

Biscayne Bay Commission Minutes
May 27, 2026, at 10 a.m. EDT
Microsoft Teams Webinar

General subject matter overview: The Biscayne Bay Commission meets to discuss matters pertaining to the protection of the vital natural resources within Biscayne Bay.

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 welcomed attendees online and informed the audience that the meeting is being recorded and broadcast over Microsoft Teams. She added that public comments are due by June 3, 2026, and may be emailed to BBCommission@FloridaDEP.gov.

Commission Procedural Items

Vice Chair Blalock took roll call and requested a motion to approve minutes from the February 12, 2026, meeting. The motion was made, seconded and passed with all in favor.

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Water Quality Protection Program Overview

Karen Bohnsack, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration affiliate working with the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS), and Dr. Nicholas Parr, the FKNMS Liaison and DEP Southeast Aquatic Preserve Manager, provided a presentation on the program framework and accomplishments of the FKNMS Water Quality Protection Program as well as the context around the program's inception. Ms. Bohnsack discussed the program's initial focus and the goals developed to foster collaborative work such as comprehensive monitoring efforts, corrective action to manage pollution, research, and dedicated outreach and education efforts. Dr. Parr highlighted the ongoing efforts and successes from each area of focus for the program.

Vice Chair Blalock asked about the opportunities for financial assistance offered to homeowners by the county or other avenues to connect to sewer lines. Dr. Parr provided insight as a resident of the Keys that the county covered the cost of the assessment for all residents, and additionally the cost of installation up to the resident's property line if they met the county's deadlines for application. Commissioner Steinberg mentioned the loan program she sponsored that covers a portion of the economic costs to Miami-Dade County residents when connecting to sewer lines.

Statewide Ecosystem Assessment of Coastal and Aquatic Resources (SEACAR) Program Overview

Cheryl Clark with DEP's Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection presented on the SEACAR Program and provided a comprehensive overview of their database that manages a variety of habitats and indicators across the coast of Florida. Ms. Clark highlighted the program's overarching goal of achieving connectivity through collaboration, coordination and data sharing to improve responses to challenges facing Florida's aquatic environments. The program has a publicly accessible data discovery page where visitors can search data from any of the 157 unique monitoring programs. Ms. Clark walked through the process to upload data as a contributing monitoring agency as well as data use cases.

The commission thanked Ms. Clark for her presentation and the resources that SEACAR provides for the state.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection Seafloor Mapping Initiative Overview

Alex Reed, DEP Director of the Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection, offered an overview of the Florida Seafloor Mapping Initiative that has been collecting LiDAR and sonar data to develop a seamless Digital Elevation Model of the bathymetry of Florida's continental shelf. The model will assist with resource management and restoration planning, storm surge analyses, coastal and hydrologic modeling, and navigation, among other analyses. Ms. Reed illustrated how the program began and the implementation challenges, such as extensive volume of data and multiple vendors collecting data at once.

Commissioner Reinert asked if Lake Okeechobee has been mapped in this way to see if there is any notable bathymetric data for historical and cultural points of interest. Ms. Reed noted that while the terrestrial data collection efforts in 2019 and 2020 collected topographic LiDAR data in the Lake Okeechobee region, there is little bathymetric data from that project due to low visibility. She indicated that sonar may be more successful for data collection in the lake. Commissioner Crowley highlighted that Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) has worked with the Army Corps of Engineers to map areas of the Intercoastal Waterway and offered to connect these datasets to ensure seamless mapping within all areas of Biscayne Bay.

Miami-Dade County Boater Safety and Bay Education Task Force

Nancy Jackson and Kathleen Oswald from Miami-Dade County's Department of Environmental Resources Management presented on the background of the Boater Safety and Bay Education Task Force and its accomplishments since its establishment in June 2025. Ms. Jackson outlined the impactful presentations they received throughout their seven public meetings from local, state and federal agencies as well as local nonprofit organizations and community stakeholders. Ms. Oswald walked through the final report being reviewed by the mayor that includes recommendations like creating a permanent advisory board to continue the work and a marine enforcement group within the county to aid collaboration between each law enforcement entity.

Commissioner Crowley emphasized the benefits of a collaborative marine patrol force on the waters to protect boaters as well as FIND's grant opportunities to assist with the repair and replacement of channel markers. Additionally, he highlighted the benefits of having local managed mooring fields. Commissioner Steinberg has created legislation for the Board of County Commissioners based on the recommendations from this task force.

Public Comments

Public comments opened. Each commenter was limited to three minutes.

- Virtual commenter: Valeria Donets
 - Commented on the need for continued investments in Biscayne Bay restoration and water quality improvements including Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) projects and land buying projects to protect from development pressures.

Commission Discussion

Vice Chair Blalock opened discussion to hear updates from commissioners or comments about today's meeting. He additionally encouraged all commissioners to complete and update the project tracker with ongoing or new projects.

Closing Remarks and Adjournment

Vice Chair Blalock turned to Mollie Cordo to close out the meeting where she encouraged commissioners to complete the project tracker and for those with written public comments to submit them to BBCommission@FloridaDEP.gov by June 3, 2026. The meeting is adjourned.