

Biscayne Bay Commission Minutes
Sept. 3, 2024, at 10 a.m. EST
Cutler Bay Town Hall – City Council Chambers 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
Kevin Cabrera	Commission Member	Not Present
Micky Steinberg	Commission Member	Present
Tim Meerbott	Commission Member	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 (DEP) 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 Sept. 10, 2024. Public comments may be emailed to BBCommission@FloridaDEP.gov. Mrs. Cordo thanks the town of Cutler Bay for hosting.

Commission Procedural Items

Chair Valenstein takes roll call.

Update on Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserves Spoil Islands Management

Griffin Alexander, presenting on behalf of the Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserves (BBAP), provides updates on various preserve projects, including bird surveys and marine debris surveys, as well as results of the latter. These updates primarily focus on projects around Mangrove, Pace and Sandspur Islands.

Commissioner Crowley suggests utilizing grant programs to fund trash removal. Commissioners deliberate between financing trash removal and implementing projects like the “Leave No Trace” Initiative.

Update on the City of Miami’s Leave No Trace and Spoil Islands

Chris Evans, of the city of Miami, presents an update on the “Leave No Trace” Initiative and the city’s Spoil Islands. The presentation highlights the city’s community involvement and provides a timeline of the “Leave No Trace” Initiative as well as enhanced enforcement measures.

Commissioner Crowley re-emphasizes the need for additional funding for trash removal. Commissioners debate the effectiveness of supplementary finances compared to a new public awareness campaign.

Reasonable Assurance Plan Update

Pamela Sweeney, speaking on behalf of Miami-Dade County, presents an update on the Reasonable Assurance Plan (RAP), with a focus on restoring water quality and habitat. The update provides an overview of the RAP's timeline and a 'report card' for the health of Biscayne Bay. Pamela notes the delay the county has experienced in implementing the RAP.

Commissioner Crowley discusses Biscayne Bay's impaired water body designation in 2017 and the lack of forward progress with the RAP. The Commissioners deliberate the RAP's setback and ask what immediate steps the county plans to take to ensure progress.

Overview of Biscayne Bay Monitoring Station

Dr. Nicholas Parr, of DEP, presents an overview of Biscayne Bay's Monitoring Stations. The presentation reviews site locations, methods of data collection and expands upon the utility of data collected from each site.

Commissioner Crowley suggests redistributing funds from data collection to cleaning the bay. The commissioners discuss the quantity of sampling sites, the importance of various metrics taken from each site and the utilization of outside water sampling organizations and their access to the Watershed Information Network (WIN). Dr. Parr notes the large number of organizations and water sampling sondes throughout the bay and the difficulty in processing such a large amount of information.

Public Comments

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

- In-person commenter: Scott Pollowitz
 - Discusses environmental, public health and economic impacts of debris on spoil islands. Suggests using webcams on spoil islands to track progress and observe compliance issues.
- In-person commenter: Anthony Adams
 - Discusses new construction and legislation that imposes on longstanding manatee habitat.
- In-person commenter: Sam Van Leer
 - Discusses the effected murky water, caused by speeding boats, has on Bay restoration. Requests boating speed limits to decrease murky water.
- In-person commenter: Dave Doebler
 - Discusses the "Leave No Trace" Initiative and the difficulties it faces. Suggests limiting access for island goers so they cannot bring as much gear onto the islands. Also mentions a boat marker audit in North Biscayne Bay.

- In-person commenter: Jeffrey Spears
 - Presents his opposition to the preapproved commercial marina permit. Discusses the harm it would pose to wildlife and water quality, as well as the difficulties law enforcement would experience in the area.
- In-person commenter: Earle Loomis
 - Presents his opposition to the preapproved commercial marina permit and his concerns for endangered species in the proposed construction area.
- In-person commenter: Albert Gomez
 - Discusses the effectiveness of the “Leave No Trace” Initiative when paired with proper law enforcement. Suggests permanent enforcement dedicated to spoil islands or utilizing webcams, as well as redirecting grant funds for island enforcement.
- In-person commenter: Silvio Pupo-Casco
 - Discusses the importance of education, engagement, enforcement and expenditures when implementing the “Leave No Trace” Initiative and the benefits they have when utilized simultaneously.
- In-person commenter: Marco Carrizosa
 - Presents concerns regarding how a proposed development obtained preapproval for a commercial marina and the lack of communication provided to residents in the area regarding upcoming construction.
- In-person commenter: Adriana González Fernández
 - Discusses expanding BBAP water quality datasets by including microbiological parameters and additional relevant parameters.
- Virtual commenter: Maria Gonzalez
 - Expresses concerns for the preapproved marina near Little River and not being notified of the update as a nearby resident. Likewise expresses concerns for wildlife around the new marina.
- Virtual commenter: Lauren Jonaitis
 - Presents findings from bird surveys of Mangrove Island as important habitat for Magnificent Frigate birds. Requests additional enforcement around the island as well as additional enforcement hires.
- Virtual commenter: Sandy Moise
 - Discusses the large amount of trash entering the Bay from stormwater drains as well as additional barriers around spoil islands to protect beachgoers. Likewise opposes the marina near Little River, especially due to its proximity to a Manatee Protection Zone.
- Virtual commenter: Kat Holland
 - Suggests a public service announcement to bring awareness to water quality, and a citizen patrol to aid in enforcement.

- Virtual commenter: Maji Ramos
 - Expresses concerns over the lack of signage at marinas and ramps, as well as improperly maintained recycling bins and trash cans. Requests additional funding for marine patrol and opposes the new marina in Little River.

Commission Discussion

Chair Valenstein starts by commending the Commissioners and members of the public for coming out in force to voice their concerns and bring awareness to numerous issues around Miami.

Closing Remarks and Adjournment

Chair Valenstein makes closing remarks and reminds attendees that the next meeting will not be at Cutler Bay, but likely held virtually in early December to accommodate for difficulties in aligning schedules. The meeting is adjourned.