# IRL COUNCIL
## STEM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

*Minutes from the meeting of*

**February 6, 2024**

**1:30 PM**

*Historic Sebastian Elementary School, 1235 Main Street, Sebastian, FL 32958*

**Attendance:** Aaron Adams, Kyle Bartow, Erin Cartmill, Hyun Jung Cho, David Cox, Bob Day, Tiare Fridrich, Lauren Hall, Dennis Hanisak, Kris Kaufman, Lisa Krimsky, Wendy Noke-Durden, Melanie Parker, Valerie Paul, Emily Ralston, Mitch Roffer, Loraé Simpson, Wendy Swindell, Chad Truxall, Kelly Young

**Guests:** Stacy Cecil, Peter Eggert, Elizabeth Kelly, Olivia Escandell, Meagan Wettlaufer, Erin McDevitt, Doug Scheidt, Tim Price, Lauren Kleiman

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

   Dr. Jacoby called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

   Dr. Jacoby led the group introductions.

3. **Election of Officers** (Kathy Hill)

   Ms. Hill reviewed the election process.

   **Requested Action:** Elect Chair and Vice Chair for Calendar Year 2024 for the STEM Advisory Committee.

   MOTION WAS MADE BY BOB DAY TO ELECT CHUCK JACOBY AS CHAIR. THE MOTION WAS SECONDED BY LISA KRIMSKY. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. MOTION WAS MADE BY BOB DAY TO ELECT CHAD TRUXALL AS VICE CHAIR. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY KELLY YOUNG. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

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

   No agenda revisions were brought forward.

5. **Consent Agenda** (Dr. Chuck Jacoby, Chair)

   a. Approve November 14, 2023, STEM minutes
   b. Approve revised MOA with Brevard Zoo "Dollar for Conservation"
   c. Approve Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Amendment
   d. Approve Fiscal Year 2025 EPA Workplan
   e. Approve Fiscal Year 2025 Tentative Budget

Mr. Kolodny noted a correction in the text to the Fiscal Year 2025 Tentative Budget: 1c. corrected from Science and Innovation to Community-Based Restoration.

**Requested Action:** Motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

MOTION WAS MADE BY BOB DAY TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.
MOTION WAS SECONDED BY LAUREN HALL. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**6. Public Comment**

No public comment was made.

**7. Water Quality Reports**

a. Northern and Central IRL (Lauren Hall, SJRWMD)

Ms. Hall reported that the data collection is from the continuous monitoring sondes in the north and central lagoon areas. The water depth throughout shows a gradual decline, which is typical for this season. Salinity remains in the brackish ranges for all stations; dips are due to rainfall events. Temperature drops coincide with cold fronts but rise quickly. Chlorophyll remains under ten RFU with the exception of Eau Gallie. Spikes of *pseudo-nitzchia* have occurred, but nothing significant currently. Turbidity peaks occur due to wind conditions and rainfall events. Fluorescent dissolved organic matter (FDOM) at Eau Gallie River and Vero are trending upwards due to the proximity of freshwater tributaries. December and January experienced an unusual rainfall event with over seven cumulative inches. Reviewing the same timeframe for a similar amount, it was noted that 2016 was a strong El Nino year; going further back to the same amount, 2010 was a moderate El Nino year.

A decline in % cover of seagrass has occurred in Mosquito Lagoon; summer recorded a 62 % coverage in July, and early January coverage is at <5% at transects. In 2023, at the same time period, recorded the same <5% coverage; this could be a trend. We still have substantial seagrass in Mosquito Lagoon, with dense coverage at some sites.

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

Dr. Parker reports the freshwater flow has big spikes due to rainfall events, with the largest amounts from the Tidal Basin; no Lake Okeechobee discharges since April 2023. The salinity at the HR1 site fell into the damaging range at the surface and the stress range at the bottom. The US1 Bridge salinity decreased to the stress level at the surface and optimum level at the bottom. A1A Bridge remained at the optimal level at both the surface and bottom. This week, the salinity has increased at all sites.

The juvenile oyster (spat) recruitment rates showed a small peak from August through October; it is typical to see lower recruitment rates late in the year when water temperatures cool.

**8. Presentation**

*The Indian River Lagoon Species Inventory: 30 Years of Cataloging Biodiversity*
Dr. Holly Sweat, Smithsonian Marine Station

Dr. Holly Sweat from the Smithsonian Marine Station presented on the topic of "The Indian River Lagoon Species Inventory: 30 Years of Cataloging Biodiversity". She briefly explained the project, which originated at the Indian River Lagoon Biodiversity Conference in 1994. By 1997, the Smithsonian Marine Station became the repository for information. The IRL Species

Inventory online portal went live in 2000, and since then, the inventory has evolved from a simple list to including habitat and ecology information. The project's mission is to create a comprehensive inventory of every living thing in the watershed, including marine, freshwater, and terrestrial species. Thanks to funding from the IRLNEP, the inventory has been able to expand its development, and emerging technology may improve identification in the future. Dr. Sweat also introduced the website IRLSpecies.org and gave a short tutorial on navigating it to find information.

