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# IRL COUNCIL STEM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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*Minutes from the meeting of*

**Tuesday, May 9, 2023**

**1:30 PM**

*Up the Creek Farms, 3590 Valkaria Road, Grant-Valkaria, FL 32950*

**Attendance:** Kyle Bartow, Erin Cartmill, Hyun Jung Cho, David Cox, Bob Day, TJ Fridrich, Frank Golan, Dennis Hanisak, Chuck Jacoby, Dan Macchiarella, Dale McGinnis, Rich Paperno, Melanie Parker, Valerie Paul, Mitch Roffer, Leesa Souto, Wendy Swindell, Linda Walters, Edie Widder, Kelly Young

**Guests:** Emily Ralston, Jeff Eble, Melissa Meisenburg, Stacy Cecil, Ashley Lingwood, Elizabeth Kelly, Paul Sacks, Tyler Dean, Lauren Hall, Doug Scheidt, Tom Price, Kai Rains, Edgar Guerron-Orejuela, Maegan Wettlaufer, Kelly McGee, Virginia Barker, Tess Sailor-Tynes

**1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance** (Dr. Chuck Jacoby, Chair)

The meeting was called to order by Chuck Jacoby at 1:35 p.m. who led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2. Introductions** (Dr. Chuck Jacoby, Chair)

Chuck Jacoby led roundtable introductions, including new members and guests.

**3. Agenda Revisions** (Dr. Chuck Jacoby, Chair)

No agenda revisions were brought forward.

**4. Minutes Approval** (Dr. Chuck Jacoby, Chair)

Minutes of February 7, 2023.

**Requested Action:** Approval of Minutes from the STEM meeting on February 7, 2023

MOTION WAS MADE BY MITCH ROFFER TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 7, 2023. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY BOB DAY. MOTION PASSED.

**5. Public Comment**

None

**6. Water Quality Reports**

a. Northern IRL (Dr. Chuck Jacoby, SJWMD)

Dr. Jacoby reported this quarter's six continuous data sondes did not report any significant changes in water levels, as there were no weather events to note. Salinity levels remained normal, but temperatures did experience some typical winter dips. Chlorophyll levels in the central lagoon were relatively low, while the Cocoa area showed a short-lived increase. Dissolved oxygen levels remained at an acceptable level throughout the entire quarter. 700 camera drops indicated some seagrass recovery.

b. Southern IRL (Dr. Melanie Parker SFWMD)

Dr. Parker reported recent heavy rains caused the Tidal Basin to experience the highest freshwater inflows to the IRL, while Lake Okeechobee's releases took place from January 21 to

April 14. The past few weeks have seen a slight decrease in salinity levels at all three monitoring sites, but they have remained within the optimal range since December 2022. As usual, the juvenile oyster (spat) recruitment rates were low from November 2022 to March 2023 but started increasing in April, indicating the beginning of the spawning season. Live oyster densities have been stable over the past two years, with an increase in densities from April 2022 to April 2023. Sincere gratitude to Lauren Hall of SJRWMD for sharing the seagrass maps and data. Since 2009, there has been an overall loss of 25% of seagrass in the SFWMD portion of the IRL, with a decrease of about 9% in acreage from 2019 to 2021. This month, SJRWMD will conduct a large-scale seagrass monitoring effort, dividing the southern IRL into six segments with about 30 randomly selected stations each. The measurements will include percent cover, canopy height, and water quality.

## 7. Presentations

### ***Update on How Knowledge of Land Use Can Inform Water Quality Restoration in the IRL***

(Dr. Kai Rains and Edgar Guerron-Orejuela, University of South Florida).

Dr. Kai Rains presented a restoration prioritization tool that can effectively indicate changes in land use. This tool is designed to assist in the identification of targets for restoration, preservation, and mitigation. It can also set queries and is easily expandable to include additional screening layers and data. The goal is to align the tool with stakeholder needs and regional priorities, thereby making it simpler for local governments to identify and target areas to conserve. Attendees discussed the possibility of expanding the tool's focus beyond wetlands to include septic to sewer prioritization, highlighting the tool's versatility. The presentation was well-received and ignited a dialogue among the participants.

