IRL COUNCIL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Minutes from the meeting of

August 11, 2023

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

Sebastian City Hall; Council Chambers, 1225 Main Street, Sebastian, FL 32958

Attendance: Joseph Earman, Rob Feltner, Aaron Watkins, Stacey Hetherington, Doug Bournique, Libby Pigman, Jeff Brower, Chris Dzadovsky

Guests: Jennifer DiMaio, Frank Catino, Yvonne Clayborne, Douglas Scheidt, Adam Blalock, Virginia Barker, Melanie Parker, Kathy LaMartina, Tom Carey, Charles Jacoby

1. **Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance** (Chris Dzadovsky, Chair)
   Mr. Dzadovsky called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. **Introductions**
   Mr. Dzadovsky led the introductions of Board members and staff members and welcomed Adam Blalock, Jennifer DiMaio and Brian Benton.

3. **Agenda Revisions** (Chris Dzadovsky, Chair)
   Dr. De Freese requested that the consent agenda be revised to include the following committee appointments:
   Emily Ralston, Florida Institution of Technology, to the STEM Advisory Committee, replacing Kevin Johnson.
   Brian Benton, City of Sebastian, to the Management Board, replacing Paul Carlisle.
   Jenny White, FWC, to the Management Board, replacing Julie Mitchell.

4. **Resolutions, Recognition, Letters and Awards** (Chris Dzadovsky, Chair)
   None

5. **Public Comment**
   Charles Stadelman, City of Sebastian Natural Resource Board, introduced himself. He explained that the Natural Resource Board works on similar issues. After thanking the IRLNEP, an invitation to attend any meetings was issued.

6. **Water Quality Reports**
   a. Northern and Central Lagoon (Dr. Charles Jacoby, SJRWMD)

      Dr. Chuck Jacoby reported that the data sondes reported little change in water depth. The salinity has remained in the seasonal typical range, Vero slightly higher due to proximity to inlets, and Mosquito Lagoon higher due to evaporation. June and July showed a dip in salinity at Vero from precipitation, which also triggered a rise in tannins. Overall, lagoon water temperatures are high. Warmer water does not hold as much oxygen and stresses aquatic life. Some shallower areas have experienced fish kills due to low dissolved oxygen. Chlorophyll-a has been relatively low, though isolated spikes have occurred, *Pyrodinium bahamense* and *Pseudo-nitschia* have been noted and moving south. Secchi depths reveal clear water, with some areas clear to the bottom. An area near Melbourne shows an increase in chlorophyll-a, which coincides with shallow Secchi depth.

Mosquito Lagoon is showing up to 90% of seagrass coverage at the southern end, and the manatees have found it. The Northern Indian River Lagoon has patchy areas of seagrass coverage; moving south, less seagrass has been recorded. *Caulerpa* is dominant in Banana River Lagoon, Northern and North Central Indian River Lagoon. *Halophila decipiens* is present in low amounts in the South Central Indian River Lagoon. Dr. Jacoby stated that seagrass is less affected by rising water temperatures, while increased turbidity can cause damage.

b. Southern Lagoon (Dr. Melanie Parker, SFWMD)

Mrs. KJ Ayres-Guerra, for Dr. Melanie Parker, reported that the data provided covers the period up to July 30, 2024, and includes weekly averages from the week of July 24 - 30, 2023. Over the past few weeks, the main source of freshwater inflow into the St. Lucie Estuary has been the Tidal Basin, as Lake Okeechobee has not released any water since mid-April.

During the most recent 7-day period, salinity levels increased across all sites. At HR1, salinities on the surface dipped into the lower stressful range but remained within the optimal range on the bottom. Meanwhile, the US1 Bridge site maintained optimal levels on both the surface and bottom. At the A1A bridge site, salinities were within the optimal range on the surface and in the upper stressful range on the bottom.