**9. Old Business**

Science 2030 Document (Duane De Freese)

Dr. De Freese announced the document has been posted on the website under Resources. members were asked to review, comment, and rank the top five priorities, using page three and send this information to Kathy Hill. The goal is to find consensus as it is possible to tailor the Science and Innovation RFP to focus on a target.

**Requested Action:** For Discussion only.

**10. New Business**

a. Fiscal Year 2025 Water Quality RFP (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny announced the top two proposals statistically tied. Both projects will be funded. The surplus funding for the Water Quality category will be offered to the third-ranked project; this will not match the requested amount for that project.

**Requested Action:** Motion to recommend that the IRL Council Board of Directors accept the IRLNEP STEM Advisory Committee recommendations and approve the final ranked list of FY 2025 Water Quality proposals; fund the top proposals contingent and consistent with available funds and budgetary authority; and authorize staff to negotiate and enter into contracts with those applicants.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY DAVID COX TO RECOMMEND THAT THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACCEPT THE IRLNEP STEM ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND APPROVE THE FINAL RANKED LIST OF FY 2025 WATER QUALITY PROPOSALS; FUND THE TOP PROPOSALS CONTINGENT AND CONSISTENT WITH AVAILABLE FUNDS AND BUDGETARY AUTHORITY; AND AUTHORIZE STAFF TO NEGOTIATE AND ENTER INTO CONTRACTS WITH THOSE APPLICANTS. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY LISA KRIMSKY. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

b. Fiscal Year 2025 Habitat Restoration RFP (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny announced the top two proposals statistically tied in the Habitat Restoration category. Both projects were recommended for funding.

**Requested Action:** Motion to recommend that the IRL Council Board of Directors accept the IRLNEP STEM Advisory Committee recommendations and approve the final ranked list of FY 2025 Habitat Restoration proposals; fund the top proposals contingent and consistent with available funds and budgetary authority; and authorize staff to negotiate and enter into contracts with those applicants.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY VALERIE PAUL TO RECOMMEND THAT THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACCEPT THE IRLNEP STEM ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND APPROVE THE FINAL RANKED LIST OF FY 2025 HABITAT RESTORATION

PROPOSALS; ADDING ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO COMPLETELY FUND THE TOP STATISTICALLY TIED PROPOSALS CONTINGENT AND CONSISTENT WITH AVAILABLE FUNDS AND BUDGETARY AUTHORITY; AND AUTHORIZE STAFF TO NEGOTIATE AND ENTER INTO CONTRACTS WITH THOSE APPLICANTS. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY KELLY YOUNG. MOTION PASSED. LORAÉ SIMPSON RECUSED.

c. Fiscal Year 2025 Community-Based Restoration RFP (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny announced that funding will cover the top two proposals, with the third-ranked proposal having partial funding. Staff recommends applying $11,974 of the Fund Balance to fund the third project fully. The second, third and fourth projects scoring in the Community-Based Habitat Restoration category scored within one point of each other.

**Requested Action:** Motion to recommend that the IRL Council Board of Directors accept the IRLNEP STEM Advisory Committee recommendations and approve the final ranked list of FY 2025 Community-Based Restoration proposals; fund the top proposals contingent and consistent with available funds and budgetary authority; and authorize staff to negotiate and enter into contracts with those applicants.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY LISA KRIMSKY TO RECOMMEND THAT THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACCEPT THE IRLNEP STEM ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND APPROVE THE FINAL RANKED LIST OF FY 2025 COMMUNITY-BASED RESTORATION PROPOSALS; ADDING ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO COMPLETELY FUND THE THIRD-RANKED PROPOSAL CONTINGENT AND CONSISTENT WITH AVAILABLE FUNDS AND BUDGETARY AUTHORITY; AND AUTHORIZE STAFF TO NEGOTIATE AND ENTER INTO CONTRACTS WITH THOSE APPLICANTS. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY VALERIE PAUL. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

d. Fiscal Year 2025 Science and Innovation RFP (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny announced the top three ranked proposals could be fully funded, with the fourth proposal receiving partial funding. The staff recommends applying $2,212 of the Fund Balance to fund project #4 fully.

