IRL COUNCIL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Minutes from the meeting of

November 15, 2024

9:30 AM – 12:30 PM

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

Attendance: Eric Charest for Joseph Earman, Rob Feltner, Aaron Watkins, Cole Oliver, Libby Pigman, Jeff Brower, Jamie Fowler

Guests: Wade Lehmann, Chuck Jacoby, Lauren Hall, Melanie Parker, Ruth Holmes, Beth Powell

1. **Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance** (Jeff Brower, Chair)
   Mr. Jeff Brower called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. **Introductions** (Jeff Brower, Chair)

   Mr. Jeff Brower welcomed Wade Lehman, EPA, in attendance. Mr. Lehman thanked the Board and the IRLNEP for the great work accomplished. Board members and staff introduced themselves. Eric Charest represented Indian River County and Cole Oliver represented SJRWMD. Dr. Duane De Freese introduced Keven Walker, Project Manager for the NOAA Transformational Grant and Ruth Holmes, Esq. It was noted that Daniel Kolodny and Caleta Scott were attending the ANEP Fall Tech Transfer in New York.
3. **Agenda Revisions** (Jeff Brower, Chair)
   Staff brought forward two revisions. A Consent Agenda revision: the addition of Holly Sweat, Smithsonian Marine Station, to the STEM Advisory Committee, replacing Valerie Paul. The IRL 2025 Calendar dates in November. The Board had no revisions.

   MOTION WAS MADE BY COLE OLIVER TO ACCEPT THE AGENDA REVISIONS. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY ROB FELTNER. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.
4. **Resolutions, Recognition, Letters and Awards** (Jeff Brower, Chair)

   None
5. **Public Comment**

   None
6. **Water Quality Reports**
   a. Northern and Central Lagoon (Lauren Hall, SJRWMD)

b. Ms. Lauren Hall presented the rainfall data from August through October, noting that recent hurricanes have led to increased rainfall. As a result of these rain events, salinity levels decreased. The decline in temperature is typical for this season. Dissolved oxygen levels remain above 2 mg/L, with the exception of a sensor at the Titusville station. Low concentrations of chlorophyll-a were reported, with no significant algal blooms observed. Turbidity spikes were noted as a consequence of storms. Changes in Dissolved Organic Matter (FDOM) were recorded at the Vero and Eau Gallie monitoring sites. Overall, water clarity has been maintained.
The 2024 Preliminary Seagrass Cover report indicated growth in specific areas, with significant increases observed at the Northern IRL Epcot and Southern IRL Midway sites. The most notable rises occurred at South Mosquito Lagoon Biolab and North Banana River KARS Park. However, the Central IRL Shooters sites did not show any seagrass coverage.

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

Dr. Parker reported that the data was through November 3rd, and the weekly averages covered October 28 through November 3rd. The greatest freshwater inflow has occurred from the Tidal Basin and the C-23 and C-24 Basins. Early September saw a large influx associated with heavy rainfall; the late September peak was due to Hurricane Helene. Hurricane Milton contributed to the early October inflow. There were no releases from Lake Okeechobee.

The salinity for the most recent 7-day period fell into the damaging range for oysters at the HR1 site on the surface and lower stressful ranges on the bottom. The US1 Bridge site was in the lower stressful range. The salinity at the A1A bridge remained in the optimal range. Salinity decreased sharply in September and remained low most of the past couple of months, with a brief increase occurring between rain events. Juvenile oyster (spat) recruitment rates peaked in May and June. Settlement rates began decreasing in July and continued to decrease over recent months when salinities were below optimal (<10) for oysters. The fall months see another peak, but the low salinities have kept larval oyster numbers low.

Oyster density was lower in 2024 but increased slightly during the September survey. This suggests that older adult oysters have survived the lower salinities.

7. Presentation

NOAA Transformational Habitat Restoration Grant Award Update

Dr. Duane De Freese, Executive Director of the IRLNEP, gave the *NOAA Transformational Habitat Restoration Grant Award Update.* The timeline and cost value were reported. The responsibilities of the IRLNEP staff were outlined, and Kevin Walker, the Project Manager, was introduced. The details of the progress to date were covered, and the story map of restoration sites and the Socio-Economic Assessment of Data draft has been completed. A list of Project Deliverables was submitted.

