

Biscayne Bay Commission Minutes
July 23, 2025, at 10 a.m. EDT
Florida International University — 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 |
| Micky Steinberg | Commission Member | Present |
| Tim Meerbott | Commission Member | Not Present |
| Scott Wagner | Commission Member | Not Present |
| Dr. Thomas Reinert | Commission Member | Present |
| Spencer Crowley III | Commission Member | Present |

Welcome and Introduction

Mollie Cordo from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection welcomes the room and asks all to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. She 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 July 30, 2025. Public comments may be emailed to BBCommission@FloridaDEP.gov. Mollie Cordo thanks Florida International University for hosting.

Commission Procedural Items

Chair Valenstein takes roll call. Previous meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

David Holmberg, south regional biologist of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s (FWC’s) Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Restoration Section, provides a presentation on the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, Coastal Wetlands project at Oleta River State Park to restore mangrove habitat.

The commissioners discuss how projects like this can improve resilience for coastlines and mangrove habitat after hurricanes and opportunities for funding sources for future projects.

University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine, Atmospheric, and Earth Science

Ashley Rossin, a second year post-doctoral student at the University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine, Atmospheric, and Earth Science, presents on quantifying the restoration potential of corals from Miami’s urban areas because of their resilient qualities enabling them to bounce back from bleaching, ocean acidification and other events linked to environmental changes. The research is in collaboration

with many researchers at Cooperative Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Studies and the Atlantic Oceanic Meteorological Laboratory coral program.

The commission discusses funding timelines, the outlook for future urban coral spawning and potential support from Port of Miami connections.

Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserves Water Quality Monitoring Program

Tristan Clute, water quality technician for Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserves (BBAP), provides a five-year update on the water quality monitoring program after the Julia Tuttle seagrass die-off event in 2019, identifying the trends of temperatures, salinity, dissolved oxygen, turbidity and nutrient indicators like phosphorous, nitrogen and chlorophyll as measured by the discrete and continuous sampling programs in the basins and rivers of Biscayne Bay.

The commission discusses the progress made with monitoring as well as results of the monitoring efforts and how they can influence decisions for possible future projects that could improve bay health.

Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserves Benthic Monitoring Program

Veronica Lopez, spatial ecology coordinator for the Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserves, provides a summary of the benthic monitoring program that began in 2019 to assess the health of seagrass in the bay and its correlation with water quality.

The commission discusses the invasive *Halophila stipulacae* found recently in the Bill Sadowski Critical Wildlife Area and its distribution and rooting behaviors.

Public Comments

Public comments are opened and led by Mollie Cordo. Each commenter is limited to three minutes. There is a short break, and then public comment is opened.

- In-person commenter: Sam Van Leer
 - Updates on projects hosted by Urban Paradise Guild benefiting the bay and their willingness to partner with various organizations to mobilize volunteers; expressing concern about sediment stirrups and turbidity from boat wakes as well as the safety of paddleboarders when recreating close to wake zones; and advocating for a boating exclusion zone surrounding Mangrove Island that could protect birds from entanglement.
- In-person commenter: Dr. Roland Samimy
 - Question regarding nutrients and phosphorous levels and the procedures that are followed for sampling times.
- In-person commenter: Aliza Karim
 - Bring attention to Virginia Key mangrove die off that could be happening, leading to an opportunity for restoration; an increase in red algae in the bay and offshore that could be a result of nutrient loading; and that phosphorous being measured might not be an accurate representation of molecules entering the system because of a rapid uptake

from phytoplankton. Suggests looking at sources of pollution to understand the relationship between chlorophyll and phosphorus.

- In-person commenter: Ruth Gomez
 - Concerned citizen giving comments on budget cuts and the relationship to projects collecting data in Biscayne Bay.

- Online commenter: Laura Reynolds
 - Comments that the Biscayne Bay Reef, Observation, Interpretation and Prediction System (BBROIPS) is available for use and encourages people with data to upload and allows managers, the public to query all the data in Biscayne Bay in real time. Requests to present the capabilities of the system to the commission at a future meeting.

- Online commenter: Sandy Moise
 - Comments that Mangrove Island cleanup with Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserves and FWC was successful with mangrove planting; highlights the importance of the island as a bird rookery and the recent bird deaths from entanglement; expressed that seagrass scarring is a concern in the Julia Tuttle basin; willing to work with partners on building up the island to prevent erosion; and concerned about septic to sewer conversions and advocates for planting native species of plants that uptake nutrients from waste.

- Online commenter: Steven Lidner
 - Question about data deficit about pollutants from roadways and other impervious surfaces and what impact they have on water quality.
 - Tristan Clute answers to provide clarification on the scope of Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserves' testing for herbicides, pesticides, fungicides and other toxins.

- Online commenter: Valeria Donets
 - Representing Friends of Biscayne Bay, praise to the partners who helped execute the Derelict Trap Rodeo and the positive impact it made on the bay, removing 112 traps and over 780 lbs. of trash through the efforts of over 65 participants on land and on the water. Extends gratitude to all sponsors and prize winners of the event.

- Online commenter: Dave Doebler
 - Biscayne Bay Marine Health Coalition and a member of the Biscayne Bay Watershed Management Advisory Board, appreciates the presentations on water quality and Oleta mangrove restoration, hoping to see more projects that benefit seagrass restoration. Additionally, hopes for an annual trap closure season to host a derelict trap cleanup every year.

Commission Discussion

Chair Valenstein reminds commissioners to continue communicating through the project tracker and that the following meeting will be virtual.

Vice Chair Blalock echoes the sentiments from earlier comments about the successful Derelict Trap Rodeo. Additionally, he notes the grant cycle for Biscayne Bay water quality improvement was opened July 1 and will remain active until September 1.

Commissioner Reinert announces FWC's next commission meeting is Aug. 13-14 with a Biscayne Bay-related agenda item, a bonefish pre-spawning protection area in Biscayne National Park.

Commissioner Crowley announced Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) grant application cycle closed. He hopes to receive applicants for a 10-to-1 match for two spoil island grants aimed at cleaning up the Coconut Grove spoil islands.

Closing Remarks and Adjournment

Chair Valenstein makes closing remarks. Mollie Cordo reminds everyone that public comments are due by Wednesday, July 30, 2025. The meeting is adjourned.