IRL COUNCIL
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Minutes from the meeting of

August 22, 2025

9:30 AM

Sebastian City Hall Complex, 1225 Main Street, Sebastian, FL 32958

Members: Joseph Earman, Kim Adkinson, Sirena Davila, Sarah Heard, Cole Oliver, Libby Pigman

Absent: Jeff Brower, Volusia County, James Clasby, St Lucie County

Guests: Terri Breeden, Virginia Barker, Melanie Parker, Caitin Butler, Jennifer DiMaio, Amy Eason, Lauren Hall, Melissa Meisenburg

1. **Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance** (Joe Earman, Chair)

   Mr. Earman called the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m.

2. **Introduction: IRL Council Board of Directors and Special Guests** (Joe Earman, Chair)

   Mr. Earman introduced Jennifer DiMaio, EPA Region 4. Ms. DiMaio explained she has been working with IRLNEP since 2015 and thanked all those involved for their efforts. The members of the Board introduced themselves.

3. **Agenda Revisions** (Joe Earman, Chair)

   No agenda revisions were made.

4. **Resolutions, Recognition, Letters and Awards** (Joe Earman, Chair)

   None

5. **Public Comment**

   No public comment was made.

6. **Water Quality Reports**

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

   Ms. Lauren Hall, SJRWMD, presented the rainfall data from May through July, noting that the May total was double that of last year. June was half the previous amount, and July was slightly more; amounts varied across the watershed.

   The locations of the continuous monitoring sondes were identified, and collected data was made available on the St. Johns River Water Management District website. Water depths remained stable across all stations. Salinity varied between sites; a few sites experienced increased salinity, while others saw a slight decrease, but all remained above 20 parts per thousand. Water temperature had increased. As the temperature rises, it becomes increasingly difficult for water to retain dissolved oxygen. Significant fluctuations in dissolved oxygen levels occurred throughout the area, particularly in the Banana River, with dips this past week below the hypoxia threshold of two milligrams per liter. Turbidity

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conditions followed normal patterns, with higher levels observed in the shallow Mosquito Lagoon. Fluorescent Dissolved Organic Matter (FDOM) exhibited greater fluctuations in areas with freshwater inputs. It was noted that phytoplankton blooms had occurred in the past three months. The Mosquito Lagoon experienced a consistent phytoplankton bloom of *Aureoumbra* and *Pyrodinium bahamense* throughout. Bloom activity had occurred in other lagoon locations due to the presence of the *Pyrodinium* species, which appears annually at this time of year. Rainfall pulses provided nutrients that the blooms utilized. Water clarity declined in the northern Indian River Lagoon (IRL).

Seagrass presence was discussed; northern IRL has remained stable. The central IRL continues to struggle with recovery. Sites south of the Fort Pierce Inlet showed noticeable growth. Species included *Syringodium filiforme* and *Thalassia testudinum.* Monitoring continues for *Caulerpa ashmeadii*, with the collection of nutrient data and collaboration with partners to understand the nutrient cycling associated with this species. The seed distribution study will continue for an additional year. *Ruppia maritima* and *Halodule wrightii* were noted; however, the central IRL did not have *H. wrightii* seeds present, only *R. maritima.*

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

Dr. Melanie Parker, SFWMD, reported that the data covered was through August 10, 2025, and the weekly averages spanned from August 4 to August 10. Freshwater inflow data showed that there had been no releases from Lake Okeechobee since March 29. Over the most recent 7-day period, total inflow into the St. Lucie Estuary (SLE) averaged 898 cfs, with much of the flow originating from the Tidal Basin.

Salinity monitoring at HR1, US1 Bridge, and A1A Bridge revealed increased salinity levels at all locations. Specifically, HR1 recorded surface salinity at eight and bottom salinity at 14. The US1 Bridge had a surface salinity of 15 and a bottom salinity of 18. The A1A Bridge displayed the highest readings, with surface salinity at 24 and bottom salinity at 28. The average daily salinity levels had risen due to drier conditions. At the US1 site, salinities briefly reached the stressful range for oysters in mid-July but quickly rebounded and remained within the optimal range.