8. IRLNEP Management Conference Committee Reports

a. Management Board Report (Beth Powell, Indian River County)

Ms. Powell reported that thirty in-person and fifteen online attendees were present. The August minutes and the Finance Sub-Committee report were approved. Lauren Hall for SJRWMD and Erin Bergman, on behalf of SFWMD, gave water quality reports.

Presentations on the *Space Florida Wharf Study* and *NOAA Transformational Habitat Restoration Grant Award Update* produced some great questions and clarification of both topics.

The Management Board welcomed Kevin Walker to the IRLC team and thanked staff for the enormous lift on the NOAA grant, which funnels significant money to the IRL. Obtaining the grant was a small part of the now larger effort to ensure that the projects are successfully implemented, which will lay the groundwork for future funding opportunities.
The Management Board recommended to the Board of Directors that they accept the requested actions: the approval of the FY 2025 Final Budget Amendment, the IRL Council Meeting Calendar for 2025, with the November date scheduled at a later time due to a conflict with Veteran's Day; and all other dates. The request for qualifications for grant writing services to replace vacancies and expand the list of contractors was unanimously approved. The Board extended condolences to the families of Dr. Graham Cox and Marty Baum, leaders, advocates and volunteers who have dedicated time and resources to the IRL.

b. STEM Advisory Committee (Dr. Chuck Jacoby, Florida Flood Hub)

Dr. Jacoby reported that the STEM Advisory Committee welcomed Kevin Walker as the project manager for the NOAA grant. The committee also expressed condolences on the passing of Dr. Graham Cox and Marty Baum, both long-time supporters and advocates of the IRL. The consent agenda items, minutes, Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Amendment and Request of Qualification solicitations for grant writing were approved. The new business item, the 2025 IRL Meeting Calendar, was approved with the change of the November date not to include Veteran's Day.

Two presentations, *Space Florida Wharf Study* and *NOAA Transformational Habitat Restoration Grant Award* Update, were heard, followed by discussions.

c. Citizens' Advisory Committee (Captain Frank Catino)

Ms. Hill presented on behalf of Captain Frank Catino. Dr. Graham Cox served on the Citizens Advisory Committee, and his knowledge and environmental insight will be missed. The *Project Plankton* presentation was well received. It was a small grant-funded project, and a robust question-and-answer session followed. The *NOAA Transformational Habitat Restoration Grant Award Update* presentation followed, and discussion ensued.

The new business agenda items, Fiscal Year 2025 Final Budget Amendment, the 2025 IRL Council Meeting Calendar and the Request for Qualification solicitations for grant writing services to replace vacancies and expand list of contractors were approved.

9. Consent Agenda (Jeff Brower)

a. Approval of August 23, 2024, Board of Directors meeting minutes
b. Request for Qualification (RFQ) solicitations for Grant Writing Services to replace vacancies and expand list of contractors
c. Amended IRL Council Operating Procedures Manual
d. Amended IRL Council Handbook of Personnel Policies and Practices
e. Board of Directors Appointments to IRLNEP Management Conference:

<u>New Appointments</u>

- Thomas Heller, Jupiter Narrows Conservation Alliance, to CAC
- Krista McCoy, Florida Oceanographic Society, to STEM

- Sherry McCorkle, SFWMD, to Management Board, replacing Kathy LaMartina
- Holly Sweat, Smithsonian Marine Station, to STEM, replacing Valerie Paul (Agenda Revision)

Requested Action: Approve Consent Agenda

MOTION WAS MADE BY ROB FELTNER TO ACCEPT THE CONSENT AGENDA WITH THE AGENDA REVISION. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY LIBBY PIGMAN. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

10. Old Business

None

11. New Business

a. Fiscal Year 2025 Final Budget Amendment (Duane De Freese)

Dr. De Freese reviewed the changes to the Fiscal Year 2025 Final Budget.

Requested Action: Motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2025 Final Budget Amendment by Resolution 2024-07, pursuant to Florida Statutes.

MOTION WAS MADE BY ROB FELTNER TO APPROVE THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 FINAL BUDGET AMENDMENT BY RESOLUTION 2024-07, PURSUANT TO FLORIDA STATUTES. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY JAMIE FOWLER. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

b. 2025 IRL Council Meeting Calendar (Erin Bergman)

Ms. Bergman presented the tentative dates. Dates are chosen due to the availability of the Council Chamber space. It was noted that the November dates had changed due to the Tuesday meetings falling on Veteran's Day.

Requested Action: Motion to adopt the proposed 2025 IRL Council Board of Directors and Management Conference meeting calendar.