### ***IRL Monitoring Plan***

(Dr. Dennis Hanisak, FAU-Harbor Branch)

In the presentation, Dr. Dennis Hanisak outlined the IRLNEP Monitoring Plan to establish a comprehensive monitoring network aligned with the Vital Sign categories of Water Quality, Healthy Habitats, and Living Resources as outlined in the CCMP. The plan considers existing resources, identifies data gaps, and addresses emerging needs while providing actionable recommendations.

## 8. IRL Seagrass Restoration Next Steps

(Panel Discussion with Dr. Chuck Jacoby, SJRWMD; Dr. Dennis Hanisak, FAU-Harbor Branch; Tess Sailor-Tynes, Marine Discovery Center)

Dialogue among the panelists included an explanation of closed vs open systems of seagrass nurseries, the ability to obtain and supply sustainable donor material, creating healthy habitats and the need to develop supportable technology. Sharing data, successes and failures was deemed crucial. Group discussions among members included topics of fragmentation, the use of drones, sediment quality, and creating a seagrass task force.

## 9. Old Business

None

## 10. New Business

- a. One Lagoon Monitoring Plan Final Draft (EPA Concurrence Document) (Duane De Freese)  
[One Lagoon Monitoring Plan Draft](#)

Dr. Duane De Freese expressed his gratitude to Dennis Hanisak, David Heuberger, and their team for their outstanding work in completing the contract project. The plan underwent a thorough peer review process, resulting in six valuable recommendations and the identification of gaps. The capability to update monitoring maps was also noted.

**Requested Action:** Motion to recommend that the IRL Council Board of Directors adopt the One Lagoon Monitoring Plan and authorize staff to submit the plan to EPA for review and certification. If revisions are requested by EPA, the IRL Council Board of Directors authorizes staff to make recommended changes and finalize the document.

MOTION WAS MADE BY BOB DAY TO RECOMMEND THAT THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ADOPT THE ONE LAGOON MONITORING PLAN AND AUTHORIZE STAFF TO SUBMIT THE PLAN TO EPA FOR REVIEW AND CERTIFICATION. IF REVISIONS ARE REQUESTED BY EPA, THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS AUTHORIZES STAFF TO MAKE RECOMMENDED CHANGES AND FINALIZE THE DOCUMENT. MOTION SECONDED BY WENDY SWINDELL. MOTION PASSED.

b. Long-term strategy for use of BIL Funds (EPA Required Document) (Duane De Freese)

Dr. Duane De Freese outlined the methods employed to create the Priority Communities classification for the IRL Watershed included in the strategy. These methods involved the use of various tools and documents, including detailed maps. The directed RFP is under development and it is anticipated to be issued in early 2024.

**Requested Action:** Motion to recommend that the IRL Council Board of Directors adopt the long-term strategy for use of BIL funds and authorize staff to submit the strategy to EPA for review and certification. The EPA deadline is on or before June 1, 2023. If revisions are requested by EPA, the IRL Council Board of Directors authorizes staff to make recommended changes, finalize the document, and resubmit to EPA.

MOTION WAS MADE BY LINDA WALTERS TO RECOMMEND THAT THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ADOPT THE LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR USE OF BIL FUNDS AND AUTHORIZE STAFF TO SUBMIT THE STRATEGY TO EPA FOR REVIEW AND CERTIFICATION. THE EPA DEADLINE IS ON OR BEFORE JUNE 1, 2023. IF REVISIONS ARE REQUESTED BY EPA, THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS AUTHORIZES STAFF TO MAKE RECOMMENDED CHANGES, FINALIZE THE TH DOCUMENT, AND RESUBMIT TO EPA. MOTION SECONDED BY BOB DAY. MOTION PASSED.

c. FY 2024 Final Budget (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Dan Kolodny noted some minor modifications, including an increase in administrative services to accommodate the extra workload undertaken by Special Services District due to an uptick in IRLNEP staffing. SDS negotiated a higher interest rate on behalf of the IRL Council.

**Requested Action:** Motion to recommend that the IRL Council Board of Directors review and adopt the Final Budget for FY 2024 by Resolution 2023-02, pursuant to Florida Statutes.

MOTION WAS MADE BY WENDY SWINDELL TO RECOMMEND THAT THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS REVIEW AND ADOPT THE FINAL BUDGET FOR FY 2024 BY RESOLUTION 2023-02, PURSUANT TO FLORIDA STATUTES. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY LINDA WALTERS. MOTION PASSED.

d. Small Grants (Kathy Hill)

Ms. Kathy Hill shared that 19 proposals were submitted. Nine scored 70 or higher. One proposal eligible for an award was withdrawn; this allowed five proposals to be awarded within the budgeted amount. During the meeting, the funding of the three proposals that scored above 70 was discussed, as well as one proposal that scored 69.9. The CAC supported funding all four proposals and recommended them to the BOD.

