity.
- The economic value of the Lake Worth Lagoon estuary is estimated at close to \$900 million per year.
- The Lake Worth Lagoon watershed is comprised of 30 different municipalities.
- The Lake Worth Lagoon is connected to Lake Okeechobee via the C-51 and L-8 Canals.
- Key challenges related to the Lagoon include shoreline hardening, stormwater discharges, limited flushing in the central lagoon and algae.
- There are numerous ongoing projects and initiatives intended to improve the Lake Worth Lagoon estuary including: restoring tidal flats, creating living shorelines, constructing islands, the Lake Worth Lagoon Initiative, the C-51 Canal Sediment Trap and the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP)
- With support from local, state and federal partners, the County has invested approximately \$88 million in LWL Estuary improvement projects.
- CERP envisioned 7 of the 68 components within the County, many of which were multi-objective, capturing and temporarily storing excess stormwater runoff during the wet season and delivering water to the people and ecosystems that need it during the dry season.
- Future Lake Okeechobee operations have the potential to impact the LWL estuary.
- Collective action, additional funding and interim and long-term regional water management projects are needed to benefit of the LWL estuary and other water resources in the County.

Mr. Block asked if decisions have been made on what County water and environmental projects will be funded with the federal relief dollars. Ms. Drum stated we have started internal conversations and Todd Bonlarron may be able to respond in details. Mr. Bonlarron stated that the County is awaiting direction from the Department of the Treasury regarding some vagueness in the legislation. More discussion and direction by our Board of County Commissioners is expected in the near future after staff prepare a plan. The County has not yet received the \$291 million assigned to the County but we expect that the funding would be available for certain water and wastewater projects. Mr. Block asked if there will be an opportunity to provide public input on the proposed projects and funding. Mr. Bonlarron stated that there will be an opportunities for public input at Board of County Commission meetings. Ms. Drum then stated that due to other County initiatives and activities, County staff will be able to quickly provide input regarding priority water and environmental projects.

Rachelle Litt asked if the County or the South Florida Water Management District is involved with the submerged land development issues near Riviera Beach. Ms. Drum stated yes, the County is involved and has been involved. For many years, the County's legislative priorities have included support for funding to acquire (on willing seller basis) environmentally-sensitive submerged lands within the LWL estuary. Mr. Steinle stated that he thought the development permit was withdrawn.

Monica Mayotte asked about the status of the County's proposed environmental bond referendum planned for 2020 that was put on hold due to the pandemic. Ms. Drum stated that the Board of County Commissioners will need to decide how to proceed with any future environmental bond referendums. Mr. Block stated that he expects many people to advocate for an environmental bond referendum to occur 2022.

4. Lake Worth Lagoon Management Plan Update

Mayra Ashton (Palm Beach County) provided an overview of the recently updated draft Lake Worth Lagoon Management Plan, which is open for public review until May 20, 2021. The Plan was designed to be viewed in digital format and includes many visually-pleasing figures, photos and infographics to educate the reader and convey critical information and historical trends. There are 25 action plans organized into six different categories; 13 of the action plans are new; many others have been updated or revamped since the previous Plan was published in 2013. Ms. Ashton reviewed the key components included in each action plan. Ms. Ashton stated that the goal is to address public comments and request plan adoption by the Board of County Commissioners by July 2021.

Ms. Ashton also provided a brief summary of the 2022 Lake Worth Lagoon Initiative Legislative Funding Request application period, which opens May 1, 2021 and closes July 31, 2021. Projects funded in previous years include septic to sewer, stormwater retrofits, water quality enhancement and large-scale restoration projects. Submitted projects are ranked by a selection committee and are then included in legislative funding requests submitted during the 2021 state legislative session. If project funding is provided by the legislature, it would be available on July 1, 2022, pending agreement with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Drew Martin asked how many Manatees have died in the LWL estuary and what is the seagrass coverage. Ms. Ashton stated that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is the lead agency with regard to manatees but the County does have a vegetation monitoring program and a law enforcement program to reduce impacts to manatees within the LWL estuary.

Mr. Block stated that we are fortunate to have Mr. McBryan and Ms. Drum in their respective roles at the County. Mr. Block said that we need a water resources plan that accounts for both the quality and supply of water going into the future and Mr. McBryan should be given the resources needed to develop a plan that is able to take advantage of the various state and federal grant opportunities and be ready to implement.

5. County Water Resources Manager Update

Jeremy McBryan (Palm Beach County) stated that the County is continuing to work on updates to the landscape irrigation conservation measures and water shortage ordinances with adoption planned for July/August 2021. Regarding flood maps, Mr. McBryan said that back in March, the County requested that FEMA delay their proposed appeal period, but FEMA never responded to this request. The 90-day appeal period started April 16 and ends July 15, 2021. County staff will brief the Board of County Commissioners on May 25 and obtain direction by the end of June. Regarding Lake Okeechobee, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is planning to release a balanced array of 5-6 alternatives on May 7. Consistent with previous input provided by the County to the USACE, the County continues to convey that modified Lake operations should not impact the County's investments in restoring the LWL estuary or negatively impact the region's water supply.

