

Biscayne Bay Commission Minutes
July 27, 2022
9 a.m.

Florida International University's Biscayne Bay Campus and GoToWebinar

General subject matter considered: The Biscayne Bay Commission met to review and discuss plans to address water quality impairments and discussed Miami-Dade County's proposed Reasonable Assurance Plan, priority projects, and financial resources that could address current and future projects.

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Noah Valenstein	Chair	Present
Adam Blalock	Vice-Chair	Present
Jean Monestime	Commission Member	Present
Rebeca Sosa	Commission Member	Not Present
Danielle Cohen Higgins	Commission Member	Not Present
Tim Meerbott	Commission Member	Present
Charlie Martinez	Commission Member	Present/Online
Dr. Thomas Reinert	Commission Member	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 Aug. 3, 2022, and can be emailed to BBCommission@FloridaDEP.gov. Jon thanks Florida International University for hosting.

Commission Procedural Items

Chair Noah Valenstein takes roll call and requests a motion to approve minutes from the commission meeting on April 8, 2022. Commission Member Spencer Crowley III makes this motion, and Commission Member Thomas Reinert seconds; all are in favor.

Chair Valenstein acknowledges the robust conversations from the previous meeting and the desire for more discussion on water quality. Chair Valenstein reviews the agenda for the day, including the hold of all discussion until after the public comment.

Reasonable Assurance Plan for Biscayne Bay

Irela Bague, Chief Bay Officer for Miami-Dade County, gives an update on the Reasonable Assurance Plan (RAP) for Biscayne Bay.

Bague reviewed current water quality trends and emphasized that there are a number of sources of pollution bringing nutrient levels higher, resulting in algae blooms and fish kills. Bague also noted that the county is moving the Biscayne Bay coastal wetlands projects forward with the support of local communities and municipal, state and federal partners.

Bague then turned it over to Pamela Sweeney with Miami-Dade County who reviewed the “Biscayne Bay Report Card” that is available online at MiamiDade.gov/BiscayneBay. Sweeney emphasized that the county is focused on reducing nutrient loading, restoring seagrass and other benthic resources, and improving the understanding of the relationship among nutrients, oxygen and chlorophyll.

Sweeney also gave an overview of data collection, analysis and modeling being performed by the county’s contractor, CDM Smith, for the proposed RAP.

Following the presentation, commission members discussed the following:

- Commission Member Crowley asked about the target goal of the RAP – whether it was the historical nutrient level or the state standard.
- Commission Member Crowley confirmed that the RAP was tracking reductions in three constituents – nitrogen, phosphorous and chlorophyll.
- The similarities and differences between the RAP and the county’s municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) and how they work together.

Water Quality in the C-7/Little River and C-8/Biscayne Canal Basins

Ken Weaver, Deputy Director for the Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration at DEP, focused his presentation on two basins that are impaired and not meeting the numeric nutrient criteria, primarily chlorophyll. Weaver noted that both water bodies also have fecal coliform impairments and that stormwater, industrial stormwater and septic tanks are considered to be significant sources of pollution.

Following the presentation, the commission members discussed the following:

- **Wibits**, RAPs and phases of RAPs. How **wibits** are developed and how it plays into the RAP.
- The boundaries of the **wibit** being set based on the input from the county.

DEP Grants for Coral Reefs and Their Intended Impact on the Bay

Alex Reed, director of the Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection at DEP, gave an overview of available grant funding from the state, specifically through the Resilient Florida Program. Reed noted that Governor Ron DeSantis initially pledged to commit over \$2.5 billion over his first term addressing environmental challenges and water quality issues, but that his newly signed budget surpasses that goal for a total investment of \$3.3 billion over four years for Everglades and water quality. In addition, \$800 million in federal funding has also been dedicated.

Following the presentation, commission members discussed the following:

- Advancing the RAP will help ensure that it is able to meet its targets and dedicate funds to the highest nutrient-reducing projects.
- Whether the success of individual grants will lead to future state appropriations.
- The different types of the beneficial projects that could be funded by the grants.
- The different types of the agencies that use grant funding.

Public Comments

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

- In-person commenters: Marcos Pena, Audry Siu, David Doebler and Steve Leitner.
- Virtual commenter: Rachel Streitfeld.

Public comment period includes the following topics:

- There are more than just the three primary constituents (nitrogen, phosphorous and chlorophyll) discussed affecting water quality and seagrasses.
- Support for the RAP and emphasis on keeping the schedule and moving quickly.
- Request for presentation on MS4 stormwater permit process.
- Emphasis on restoration of seagrass.

Commission General Discussion

Chair Valenstein leads discussion on current and planned projects in North Bay Village, Coral Gables, Oleta River, Little River, etc.

Commission Discussion on Homework and Report

Alex Reed gave an update on the new format of the project portion of the semiannual report and its primary updates. The format changes include a list of projects, their status and any corresponding results. Reed noted that DEP will periodically request updates from agencies on their projects, but that this is intended to be a living document so they are encouraged to submit frequent updates.

Commission Member Crowley initiated a discussion about living shorelines after seeing a project listed in the sheet.

Closing Remarks and Adjourn

Chair Valenstein makes closing remarks and reminds commission members to look at funding resources along with assigned homework. Chair Valenstein motions to adjourn and all are in favor.