**Requested Actions:** Motion to recommend that the IRL Council Board of Directors accept IRLNEP Management Conference recommendations, approve the final ranked list of proposals, and fund the top proposals contingent and consistent with available funds and budgetary authority. Authorize staff to negotiate and enter into contract agreements with those applicants.

MOTION MADE BY BOB DAY TO RECOMMEND THAT THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACCEPT IRLNEP MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS, APPROVE THE FINAL RANKED LIST OF PROPOSALS AND FUND THE TOP PROPOSALS CONTINGENT AND CONSISTENT WITH AVAILABLE FUNDS AND BUDGETARY AUTHORITY. AUTHORIZE STAFF TO NEGOTIATE AND ENTER INTO CONTRACT AGREEMENTS WITH THOSE APPLICANTS. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY LESSA SOUTO. MOTION PASSED.

- e. Resolution to support East Central Florida Regional Planning Council in seeking funding from the Military Installation Resilience Review Program. (Duane De Freese)

**Requested Action:** Motion to recommend that the IRL Council Board of Directors accept the STEM Committee recommendations to adopt Resolution 2023-03, supporting ECFRPC's efforts to seek funding from the MIRRP and other coastal resilience initiatives.

MOTION WAS MADE BY LINDA WALTERS TO RECOMMEND THAT THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACCEPT THE STEM COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 2023-03, SUPPORTING ECFRPC'S EFFORTS TO SEEK FUNDING FROM THE MIRRP AND OTHER COASTAL RESILIENCE INITIATIVES. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY WENDY SWINDELL. MOTION PASSED.

## 11. IRLNEP Staff Reports

- a. Community Engagement Report (Kathy Hill)

Ms. Kathy Hill reported a significant increase in social media engagement thanks to the efforts of the three Community Engagement Coordinators. Brevard County has been ranked highly with cities with the most engagement, based on the metrics. Facebook followers are largely individuals aged 45 and above, while Instagram followers are mostly under 45 years old.

- b. Information Technology and Data Science Update (KJ Ayres)

Ms. KJ Ayres-Guerra discussed the completed Maps & Database for Equity Plan to identify priority communities in the IRL watershed. A standard for publishing all Metadata has been established. Past Project Information has been organized and posted. The ArcGIS Online Data Hub has been successfully developed, and multiple datasets have been integrated. Future tasks will include Internal & External Project Map, an editorial in ECO – Environmental, Coastal & Offshore Magazine, and reorganizing the website.

- c. IRL Project Update (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Daniel Kolodny reported that the end of Quarter 2 of FY 2023 had 49 CCMP Projects/Activities in progress. Additionally, there was one CCMP Project pending, but no projects were completed during the quarter.

- d. Executive Director Report (Duane De Freese)

Dr. Duane De Freese reported the EDC Space Coast feasibility study has gained significant momentum and support. The Florida Legislative budget has been released, and it includes funding requests for various projects aimed at improving the Indian River Lagoon. Ms. Kathy Hill and Mr. Dan Kolodny recently represented the IRLNEP in Washington, D.C. at the EPA Transformational Coastal Management Event. Ms. Hill delivered a presentation and participated in a panel discussion. Both the House and Senate Appropriation letters have been submitted with bipartisan support seeking funding for NEPs. Although the IRLNEP did not receive the NOAA funding grant, the proposal was ranked in the highest tier. An analysis of the project funding breakdown was presented, and it has been determined that future proposals should align with NOAA's traditional historic priorities, which focus on designated habitats.

**12. Final Comments (Committee, Staff, Public)**

Dr. De Freese thanked members of the STEM Advisory Committee for their support while dealing with health issues.

**13. Next Meeting**

Tuesday, August 8, 2023, at 1:30 p.m.

Up the Creek Farms, 3590 Valkaria Road, Grant-Valkaria, FL 32950

**14. Adjourn**

Chuck Jacoby adjourned the meeting at 4:35 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 at 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](mailto:bergman@irlcouncil.org).*