Regarding the Loxahatchee River, it appears the SFWMD is preparing to update the minimum flows and levels (MFL) rule. MFLs are to be maintained so that significant harm does not occur in the resource. Many stakeholders and the County are interested in making sure appropriate science is included during any MFL rule updates and there may be opportunities to improve the rule. The County has also started discussions with outside legal counsel to ensure that all legal requirements are maintained during any MFL revisions. Regarding the Loxahatchee River Local Initiative, the County's modeling files will be provided to SFWMD today and hopefully this will ignite further discussions on alternatives to the deep reservoir on Mecca. Mr. McBryan mentioned that a Loxahatchee River Management Plan Update is ongoing and there is a workshop in Stuart on June 28 that will allow stakeholders to engage and express interest in interim projects prior to implementation of the Loxahatchee River Watershed Restoration Project (LRWRP), that is planned to be implemented ~10 years from now. Continued pressure from stakeholders is needed to ensure Congressionally-authorized projects like the LRWRP are funded, implemented in a timely fashion and are not delayed.

Mr. Block asked if the County is working with Representatives Frankel and Mast to obtain appropriations for Everglades Restoration projects. Mr. McBryan said the short answer is yes. There have been some recent meetings with Rep. Frankel on regional water resources issues. The County's legislative affairs office engages on this topic and a legislative issues workshop is being hosted May 14 by the County Coalition for Responsible Management of Lake Okeechobee, St. Lucie and the Caloosahatchee Estuaries, and the Lake Worth Lagoon. Todd Bonlarron also mentioned that the County has been working with Rep. Frankel's office to prepare some appropriations requests and working with Rep. Mast's office regarding language in some proposed bills.

6. General Task Force Member Comments

Mr. Steinle stated that with a lack of rainfall, achieving the Loxahatchee River MFL is a challenge. Last year, SFWMD delivered supplemental flows via the M-Canal to Grassy Waters and a similar volume of water was sent from Grassy Waters to the Loxahatchee River. This year, there is more water available in the regional system than last year but now we have water quality issues. In

previous years, we should have been sending regional water to the Loxahatchee River. Mr. Steinle said that each year, the degradation of the river continues. Mr. Steinle said that interim measures are needed which will require partnerships and his hope is that we have a common understanding on the water that is needed.

Commissioner Weiss is very concerned about the water quality, particularly in the L-8 Canal, which is the source of water for Grassy Waters.

Poonam Kalkat (West Palm Beach) stated that last year, we worked very hard to get water through G-161 to the Loxahatchee River. Earlier this year, the City began coordinating with SFWMD again. In fact, the City had a meeting with SFWMD and the County yesterday to discuss this topic again. While it seems Grassy Waters could be operated in a way to deliver additional flows via G-161 to the Loxahatchee River, there remain regulatory constraints in the City's water use permit that would result in negative impacts to the water levels in the City's downtown lakes during this type of operation. The City is doing some additional technical modeling with the intent of providing to SFWMD and working collaboratively on a solution. This week, there is algae in the L-8 Canal and the City had to stop conveying L-8 Canal water to the City's M Canal. The City must provide drinking water to its residents but is also committed to sending water to the Loxahatchee River.

7. General Public Comments

Albrey Arrington (Loxahatchee River District) commended Ms. Drum and Mr. McBryan on the Lake Worth Lagoon presentation and the County's work to restore that tremendous resource. Mr. Arrington stated he appreciates efforts by the City of West Palm Beach and SFWMD to more formally ensure supplemental flows to the Loxahatchee River. Mr. Arrington stated he recently spoke to SFWMD staff and was told the Loxahatchee River MFL rule is not going to be revised, and was relieved at this news as he is happy with the current MFL. However, if and when the MFL is revised, it should include a complete scientific assessment.

Jeff Koons stated he was talking to the planning council about water quality 30 years ago in this same room; there is now an emergency in the Loxahatchee River; the City needs to get good water from the west; there was never a water quality component in the Loxahatchee River restoration plan; now with algae in the L-8 Canal, the City can't take that water; we have to figure out how we can make this happen; do we store more water in the County's natural areas?; do we manage septic tanks in the acreage better?; do we take a look at a treatment train in the M Canal?; it's shocking to see all the stuff we had and all the stuff we're not getting; we have the best water in Florida; the County deserves credit for stepping up and taking a look at this over the last few years; we lost the savings clause; why does this basing end up at the back end of what we should be doing; it's shocking to me; we have an emergency; we were rocking and rolling and now it's all gone; the County never put a stormwater fee in place which would have raised money to match up; if we had local money, we could do all this stuff; the north end of the County is going to get wrecked because they can't get water; how are we going to manage our own basin's water; the Army Corps is not coming to help us.