**Requested Action:** Motion to recommend that the IRL Council Board of Directors accept the IRLNEP STEM Advisory Committee recommendations and approve the final ranked list of FY 2025 Science and Innovation proposals; fund the top proposals contingent and consistent with available funds and budgetary authority; and authorize staff to negotiate and enter into contracts with those applicants.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY WENDY SWINDELL TO RECOMMEND THAT THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACCEPT THE IRLNEP STEM ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND APPROVE THE FINAL RANKED LIST OF FY 2025 SCIENCE AND INNOVATION PROPOSALS; ADDING ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO COMPLETELY FUND THE FIRST THROUGH FOURTH-RANKED PROPOSALS CONTINGENT AND CONSISTENT WITH AVAILABLE FUNDS AND BUDGETARY AUTHORITY; AND AUTHORIZE STAFF TO NEGOTIATE AND ENTER INTO CONTRACTS WITH THOSE APPLICANTS. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY VALERIE PAUL. MOTION PASSED. EMILY RALSTON RECUSED.

## 11. IRLNEP Staff Reports

a. Community Engagement Report (Kathy Hill)

Ms. Hill reported the social media metrics and comparison between the engagement rates of the two quarters. During the holidays, the engagement rate decreased, and it was observed that reels perform better than static photos. The majority of the audience continues to trend to be women. The CEC metrics included attendance at eight local government meetings and twenty-six events. The team conducted eleven presentations, participated in twenty community meetings, and braved the cooler temperatures while participating in nine fieldwork and project opportunities. Forty-one outreach occasions were facilitated.

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

Ms. Ayres-Guerra reported the Master Project Map has been posted on the One Lagoon website; it includes all projects from Fiscal Year 2016 through Fiscal Year 2023. The map is interactive and contains project information, photos, and a final report from each project. Comments have been collected, and an improved iteration of MPM 2.0 is planned for 2024. A demonstration of the Master Project Map was included. Ms. Ayres-Guerra announced projects for 2024 include a digital web application of the Boaters Guide created by FWC and MRC, not to be used as a navigation tool, updating the website, developing a Lagoon History Story Map and publishing lagoon-wide datasets. Requested available geospatial data to be submitted.

c. IRL Project Update (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny announced the first quarter was busy, with five completed projects and forty-five in progress. Mr. Kolodny was happy to report one of the oldest projects, the North Sebastian Phase 2 Septic to Sewer, has been completed. Mr. Kolodny gave an overview of three other completed projects; one completed small grant project was reviewed.

d. Executive Director Report (Duane De Freese)

Dr. De Freese reported that the IRLNEP has partnered with the Southeast and Caribbean Disaster Resilience Partnership (SCDRP) to develop a NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge grant proposal, to be submitted on Tuesday. One focus is on the priority community of Morris Creek in Ft. Pierce. Dr. De Freese discussed attending a field tour and meeting and thanked the Kennedy Space Center and NASA folks for the boat ride and tour of MINWR. Dr. De Freese attended the Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association (SECOORA) board meeting and participated in the SCDRP meeting, where he will hold the chair position. The legislative action exemption language for meeting attendance electronically is still alive. Dr. De Freese thanked the Florida legislature members and staff for their work and efforts on this item.

Dr. De Freese joined the ANEP Congressional briefings in Washington, DC, which included nine visits to minority and majority appropriations committee members and stops at delegations' offices. In 2026, the NEPs are up for reauthorization; discussions were started with relevant offices and staff to support the NEPs, and bipartisan support in both the House and Senate was evident. Dr. De Freese alerted those in attendance that the Appropriation letters of request for 2025 may be due before the 2024 budget issue is resolved, be prepared for short notice. Aaron Adams, Bonefish and Tarpon Trust, was thanked for organizing a media panel event.

Dr. De Freese announced that he is no longer in remission and will update with the next steps.

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

Kathy Hill offered the committee the One Lagoon polo shirts as a thank-you gift. Share with staff.

Dr. Cho asked how to use a wetland area for a seagrass bed, and Dr. Jacoby offered to speak about this after the meeting.

Lauren Hall announced March 1st is World Sea Grass Day.

Kris Kaufman announced the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has a funding competition that usually opens in March; as this information becomes available, Ms. Kaufman will forward it to the IRL staff to send out. Internal Reviews are currently taking place for the NOAAs, Transformational Habitat Restoration, and Coastal Resiliency Grant.

Duane De Freese stated Water Quality funds may be available through the FDEP in July, similar to last year's budget.

Wendy Swindell announced Indian River County's Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel is accepting nominations for land parcels for acquisition.

13. **Next Meeting**

Tuesday, May 7, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.
Historic Sebastian Elementary School

14. **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:21 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.*