

Biscayne Bay Commission Minutes
Feb. 15, 2023, at 9 a.m.
Florida International University's Biscayne Bay Campus and GoToWebinar

General subject matter overview: The Biscayne Bay Commission meets to review and discuss plans to address water quality impairments as well as the priority projects and financial resources that could address these plans.

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

Welcome and Introduction

Jon Moore from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Southeast District welcomes the room and asks all to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Jon informs the audience that the meeting is being recorded, a copy of the agenda is available for in-person and virtual attendees, and that public comments are due by Feb. 22, 2022, and can be emailed to BBCommission@FloridaDEP.gov. Jon thanks Florida International University for hosting.

Commission Procedural Items

Chair Valenstein takes roll call and requests a motion to approve minutes from the Nov. 30, 2022, commission meeting. Commission Member Tim Meerbott makes this motion and Commission Member Spencer Crowley III seconds; all are in favor.

Chair Valenstein notes that new commission members are waiting on appointments. He acknowledges the interest in stormwater at the last meeting and reviews the agenda for the day, including the hold of all discussion until after the public-comment period.

MS4 and Industrial Stormwater Program

An overview of the following is provided by Michelle Bull with the Stormwater Technical Services Program in DEP's Division of Water Resource Management.

- Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) – what it is and why it's regulated, permit requirements and proposed permit updates.
- Industrial stormwater permitting program.

Biscayne Bay Water Quality Improvement Grant Program

Victoria Barker, Coral Protection Coordinator with DEP's Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection, Coral Protection and Restoration Program, provides a summary of the total grant funding, projects submitted and approved, and estimates of the total nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) removed annually by these projects. Victoria details each of the seven projects that were selected for funding.

Strategic Plan for Water Quality Restoration in Biscayne Bay

Kristine Morris, DEP Assistant Deputy Secretary for Ecosystems Restoration, , presenting virtually, provides a status update on the strategic plan, which addresses environmental, economic, social, recreational and aesthetic issues of the bay. The development of the plan includes input from the commission and Miami-Dade County, including the Biscayne Bay Task Force, Watershed Management Advisory Board, and various stakeholders, plans, programs and proposals.

Following the presentation, commission members discuss the following:

- Expanding project tracking to include planned water quality improvement projects.
- Preservation of land for restoration or conservation needs.
- Green infrastructure, living shorelines, etc.

Irela Bague, Chief Bay Officer, Biscayne Bay Watershed Management Advisory Board, Miami-Dade County, gives an overview update on the reasonable assurance plan. Pamela Sweeney provides an update to the next steps for the plan.

Commission members continue discussing the following in relation to the strategic plan:

- The identification of any other existing plans, programs and proposals.
- The development of goals and milestones for specific actions.
- Whether to expand the existing project tracker to identify planned water quality improvement projects.
- Any additional direction on strategic planning.

Public Comments

Public comments are opened and led by Jon Moore. Each commenter is limited to three minutes.

- In-person commenters: Kellie Ralston, Laura Reynolds.
- Virtual commenters: Dave Doeblner, Rachel Silverstein.

Public comment period includes the following topics:

- The importance of recreational fishing as an economic driver and Biscayne Bay as an iconic destination for anglers and tourists.
- Request for nutrient information in groundwater data.
- Emphasis on land use, oversight and growth management.
- Support for MS4 program and permitting requirements.
- Increase emphasis on removing plastics, trash, floatables, and other marine debris in stormwater systems prior to entering the Bay.
- Need for monitoring and tracing of pollutants to a particular outfall or group of outfalls.

Commission Discussion

Chair Valenstein starts the discussion by addressing the homework and need to update the project tracker. He also notes that the Florida Inland Navigation District grant cycle is currently open for local governments and will close at the end of March.

Commissioners discuss alternative locations and topics of discussion/presentation for future meetings.

Closing Remarks and Adjournment

Chair Valenstein makes closing remarks. Jon Moore reminds attendees that comments are due by Feb. 22. The meeting is adjourned.