Oyster recruitment data at the Rio station shows that the 2025 spawning season began later than in previous years, with the first spat detected in May. By June, the spawning season was in full swing, with an average recruitment rate of 17.7 spat per shell, the highest rate recorded in the SLE over the past two years.

Seagrass surveys in June mapped percent cover across the Southern Indian River Lagoon. The results indicated that seagrass cover increased in areas north of the St. Lucie Inlet, including Fort Pierce, Jensen Beach, and the lower portion of the SLE. However, cover decreased in southern regions such as Hobe Sound, Jupiter Sound, and Loxahatchee Estuary. *Halodule wrightii* was present at most sites, while *Halophila ovalis* dominated in the SLE, and *Halophila decipiens* was most prevalent in Hobe Sound.

7. IRLNEP Management Conference Committee Reports

a. Management Board Report (Terri Breeden, Brevard County)

Ms. Terri Breeden, Vice Chair of the Management Board, reported that 45 people attended, including 34 members and 11 guests. The committee approved the Finance Subcommittee report from Mr. Stu Glass, who reported that the Financial Subcommittee is seeking additional members and has requested staff to implement attendance requirements to ensure a quorum. The minutes were approved. Also recommended for approval were the Fiscal Year 2025 and 2026 Final Budget Amendments.

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Water Quality reports were presented by SJRWMD and SFWMD. The Management Board recommended approval of the following new business items: RFQ for NOAA Professional Engineering Services, Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026 Final Budget Amendments, Fiscal Year 2027 Request for Proposals; and the proposed funding amounts to ensure fiscal responsibility, as well as the Habitat Restoration Plan and the Fiscal Year 2026 Legislative Priorities.

b. STEM Advisory Committee (Dr. Duane De Freese)

Dr. Duane De Freese presented the STEM report on behalf of Dr. Chuck Jacoby, who was absent. The Science, Technology, Engineering, and Management Advisory Committee approved the consent agenda, which included the minutes and final budget amendments for Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026. Dr. De Freese thanked Lauren Hall from SJRWMD and Dr. Melanie Parker from SFWMD for compiling the water quality data presented at the STEM meeting and again for the Board of Directors. Dr. Leesa Soto from Applied Technology provided an overview of the contracted State of the Lagoon project. The STEM AC will review the document and it will be uploaded to the Program website. The committee recommended that the Council proceed with contracting engineering services from the first and second-ranked RFQ respondents, Tetra Tech and Dredging and Marine Consultants. The proposed RFP categories and funding levels with suggested reductions were also recommended, along with the Habitat Restoration Plan and Legislative Priorities for 2026.

c. Citizens' Advisory Committee (Kathy Hill)

Ms. Kathy Hill presented the CAC report on behalf of Captain Frank Catino. The Citizens' Advisory Committee had 16 people in attendance, both in person and online. The May meeting minutes were approved. The criteria for the Small Grants were reviewed with input from the committee. Staff recommended implementing a 75% scoring threshold for proposals to qualify for funding, aligning with other grant categories. Under New Business, they reviewed the RFQ for engineering services and agreed that the top two firms should be considered for service contracts. The Final Budget Amendments for Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026 were recommended. The CAC further recommended approval for the 2027 Requests for Proposals with reduced funding, the Habitat Restoration Plan, and the 2026 Legislative Priorities.

8. Consent Agenda (Joe Earman, Chair)

a. Approval of May 9, 2025, Board of Directors meeting minutes

MOTION WAS MADE BY SARAH HEARD TO APPROVE THE MAY 9, 2025, BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY COLE OLIVER. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

b. Board of Directors Appointments to IRLNEP Management Conference:

<u>Appointments:</u>

- Jeffrey Collins, Bio-Tech Consultants, to Management Board
- Josh Mills, Native Shorelines, to Management Board
- Julie Strickland, Volusia County, to Citizens' Advisory Committee
- Jenny Tomes, City of Port St. Lucie, to Citizens' Advisory Committee

Requested Action: Motion to approve Consent Agenda.

