

Biscayne Bay Commission Minutes
Jan. 24, 2025, at 10 a.m. EST
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General subject matter overview: The Biscayne Bay Commission meets to review end-of-the-year updates from Miami-Dade County (MDC) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) following the postponement of the previously scheduled December meeting.

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Noah Valenstein	Chair	Present
Adam Blalock	Vice Chair	Present
Danielle Cohen Higgins	Commission Member	Present
Kevin Cabrera	Commission Member	Not Present
Micky Steinberg	Commission Member	Not Present
Tim Meerbott	Commission Member	Present
Scott Wagner	Commission Member	Not Present
Dr. Thomas Reinert	Commission Member	Not Present
Spencer Crowley III	Commission Member	Present

Welcome and Introduction

Mollie Cordo from DEP welcomes online attendees. She informs the audience that the meeting is being recorded, a copy of the agenda is available in the chat box and that public comments are due by Jan. 31, 2025. Public comments may be emailed to BBCommission@FloridaDEP.gov.

Commission Procedural Items

Chair Valenstein takes roll call.

Update from the Biscayne Bay Watershed Advisory Board (BBWAB)

Following an introduction by Commissioner Cohen Higgins, a team from MDC provides updates on the Biscayne Bay Water Quality Improvement Grant Program and various countywide accomplishments, including the Be Biscayne Friendly campaign and the Connect 2 Protect initiative. These updates primarily focus on water quality, septic to sewer conversions and outreach.

Commissioners provide comments between each team member's presentation. Commissioners Crowley and Blalock discuss technology used across sites for SmartCover Pilot studies.

Reasonable Assurance Plan (RAP) Update

Pamela Sweeney, of MDC, presents an update on the RAP. The presentation highlights the progress in RAP milestones and updates from various projects and meetings. The presentation provides a scope of progress and estimate of completion.

Commissioner Valenstein asks for an estimated date of completion for the RAP. Ms. Sweeney suggests final DEP review will occur summer of 2026 and the RAP will be finalized the following fall.

Strategic Plan and Project Tracker Review

Hampton Hotard, speaking on behalf of DEP, presents a review on the Strategic Plan and Project Tracker. The review provides an update on the three strategic goals contained in the Strategic Plan and a brief update on the Project Tracker.

No comments are made on this presentation.

Public Comments

Public comments are opened and led by Mollie Cordo. Each commenter is limited to three minutes.

- Commenter: Jackeline Bonilla — Urban Paradise Guild
 - Discusses designating nesting colony areas on Morningside Island.
- Commenter: Dave Doeblner — Biscayne Bay Marine Health Coalition
 - Discusses a lack of funding for Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Program.
- Commenter: Meghan Lerdo — Quest Corporation of America
 - Presents new methods of outreach with a focus on aerial footage.
- Commenter: Mayor Rachel Streitfeld — Mayor of North Bay Village
 - Thanks the DEP and provides support for the work undertaken by the department.
- Commenter: Sam Van Leer — Urban Paradise Guild
 - Discusses the Urban-Paradise Guild developed concepts to support the Back Bay Study, water quality and island protection. Mr. Van Leer emphasizes the lack of progress in designating Mangrove Island as a Protected Nesting Area.
- Commenter: Scott Pollowitz — Friends of Biscayne Bay
 - Provides suggestions for additional outreach tools and new outlets for grant funding regarding water quality. Discusses new Friends of Biscayne Bay projects.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Crowley emphasizes the need for continued investment in environmental protection within Biscayne Bay and notes the economic impact of Miami's waterways. He also discusses providing the public opportunities to get in the Bay and use it responsibly in order to boost environmental conservation. Commissioner Crowley suggests Palm Beach County present on their resource management efforts in the Lake Worth Lagoon area. Commissioner Valenstein requests the presentation for Palm Beach County be sent to all the Commissioners. He also suggests new meeting locations for future meetings.

Closing Remarks and Adjournment

Chair Valenstein makes closing remarks and reminds attendees that the next meeting will be in-person, likely at Cutler Bay. The meeting is adjourned.