Although salinities were trending upward at the US1 site, they decreased slightly towards the end of last week. While there was a drop in late June, the levels quickly recovered and have since remained within the optimal range since July. The recruitment rate for juvenile oyster (spat) increased in April, indicating that the spring oyster spawning season had begun. Rates have been low over the past few months, possibly due to rainfall events causing brief declines in salinity and/or washing the larvae out of the estuary. Recruitment is continuing through the summer months, and another peak is expected this fall.

Based on the seagrass monitoring results, there was an average of 5% percent cover during the wet season, but it went down to 2.5% during the dry season. This low percentage is probably due to low salinity, lack of light, and high wave energy bouncing off the seawalls that line the estuary. During the wet season, *Halophila johnsonii* was the dominant species, with *Halophila decipiens* also present. In contrast, *Halodule wrightii* was the only species present during the dry season.

7. Presentation

A summary of the new *"Indian River Lagoon Protection Program"* (Governor DeSantis EO 23-06)
Adam Blalock, Deputy Secretary for Ecosystem Restoration, FL Department of Environmental Protection

Mr. Blalock reviewed the Indian River Lagoon Protection Program. The plan includes BMAPs and RAPs, which will be evaluated every five years for compliance, including 5-year milestones, and identify strategies to achieve water quality standards. The plan establishes a comprehensive water quality monitoring network and prioritizes research on water quality, ecosystem restoration, and seagrass impacts and restoration. Standards for onsite sewage treatment and disposal systems, wastewater facility upgrades, and Agricultural Nonpoint Sources, along with funding commitments, were addressed. Comprehensive planning for local governments includes the insertion of BMAP projects, sanitary sewers, and wastewater treatment. Grant opportunities are available and have been expanded. The grants portal is open until August 31, 2023.

8. IRLNEP Management Conference Committee Reports

a. Management Board Report (Tom Carey)
Mr. Tom Carey, Management Board Chair, reported that 28 members and 9 guests attended the August 8th meeting; potential new members were welcomed. Dr. Austin Fox presented the findings from a glyphosate project funded by a Small Grant, and this led to a robust discussion. All new business items were recommended for the IRL Council Board of Directors to approve. Mr. Cary shared that the International Coastal Clean-up will take place on September 16, 2023.

b. STEM Advisory Committee (Chuck Jacoby)
Dr. Chuck Jacoby, STEM Committee Chair, reported that the presentation by Dr. Austin Fox led to discussions. All new business items were met with approval. The committee recommended changing the RFP for Water Quality by reducing the amount by $100,000 and moving the amount to the Science and Innovation RFP. The goal is that by investing in science, the water quality will improve.

c. Citizens' Advisory Committee (Frank Catino)
Captain Frank Catino, Citizens Advisory Committee Chair, reported that five members were in attendance at the August 10th meeting; this did not constitute a quorum. Three guests attended. Under Old Business, the committee discussed a webinar workshop for Grant Writing. The goal is to optimize the quality of future grant submissions from smaller organizations. The three grant writers will participate in the webinar. The New Business agenda items were approved with the recommendation to transfer funds from Water Quality to Science and Innovation. Katherine Harris, a recipient of a Small Grant, was present to discuss the Virtual Reality Project she developed with the Marine Discovery Center on Oyster Reef Exploration. Members were able to wear a virtual reality headset and experience an Indian River Lagoon oyster reef in 360 degrees.

9. Consent Agenda

Approval of IRL Council Board of Directors Meeting Minutes from May 12, 2023.
Requested Action: Approve Consent Agenda.

MOTION WAS MADE BY STACEY HETHERINGTON TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA, INCLUDING THE CONSENT AGENDA REVISON. SECONDED BY JOSEPH EARMAN. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

10. Old Business

None

11. New Business

a. 2022 Independent Audit Report and Findings (Introduction by Daniel Kolodny, Presentation by Yvonne Clayborne of Carr, Riggs, and Ingram)
Ms. Clayborne presented the final report and findings of the 2022 Independent Audit Report. The delay in audit completion was due to needing clarification regarding the expenditure of funds for a federal award that was issued in the following FY. It was determined that the Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards to FY2023 did not trigger the single audit. The report confirmed a clean audit. However, regarding the timing of the state releasing the license plate revenue, a comment was raised, and it was determined that an adjusting journal entry be made to clarify the matter. Mr. Kolodny received high praise from the Executive Director and committee members for his valuable contributions to the success of the audit.