MOTION WAS MADE BY SARAH HEARD TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY KIM ADKINSON. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

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9. **Old Business**

None

10. **New Business**

a. Request for Qualifications (RFQ) NOAA Professional Engineering Services (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny explained that NOAA personnel emphasized the need for construction drawings for each of the 15 habitat sites and allocated the necessary funding. It was determined that a Request for Qualifications was required under the Competitive Consultants Negotiation Act. The scope of services was posted, resulting in four responses. Tetra Tech and Dredging and Marine Consultants ranked above the funding threshold. Additionally, it was noted that Management Conference members can piggyback if the scope of services matches their needs.

Requested Action: Motion to accept the IRLNEP Management Conference recommendations to identify the most qualified Engineering Services contractor(s); authorize staff to enter into negotiations and contract with firm(s) selected.

MOTION WAS MADE BY COLE OLIVER TO ACCEPT THE IRLNEP MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS TO IDENTIFY THE MOST QUALIFIED ENGINEERING SERVICES CONTRACTOR(S); AUTHORIZE STAFF TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS AND CONTRACT WITH FIRM(S) SELECTED. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY SARAH HEARD. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

b. Fiscal Year 2025 Final Budget Amendment (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny reported that the change involves the funds in reserve for Fiscal Year 2026.

Requested Action: Motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2025 Final Budget Amendment by Resolution 2025-03, pursuant to Florida Statutes.

MOTION WAS MADE BY KIM ADKINSON TO APPROVE THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 FINAL BUDGET AMENDMENT BY RESOLUTION 2025-03, PURSUANT TO FLORIDA STATUTES. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY COLE OLIVER. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

c. Fiscal Year 2026 Final Budget Amendment (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny discussed the budget changes, noting that any unencumbered funds were carried forward to the fund balance and that a 1% correction was applied to one staff member's compensation. The updates also include a lease for a vessel storage facility and an increase in insurance costs.

Requested Action: Motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2026 Final Budget Amendment by Resolution 2025-04, pursuant to Florida Statutes.

MOTION WAS MADE BY SARAH HEARD TO APPROVE THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 FINAL BUDGET AMENDMENT BY RESOLUTION 2025-04, PURSUANT TO FLORIDA STATUTES. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY COLE OLIVER. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

d. Fiscal Year 2027 Request for Proposals (RFPs) (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny explained that, due to funding uncertainties for Fiscal Year 2027, a cautious approach to funding each grant category is being proposed. This will help manage grantees' expectations and allow the Council to explore opportunities and options if federal funding is not decreased.

Requested Action: Motion to authorize staff to develop and release RFPs for FY 2027, arrange Management Conference review and ranking of proposals, with return to the

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Management Conference and Board of Directors for funding approval.

MOTION WAS MADE BY SARAH HEARD TO AUTHORIZE STAFF TO DEVELOP AND RELEASE RFPS FOR FY 2027, ARRANGE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE REVIEW AND RANKING OF PROPOSALS, WITH RETURN TO THE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR FUNDING APPROVAL. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY KIM ADKINSON. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

e. Habitat Restoration Plan (Kathy Hill)

Ms. Hill clarified that the Habitat Restoration plan is an EPA concurrence document. The 36-page draft will stay on the website because scientific information is constantly evolving.

Requested Action: Motion to approve the Habitat Restoration Plan and authorize staff to submit the plan to EPA.

MOTION WAS MADE BY COLE OLIVER TO APPROVE THE HABITAT RESTORATION PLAN AND AUTHORIZE STAFF TO SUBMIT THE PLAN TO EPA. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY SARAH HEARD. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

f. Fiscal Year 2026 Legislative Priorities (Duane De Freese)

Dr. De Freese highlighted legislative priorities at both the federal and state levels and asked the Board for guidance on their collective priorities. He also requested that members notify him if a legislative project is in progress, in case a response request is received.

Requested Action: Motion to review and adopt IRL Council Legislative Priorities for 2026. Authorize the Executive Director to represent the IRL Council in legislative policy discussions and appropriations.