MOTION WAS MADE BY AARON WATKINS TO ADOPT THE PROPOSED 2025 IRL COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE MEETING CALENDAR. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY ROB FELTNER. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

12. IRLNEP Staff Reports

a. Community Engagement Update (Kathy Hill)

Ms. Hill reviewed the metrics for Facebook and Instagram social platforms. The top post had 4.3M views. Six new podcasts are available. The Community Engagement Coordinator's activities were highlighted, and 684 interactions took place in Fiscal Year 2024.

b. Information Technology and Delivery Update (Kathy Hill)

Ms. Hill, on behalf of Ms. Ayres-Guerra, announced two webinars were delivered this quarter, completed courses including the ADA Compliance and the Master Gardener. Ms. Ayres-Guerra sat on the IRC interview panel for the new Lands Asset and Data Manager and worked on the NOAA Required Monitoring Plan.

c. IRL Project Update (Duane De Freese)

Dr. De Freese presented on behalf of Mr. Kolodny that twenty-six projects were completed in

Quarter four, with fifteen projects still in progress. Fiscal Year 2025 will see twenty-six new projects beginning.

d. Executive Director Report (Duane De Freese)

Dr. De Freese gave an update on the Executive Director's activities and the impact of the articles in the Frontiers in Marine Science publication. Dr. De Freese gave an overview of the recently held Southeast Natural Resources Leadership Group. The IRL Council will celebrate a decade of progress as a host agency for the IRLNEP and 35 years as a National Estuary Program in 2025. The Congressional re-authorization process was reviewed.

13. IRL Council Member Reports

Ms. Libby Pigman, SFWMD, announced the district would be holding a Northern Everglades and Estuary Protection Program (NEEPP) update with poster presentations on projects and programs for the northern Everglades.

Mr. Aaron Watkins, FDEP, thanked Dr. Duane De Freese for acknowledging Shawn Hamilton's contributions to the FDEP and highlighting Alexis Lambert taking the lead. The FDEP staff was thanked and commended for the storm response and coordination during the hurricanes. Staff successfully completed many tasks and responsibilities to help those in need.

Ms. Jamie Fowler, St. Lucie County, had nothing to report.

Eric Charest, Indian River County, reported that lagoon staff have been participating in outreach opportunities: Seagrass Blitz with IFAS, A Day in the Life with ORCA, Career Day with Vero Beach Boys and Girls Club and participating as science fair judges.

The county is working with municipalities on anchor limitations. A portal on the county website is available for the public to record derelict vessels; the data will be collected and shared with FWC. A partnership with the Florida Institute of Technology gives citizens the opportunity to participate in a living dock program. Citizens can apply to the program via the website, and volunteer events will take place to create the mat for deployment. The department is excited to be part of the NOAA Transformation Grant.

Cole Oliver, SJRWMD, announced that in the first quarter the M1 canal restoration flow project, which will divert stormwater away from the lagoon and back to the St. John's River, will be completed.

Rob Feltner, Brevard County, read from a list provided by Virginia Barker, Director of the Natural Resources Department, of project progress from September to November. These completed projects included leaky laterals, quick connect to existing sewers, South-Central C septic to sewer private connection, Micco sewer line extension and report submitted to the IRLNEP, bidding for septic to sewer for several areas, several others in the queue for bidding, septic upgrades, City of Titusville riverfront nutrient filtration removal boxes, City of Cocoa Beach stormwater pond harvesting, stormwater project bid awarded. Titusville Causeway multitrophic restoration living shoreline project ongoing, dredging, Brevard Zoo partnership completed construction on the oyster reef, UCF monitoring oyster bars, three derelict vessels removed, 36 vessels sunk in the recent storms, grant reporting submitted.

Jeff Brower, Volusia County, announced a project to upgrade the southeast regional water reclamation facility to an advanced wastewater treatment plant, increasing plant capacity per day. Mr. Brower shared speaking to the public about the IRL Council, and the public showed interest and support; he encouraged all to share the work being completed through the IRLNEP

and encouraged promoting the sale of the IRL license plate. Thanked Dr. De Freese for the demanding work completed while being challenged with cancer treatment. Wished all a Happy Thanksgiving.

14. IRL Council -Next Meeting Announcement (Jeff Brower, Chair)

February 14, 2025, from 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m**.** Sebastian City Hall, Council Chambers, 1225 Main Street, Sebastian, FL 32958

15. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:51 a.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