Requested Action: Motion to accept the audit report.

MOTION WAS MADE BY JOSEPH EARMAN TO ACCEPT THE AUDIT REPORT. MOTION SECONDED BY STACEY HETHERINGTON. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

b. FY2024 EPA BIL Workplan (Daniel Kolodny)
Mr. Kolodny stated that the process to receive EPA funding work plans must be submitted. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) plan covers three projects and activities. The continuation of the seagrass nurseries, the contract with Diversity of Thought and priority communities as outlined in the long-term equity plan.
Requested Action: Motion to approve the FY2024 EPA BIL Workplan and authorize staff to submit the plan to EPA.

MOTION WAS MADE BY JOSEPH EARMAN. TO APPROVE THE FY2024 BIL WORKPLAN AND AUTHORIZE STAFF TO SUBMIT THE PLAN TO EPA. SECONDED BY ROB FELTNER MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

c. FY 2024 and FY 2025 Request or Proposals (RFPs) Duane De Freese)

Dr. De Freese reviewed the timeline for releasing the RFPs. Staff have reviewed the criteria and made minor changes dealing with tightening technical criteria. The Management Board, STEM Advisory Committee and the Citizens Advisory Committee made the recommendation to accept staff-suggested changes. The STEM and Citizens Advisory Committees recommended moving $100,000 from Water Quality to Science and Innovation on the premise of investing in science to improve future water quality.

Dr. De Freese reminded the Board of the ability to change allocated fund levels upon reviewing the scored and ranked proposals at the February meeting. Due to the extraordinary funding opportunity available through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Agency and the fact that proposals submitted to this program will not be required to have a match, Dr. De Freese speculated that a small number of Water Quality proposals will be received because the IRLNEP does require a match. The staff will not bring forward any proposals that have scored 70% or lower in any category. Work is still needed on the Priority Community RFP; staff will present this in November. A match will not be needed for this RFP.

Requested Action: Motion to authorize staff to develop and release RFPs for the FY 2025 timeframe, review and rank proposals and return to the Management Conference for funding approval.

MOTION WAS MADE BY DOUG BOURNIQUE TO AUTHORIZE STAFF TO DEVELOP AND RELEASE RFPS FOR THE FY 2025 TIMEFRAME, REVIEW AND RANK PROPOSALS AND RETURN TO THE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE FOR FUNDING APPROVAL INCLUDING MOVING $100,000 FROM THE WATER QUALITY RFP TO THE SCIENCE AND INNOVATION RFP. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY STACEY HETHERINGTON. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

d. FY 2023 Final Budget Amendment (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny reviewed the adjustments to the FY 2023 Final Budget Amendment. This included changes in funding sources for some projects and incorporating the audited fund balance in the budget. By reconciling this balance to prior FY projects in progress, total expenditures increased. A decrease in administrative costs was due to the single audit not occurring.

Requested Action: Motion to approve the amendment to the FY 2023 Final Budget by Resolution 2023-04, pursuant to Florida statutes.

MOTION WAS MADE BY STACEY HETHERINGTON TO APPROVE THE AMENDMENT TO THE FY 2023 FINAL BUDGET BY RESOLUTION 2023-04, PURSUANT TO FLORIDA STATUTES. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY DOUG BOURNIQUE. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

e. FY 2024 Final Budget Amendment (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny reported FY 2024 Final Budget Amendment adjustments to include an increase of funding from EPA Section 320. Other changes included an increase in travel to the FY 2023 level and an increase in rents and leases to accommodate a potential new lease with the City of Sebastian.

Requested Action: Motion to approve the Amendment to the FY 2024 Final Budget by Resolution 2023-05, pursuant to Florida Statutes.

