IRL COUNCIL
STEM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes from the meeting of

May 7, 2024

1:30 PM

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

Attendance: Kyle Bartow, Erin Cartmill, David Cox, Bob Day, Tiare Fridrich, Lauren Hall, Chuck Jacoby, Lisa Krimsky, Dale McGinnis, Melanie Parker, Mitch Roffer, Loraé Simpson, Wendy Swindell, Derek Tremain, Jennifer White, Kelly Young

Guests: Elizabeth Kelly, Brent Wohlberg, Jeff Eble, Kara Radabaugh, Ashley Lingwood, Stacy Cecil, Doug Scheidt, Charlie Venuto, Maegan Wettlaufer, Elyse Geraghty, Lauren Kleiman

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

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

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

   Dr. Jacoby led the group in introductions.

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

   No agenda revisions were brought forward.

4. **Consent Agenda**(Chuck Jacoby, Chair)

   a. Approve Minutes from the STEM meeting on February 6, 2024
   b. Recommend approval of the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget

   Requested Action: Motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

   MOTION WAS MADE BY DALE MCGINNIS TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY DAVID COX. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. **Public Comment**

   No public comment was made.

6. **Water Quality Reports**

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

   Ms. Hall reported that six continuous monitoring sondes at a 1.5-meter depth collect water data every hour. The water depth for the current reporting period is typical. Salinity has slightly increased, and the Eau Gallie sonde shows a dip, which is attributed to rainfall in the area. The water temperature has risen seasonally, but the dissolved oxygen level remains normal. Chlorophyll-a levels are below 15 RFU, and turbidity spikes are due to wind events.

Fluorescent Dissolved Organic Matter (FDOM) changes occurred at the Eau Gallie and Vero freshwater inputs due to rainfall. Water clarity data shows that Secchi depths have improved in the Banana River and the central lagoon over the three months. Seagrass comparison from 2021 to 2023 indicates an increase of hectares in Mosquito Lagoon, Northern IRL, Banana River, and Central IRL, with a decrease in Southcentral and Southern IRL. Ms. Hall has noted that *Halophila* grasses are present but small and do not appear well on aerial surveillance, so the extent of seagrasses may be greater than reported. Rainfall has decreased since the December and January reporting period.

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

Dr. Parker reported that the data presented was collected through April 28th, and weekly averages covered April 22 through April 28th. Lake Okeechobee releases started on February 17, 2024. Releases were pulsed with an average of 1800 cfs over a 14-day period. The release schedule included multiple days of zero CFS releases, allowing the estuary to recover briefly. Releases ended on March 31, 2024. The salinity for the most recent 7-day period fell into the optimal range for oysters at the HR1 and US1 bridge. The A1A bridge was in the upper stressful range for oysters. Salinities fell into the lower stressful range several times during the Lake Okeechobee releases but recovered quickly once the releases stopped. Water temperatures were low during the Lake Okeechobee releases, which was less stressful for oysters. Juvenile oyster (spat) recruitment rates have been at or near zero since November 2023, as oysters do not typically spawn until March. Spawning and larval settlement began in late March/early April at a rate similar to the previous year. It was noted that the settlement rate may be reduced due to the lower salinities occurring in March and April.

7. Presentations

Dr. Kara Radabaugh, a Research Scientist at the Coastal Wetlands Research, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, presented on the topic of *Monitoring Improved Hydrology, Water Quality, and Mangrove Recovery in the Jensen Beach Impoundment*, a project partially funded by the IRLNEP. Dr. Radabaugh briefly explained the root systems of the three species of mangroves and the effects of hurricane-caused water saturation in the impoundment. The study design to improve the hydrology within the impoundment area was reviewed, and the monitoring metrics were examined. The hydrology of the Jensen Beach Impoundment improved following additional IRL culvert construction, and vegetation is now recovering. Ongoing remediation efforts aim to improve the intermediate forest area.

8. Old Business

Science 2030 (Dr. Chuck Jacoby)

Dr. Chuck Jacoby explained that the Science 2030 document will be a living document with two parts: the first part targets scientific investigations to support the IRL protection plan, and the second part is a compendium of scientific questions raised by this committee. The goal is to document the issues raised by the scientists.

Requested Action: Motion to recommend that the IRL Council Board of Directors accept the IRLNEP Management Conference recommendation to accept the Science 2030 document.