Lisa Interlandi (Everglades Law Center) thanked everyone for the very informative presentations. Ms. Interlandi stated that the slide listing the projects planned for Palm Beach County that have not happened is very compelling as it included a 48,000 acre-foot of storage, two stormwater treatment areas, and the maintenance of the C-51 Canal Sediment Trap – all of these projects could provide huge benefits to the Lake Worth Lagoon. We are seeing the impacts of not having these projects online, especially at some of the County’s restoration projects, due to having to deal with polluted water. Ms. Interlandi would like to see all stakeholders come together to identify which projects that we want and start to push forward with efforts to implement them. Local sources of funding (e.g. environmental bond) may be available soon that could be leveraged with state and federal funding sources. Regarding the Lake Okeechobee System Operating Manual, Palm Beach County’s wellfields are recharged by water moving through the Everglades, similar to Broward and Miami-Dade Counties, and just holding water in the lake does not recharge our wellfields.

Karen Marcus (Sustainable Palm Beach County) thanked Mr. McBryan and Ms. Drum for the presentations and stated that the projects talked about all need to get done. Ms. Marcus said that Sustainable Palm Beach County was very active in the environmental bond issue in 2020 and hopes that it will come back in 2022. Perhaps the manatee emergency in the Lagoon will prompt people to better recognize that their individual actions impact local water resources. Ms. Marcus stated that Mayor Kerner continues to express his willingness to support an environmental bond.

Drew Martin (Sierra Club) agrees with Mr. Koons that a stormwater fee is needed; because of the money coming from Washington, this is the time to do septic to sewer conversions; sea level rise will impact the ability of septic tanks to function; agree that the Loxahatchee River’s condition is an emergency; many years ago, a regional plan was developed; the Sierra Club does not support aquifer storage and recovery; the manatee issue is something we have to pay attention to; people are doing a terrible job on their landscaping; too much fertilizer; your water conservation actions are making a difference as less irrigation is being observed.

Mr. Block stated that he had a conversation with Mike Sole (FPL) and Palm Rauch (FPL) as they are very concerned about the Lagoon and manatees and he is hoping that FPL will lend their weight to doing everything we can to improve water quality in the Lagoon.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Block stated the next meeting is scheduled for July 29, 2021 with two additional 2021 meetings in September and October. Mr. McBryan mentioned that a joint meeting with Broward County is also tentatively scheduled for June 2; details will follow. Mr. Block said he was interested in having a joint meeting with Martin County in 2022. Mr. Steinle made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Ms. Mayotte. Mr. Block then adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:15pm.

**Palm Beach County Water Resources Task Force
April 29, 2021 Meeting Remote Attendee List**

Eric Anderson (Palm Beach County)
Jennifer Baez (Palm Beach County)
Verdenia Baker (Palm Beach County)
Chris Barlow (Black & Veatch)
Frank Bernardino (Anfield Consulting)
Julie Bishop (Palm Beach County)
Karen Brandon (AECOM)
Anne Cox (ecolo-G, Inc.)
Ernie Cox (Family Lands Remembered, LLC)
Brett Cunningham (Jones Edmunds)
Stephanie Dunham (Collective Water Resources, LLC)
Sussan Gash (Palm Beach County)
Nicole Gumbs (Palm Beach County)
Megan Houston (Palm Beach County)
Lisa Interlandi (Everglades Law Center)
Poonam Kalkat (City of West Palm Beach)
Lee Killinger (Florida Crystals)
Jake Leech (Palm Beach County)
Len Lindahl (MacVicar Consulting)
Debbie Madden (Gunster)
Suzanne Mechler (CDM Smith, Inc.)
Steve Memberg (GMAwater, LLC)
Matt Mitchell (Palm Beach County)
Julie Parham (City of Lake Worth Beach)
Rosemary Rayman (Lake Worth Drainage District)
Walt Reigner (Black & Veatch)
Joseph Schmidt (The Nature Conservancy)
Jeff Vollat (ADA Engineering, Inc.)
David Wiloch (Palm Beach County)
Brian Wood



Palm Beach County Water Resources Task Force
Meeting Sign-in Sheet
April 29, 2021
1:30 pm



Name	Organization	Email	Phone
MAYRA ASHTON	PBC - ERM	MASHTON@PBCgov.org	561-233-2451
Danna Adernaw White	PBC Mayor Kerner	dawhite@pbcgov.org	361-355-2203
Jeff Koons	ADVOCATE	JFKOONS@GMAIL.COM	561-512-8879
Rachelle Litt	CITY OF PBC	rlitt@pbcfl.com	361-635-9159
CHP BLOCK	JIC		
Sheryl Wood	MBDV	swood@mansonbolves.com	
Jeff Hiscock	Baxter + Noodman	jhiscock@baxterwoodman.com	561-688-6106
Richard Radcliffe	PBC League	RRADCLIFFE@PBCGOV.ORG	561 355-4484
Deb Drum	PBC ERM	ddrum@pbcgov.org	561-233-2400
Albrey Arrington	Lox River Dist.	calbrey@lreid.org	561-747-5700
Todd Bonarrows	PBC Admin	tbonarrows@pbcgov.org	
Drew Martin	Sierra club	DMartin@Gaol.com	561-533-6814
Ron Rice	PBC Extern	rrice@pbcgov.org	561 233 1712
JEREMY MCBRYAN	PBC	jmcbryan@pbcgov.org	561-355-4600