MOTION MADE BY STACEY HETHERINGTON TO APPROVE THE AMENDMENT TO THE FY 2024 FINAL BUDGET BY RESOLUTION 2023-05, PURUANT TO FLORIDA STATUTES. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY ROB FELTNER. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

f. Resolution in support of the South Florida Water Management District and the St. Johns River Water Management District proposing hydrologic reconnection of the Central and South Florida Flood Control Project. (Duane De Freese)

Dr. De Freese explained the opportunity that would join the two water districts and private property in a transformational project. 7,800 acres would hold water, and 120,000 ac-ft of water would be diverted from the lagoon along with the corresponding nutrients. The St. John's River Water

Management District and the South Florida Water Management District would have the ability to move water north and south as needed for customer use. The language in the resolution has been reviewed by both water management districts as well as the DEP. Currently, the water in the prescribed area flows into the lagoon and is lost from use.

Requested Action: Motion to approve a resolution in support of the proposed hydrologic reconnection of the Central and South Florida Flood Control Project.

MOTION WAS MADE BY DOUG BOURNIQUE TO APPROVE A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED HYDROLOGIC RECONNECTION OF THE CENTRAL AND SOUTH FLORIDA FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT. SECONDED BY STACEY HETHERINGTON. MOTION PASSED UNAMOULSLY.

12. IRLNEP Staff Reports:

a. Communications Update (IRLNEP Team)

- Website, Information Technology, and Social Media (KJ Ayres-Guerra)
  Mrs. KJ Ayres-Guerra reviewed highlights from this quarter's activities. Reviving an Ecosystem: Creating Capacity for Seagrass Restoration appeared in ECO magazine. Attending the ESRI User Conference was eminently informative, and the presentation was well received. Next up is the completion of the project storyline, database and dashboard.

  Mrs. Ayres-Guerra also presented the communications report on behalf of Ms. Kathy Hill. Social media numbers continue to rise. The viral video of the juvenile marsh rabbit has reached 6.5 million people. A billboard campaign for the new IRL license plate will start with three locations: Ormand Beach and Cocoa, both on US-1 and West Melbourne at I-95. The Community Engagement Coordinators continue to interact with local government and community meetings, attend events and fieldwork projects and engage the public in presentations.

- Northern IRL Community Engagement (Jessy Wayles)
  Ms. Jessy Wayles reported on developing partnerships within the region, as well as her representation at NERT/ECERT Steering Committee meetings. Presentation highlights included the Trailer Trash Podcast and a WFTV-9 appearance on the topic of horseshoe crab monitoring. Ms. Wayles continues to support ShORE (Sharing Our Research with Everyone), along with spending 15 days doing habitat fieldwork.

- Central IRL Community Engagement (Heather Stapleton)
  Ms. Heather Stapleton discussed various opportunities for community involvement. She attended 13 lagoon-centered events and had several speaking requests centered around Earth Day. She celebrated the actual day of Earth Day with the City of Sebastian at Riverview Park. Everyone enjoyed using and signing the "Lagoon Friendly selfie frames," a proven behavior change tool. She had 14 days of fieldwork with Brevard Zoo's Restore Our Shores and FOS' Seagrass Matting and Citizen Science Seagrass Network Monitoring.

- Southern IRL Community Engagement (Caleta Scott)
  Ms. Caleta Scott described the various engagement activities. One highlight was earning Florida Master Naturalist certification in Coastal Restoration, and another was becoming a Martin County Water Ambassador. Ms. Scott established sponsorships, participated in Earth Day Celebrations and spent 21 days doing habitat fieldwork.

b. IRL Project Update (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Dan Kolodny reported 50 CCMP Projects/Activities in progress. Three Small Grant projects were completed. An overview of the following was provided: ORCA: One Health Fish Monitoring Citizen Science Project, Florida Institute of Technology: Impacts of glyphosate on seagrass growth and

nutrient cycling; informing aquaculture and restoration efforts to improve outcomes and Marine Discovery Center: Virtual Reality – Oyster Reef Exploration.

c. Dr. Duane De Freese shared FY 2023 milestones. Standouts included 50 projects funded and administered, record expanding funding, expanded program capacity and completion of strategic planning. Various events, meetings, task force participation, and workshops were attended. Looking ahead to FY 2024, 17+ projects are currently funded and in contract development. The NOAA Habitat Restoration Grant proposal is being modified and will be resubmitted. The new IRL specialty license plate campaign is in progress. The One Lagoon Habitat Restoration workplan is to be completed. Two new atmospheric deposition stations are planned for construction. Community listening sessions, webinars, and priority community engagement plans are being finalized.