MOTION WAS MADE BY LORAÉ SIMPSON TO RECOMMEND THAT THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACCEPT THE IRLNEP MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATION TO

ACCEPT THE SCIENCE 2030 DOCUMENT. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY LISA KRIMSKY. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

9. New Business

a. Small Grant (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny announced that the Citizens Advisory Committee reviewed, scored, and ranked 24 proposals. Seven of the proposals were ranked within the funding allocation. An additional four projects ranked above the funding threshold of 70% but fell outside the budget allocation. The Management Board concurred with the CAC recommendation to add four additional projects to the Small Grant rankings, as these projects scored above the 70% threshold for funding. This would result in a budget increase of $14,412.

Requested Action: Motion to recommend that the IRL Council Board of Directors accept the 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 MADE BY DAVID COX TO RECOMMEND THAT THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACCEPT THE IRLNEP MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS, APPROVE THE FINAL RANKED LIST OF PROPOSALS, ADDING ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO COMPLETELY FUND THE FIRST THROUGH ELEVENTH 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 BOB DAY. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

b. Fiscal Year 2025 EPA BIL Workplan (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny explained that the EPA is reviewing the 2024 EPA BIL Workplan. A concern was noted in the contractual portions of the procurement guidelines for a for-profit company. In order to maintain compliance, the 2025 EPA BIL Workplan submitted in the STEM Committee packet has been edited.

Requested Action: Motion to recommend that the IRL Council Board of Directors accept the IRLNEP Management Conference recommendation to authorize staff to develop and submit the FY 2025 EPA BIL Workplan and authorize staff to submit the plan to EPA.

MOTION WAS MADE BY WENDY SWINDELL TO RECOMMEND THAT THE IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACCEPT THE IRLNEP MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATION TO AUTHORIZE STAFF TO DEVELOP AND SUBMIT THE FY 2025 EPA BIL WORKPLAN AND AUTHORIZE STAFF TO SUBMIT THE PLAN TO EPA. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY DAVID COX. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

10. IRLNEP Staff Reports

a. Community Engagement Report (Kathy Hill)

Ms. Kathy Hill reported that the social media metrics for this quarter show a distinction between organic interactions and those generated by ads. The ads focused on the IRL license plate and were created by IDEAS. It was observed that the ads performed better on Facebook

than on Instagram. Facebook continues to experience more interactions and has an older demographic than Instagram. The interactions of the Community Engagement Coordinators in various activities increased this quarter compared to the previous one. Ms. Hill and Ms. KJ Ayers-Guerra represented the IRLNEP at the EPA Annual Meetings in Washington, D.C.

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

Ms. KJ Ayers-Guerra reported on her participation in the ESRI Southeast User Conference and the presentation of the IRL Council Master Project Map 1.0. Feedback was obtained, which will be instrumental in improving the project. Interviews for the IRL Fishing Tales Project are ongoing, and suggestions for future interviews were requested, indicating the project's active engagement with the community. Boater's Guide is being developed as an app and a paper version.

c. IRL Project Update (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Daniel Kolodny announced that 41 CCMP projects/activities are in progress. Four projects were completed in the second quarter, and a brief overview was given: *Indian River Drive and Dixon Blvd.*, the City of Cocoa, *Tucker Cove Seagrass Restoration*, Sea and Shoreline*, Using Genetic Tools to Boost Seagrass Restoration Success in the IRL,* Mote Marine Lab and *One Health Fish Monitoring -PFAS,* ORCA. Mr. Kolodny recently attended the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting and presented on the IRL and the issues affecting its habitat health.

d. Executive Director Report (Duane De Freese)

Dr. Duane De Freese thanked Florida state Senators Wright and Mayfield, Representative Altman and their staff for assisting in the passage of CS/CS/SB 224. The IRLNEP staff will arrange the communications media technology needed for public meetings. It is a historic year for funding. The FDEP Funding FY 2025 portal is open. On the Federal level, eighty-eight bipartisan members of the House of Representatives have signed a letter of support sent to the House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior requesting authorization of the total funding amount. The Senate letter is still in circulation. Also, the Brevard Zoo and Florida Institute of Technology entered into an agreement titled CARE, Consortia of Aquarium Research and Education.

11. Final Comments (Committee, Staff, Public)

Bob Day commented that the IRLNEP has a long history of neutral responses on regulatory issues, and this should remain.

12. Next Meeting

Tuesday, August 20, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.
Historic Elementary School, 1235 Main Street, Sebastian, FL 32958

13. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 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.