MOTION WAS MADE BY SARAH HEARD TO REVIEW AND ADOPT IRL COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 2026. AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO REPRESENT THE IRL COUNCIL IN LEGISLATIVE POLICY DISCUSSIONS AND APPROPRIATIONS. MOTION WAS SECONDED BY COLE OLIVER. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

11. IRLNEP Staff Reports:

a. Community Engagement Update (Kathy Hill)

Ms. Hill highlighted the top social media posts and their reach. The accomplishments of the three Community Engagement Coordinators were reviewed, and the third-quarter engagement statistics were shared. The new One Lagoon website was also presented.

b. Information Technology and Data Science Update (Kathy Hill)

Ms. Hill reported on behalf of K.J. Ayres-Guerra. Congratulations on the birth of Dylan Guerra; both mother and son are doing well. A review of completed tasks was conducted, and K.J. was also recognized as Volunteer of the Year by the Master Gardener AgriLife Extension.

c. IRL Project Update (Daniel Kolodny)

Mr. Kolodny reported that 47 CCMP projects and activities are currently underway. Eight projects were completed in the third quarter: Brevard Zoo: *Lagoon Quest,* Marine Discovery Center: *Project Plankton,* SWIRL - *Analysis of Contaminating Organic Compounds in IRL Stormwater,* UCF: *Atmospheric Deposition in the IRL*, IRLNEP: *Restoration Support Vessel*, FAU: *Building Seagrass Capacity through Infrastructure Investments Year 1*, FAU: *Building*

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Seagrass Capacity through Infrastructure Investments Year 2, and City of Port St. Lucie*: Septic to Sewer Conversions to Reduce Nitrogen Pollution in Known Hotspots in the City of PSL*.
It was also announced that he would participate in the Sea Trout Symposium in Daytona.

d. Executive Director Report (Duane De Freese)

Dr. De Freese announced that the OIG audit is complete and awaiting public release. Non-IRLNEP Funding opportunities links can be found in the Board of Directors' packet on the OneLagoon.org website. Thanks were given to Dan Kolodny for the amount of work he completed for the OIG audit.

12. IRL Council Member Reports

Sirena Davila, FDEP, had nothing to report.

Libby Pigman, SFWMD, reported the completion of the C43 reservoir on the Caloosahatchee River. An agreement was signed between the State of Florida and the US Department of the Army to accelerate Everglades restoration. The agreement will accelerate the Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir construction timeline and allow Florida to assume responsibility for the Blue Shanty flow way, enabling Florida to manage future CERT projects through expedited permitting and an updated federal MOU.

Sarah Heard, Martin County, announced successful applications for development in the western area of the county. The first purchase of conservation land has been approved, 400 acres of Palm Beach Heights, Palmar. Seeking approval to purchase conservation easements on the Barbie Ranch, 2000 acres. This was made possible by the citizens' approval of a half-cent sales tax.

Cole Oliver, SJRWMD, thanked Lauren Hall for presenting the preliminary data from the seagrass mapping. The M1 Canal project in Brevard County is complete, directing treated freshwater back to the St. John River and removing significant amounts of nutrients from the lagoon. The design phase of the C10 Water Management Area has begun with similar goals. The Blue School grant program applications are open.

Kim Adkinson, Brevard County, shared that several private sewer leak repairs and connections have been completed. Muck dredging is underway with thanks to the St. Johns River Management District, with assistance in finding a disposal site for the muck. 18 derelict vessels have been removed.

Joe Earman, Indian River County, announced Melissa Meisenburg, Lagoon Specialist, has been working on numerous lagoon improvement projects. Conservation land acquisition is underway in the negotiation phase. One of the properties under consideration is in violation of mangrove removal.

Duane De Freese, on behalf of Jeff Brower, Volusia County, pertaining to Senate Bill 180, is requesting a letter of support from the Board of Directors of the IRL Council in Volusia County's efforts to amend the bill. Discussion ensued.

SARAH HEARD MADE A MOTION TO STAY ALIGNED WITH THE IRL COUNCIL'S MISSION AND GOALS, AND THEREFORE NOT CREATE A LETTER OF SUPPORT. JOE EARMAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

13. IRL Council – Next Meeting Announcement (Joe Earman, Chair)

November 7, 2025, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Sebastian City Hall, Council Chambers, 1225 Main Street, Sebastian, FL 32958.

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14. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:26 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, 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 .

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