Requested Action: No motion is required. Information only.

13. IRL Council Member Reports

Stacey Heatherington requested the Board draft a letter thanking Jacqui Thurlow-Lippish for her service to the IRL Council Board of Directors. Martin County is averaging 1,000 septic-to-sewer conversions per year. She thanked the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for partnering on funding; the cost of hook-up is increasing. County residents are facing hardships due to the costs.

Doug Bournique thanked Adam Blalock for attending the meeting.

Jeff Brower gave thanks to Adam Blalock and his staff for the amount and quality of work on the Indian River Lagoon Protection Program. Suzanne Scheiber, Citizens Advisory Committee member, has donated and maintains a water goat; the primary debris kept from entering the lagoon is single-use plastics. Mr. Brower thanked Tom Carey for participating on the Management Board and gave kudos to Diezel DePew, mayor of Edgewater, for taking the initiative to eliminate partially treated wastewater from being released into the lagoon. Many single-family homes and a sewage package plant have recently been converted in Volusia County. The Advanced Wastewater Treatment Facility at Oakhill is moving forward. A permit is needed for Stetson University to evaluate the in-tank BioMaze™ unit to treat septic waste. Mike Sullivan, a clam farmer, is expanding and wants to develop seafood production in the area. Volusia County is increasing its conservation corridor.

Libby Pigman announced that the Python Challenge is underway. The 2021 contest saw 231 invasive snakes removed from the area. Since 2000, 18,000 Burmese Pythons have been removed.

Aaron Watkins is proud to implement the Governor's and Legislature's historic support and funding for the Indian River Lagoon Protection Program. Mr. Watkins thanked Mr. Blalock and commended him and his staff for the work done.

Rob Feltner gave a report from Virginia Barker highlighting Save Our Indian River Lagoon (SORIL) projects from this past quarter. 16 leaking laterals have been repaired, 19 single-family homes connected, 13 septic upgrades and many home agreements have been executed. The Brevard Zoo's Restore Our Shores program reported that 19,000 oysters have been grown in gardens, and clam gardens have shown a 29% survival rate.

Joe Earman reported that Moorhen Marsh will have a grand opening ceremony once the weather cools down. The removal of derelict vessels is currently in progress, while the vulnerable areas for septic to sewers are being assessed. Indian River County is creating a new department that will oversee the beach, lagoon, stormwater and environment with a Natural Resources Director at the helm.

Chris Dzadovsky asked for input for shoreline protection on private property as the west side of the lagoon erosion will have an effect on a public road. Funding is needed for the property owners to address this issue. Mr. Dzadovsky conveyed his thanks to the IRLNEP staff and Mr. Blalock.

14. **IRL Council – Next Meeting Announcement** (Chris Dzadovsky, Chair)
The IRL Board of Directors meeting will be held on Friday, November 17, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. at Sebastian City Hall, Council Chamber, 1225 Main Street, Sebastian, FL

15. **Adjourn**
The meeting adjourned at 12:52 p.m.

NOTE: If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, he or she will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, he or she may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes (2014).

Pursuant to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person requiring special accommodations to participate in this workshop/meeting is asked to advise the agency at least 48 hours before the workshop/meeting by contacting: Erin Bergman at (314) 347-5854. If you are hearing or speech impaired, please contact the agency using the Florida Relay Service, 1(800) 955-8771 (TDD) or 1(800) 955-8770 (Voice). For more information, you may contact: Erin Bergman, IRL Council, 1235 Main St, Sebastian, FL 32958, (314)347-5854, or by email at bergman@irlcouncil.org.