

Palm Beach County Water Resources Task Force (WRTF)

Tuesday November 20, 2025, 9:00 AM

Vista Center, Room VC-1W-47 (1st Floor)

2300 North Jog Road, West Palm Beach, Florida 33411

Meeting Minutes

The following notes are a summary of the information provided at the discussions of the WRTF. This summary is not a transcript of the meeting.

Water Resources Task Force Members				
<u>Seat ID</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Alternate</u>	<u>Organization</u>
1	Malise Sundstrom	Town of Jupiter	Vacant	City elected official
2	Joaquin Almazan	City of Belle Glade	Vacant	City elected official
3	Lisa Interlandi	Village of North Palm Beach	Vacant	City elected official
4	DD Halpern	Town of Juno Beach	Vacant	City elected official
5	Karen Lythgoe	Town of Lantana	Vacant	City elected official
6	Greg Langowski	City of West Lake	Vacant	City elected official
7	Gregg Weiss (Chair)	Palm Beach County Mayor	Vacant	Palm Beach County Commissioner
8	Poonam Kalkat	City of Boynton Beach	Vacant	Water/Wastewater Provider Official
9	Tommy Strowd	Lake Worth Drainage District	Vacant	Lake Worth Drainage District
10	Vacant		Vacant	Drainage/Water Control District elected official
11	Jay Steinle	South Florida Water Management District	Mark Elsner	South Florida Water Management District
12	Rachelle Litt (Vice Chair)	Former Council Member City of PBG	Vacant	Environmental Representative
13	Robert Shorr	Town of Loxahatchee Groves	Vacant	Agricultural Representative
14	Michael Johnson	Indian Trail Improvement District	Greg Shafer	Indian Trail Improvement District

Roll call was taken with sufficient attendance for quorum. During roll call there were eight of thirteen appointed seats present. The members attending are listed below:

- Lisa Interlandi – Seat 3
- Karen Lythgoe – Seat 5
- Marci Woodard as the Alternate for Gregg Weiss – Seat 7
- Tommy Strowd – Seat 9
- Mark Elsner as the Alternate for Jay Steinle Seat 11
- Rachelle Litt – Seat 12
- Robert Shorr – Seat 13
- Michael Johnson – Seat 14

The following three members were absent.

- Malise Sundstrom - Seat 1
- Joaquin Almazan – Seat 2
- DD Halpern – Seat 4
- Poonam Kalkat – Seat 8
- Greg Langowski--Seat 6

With a quorum, there was unanimous approval of the July 15, 2025, meeting minutes.

Paul Linton, Palm Beach County's Water Resources Manager, provided a presentation on the status of Lake Okeechobee including the following information (Recovery Operations) to improve the submerged aquatic vegetation in the lake's littoral zone:

- Lake Okeechobee's stage at the end of the 2025 Wet Season was just below 14 feet NGVD which is two feet lower than last year.
- The current stage is a little below the lower quartile for the period of 1931 through 2020.
- The 2024 through 2025 dry season was exceptionally dry and this combined with the additional releases from Lake Okeechobee (Recovery Criteria) performed to provide improved littoral conditions and new aquatic vegetation resulted in a drawdown of five feet.
- Expect two to three feet of drawdown in 2025 through 2026 dry season.
- Water level is currently below and expected to stay below the Recovery Envelope. After the meeting the following information was provided by Paul Gray. To date, the lowered water level has resulted in the growth of about 28,000 acres of new aquatic vegetation in the littoral zone. Paul Gray expects considerable improvement this dry season.
- The current water supply issue is flow to the Caloosahatchee River Estuary (CRE). The USACE is currently delivering about 250 cfs and considering an increase to 350 cfs. 350 cfs is below the Minimum Flow and Level (MFL) of 457 cfs and the desired flow of at least 700 cfs. There is currently no obligation to meet the MFL as their recovery plan for the CRE includes completion of the C-43 Reservoir.

Member Lisa Interlandi made the clarifying point that flows below the MFL results in Significant Harm which is harm that takes more than two years to recover from (historically, loss of seagrass in the CRS takes much longer than two years).

Member Rachelle Litt asked what the likelihood of a water shortage is. Mr. Linton responded that it should be low for this dry season (based on the SFWMD position analysis, the likelihood of falling below the Water Shortage Management Band and subsequently below 10.5 feet NGVD is a little less than 25 percent).

Paul Linton, Palm Beach County's Water Resources Manager provided a presentation of LiDAR data acquired in 2025. The presentation provided LiDAR images from the Belle Glade's Marina and Torry Island Campground, golf course, agricultural fields, and SFWMD structures and canals.

Member Robert Shorr asked if this LiDAR would be used to update the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). Mr. Linton responded yes and communicated that FEMA will be using PBC LiDAR to update the FIRMs around Lake Okeechobee to reflect the lower risk of flooding with the USACE rehabilitation of the Herbert Hoover Dike. The LiDAR will also be used to update the FIRM maps for Eastern PBC including C-15, C-16, C-51, and C-18 (also Hillsboro Canal and C-17).

Brendan Brown, PWS of CDM-Smith provide a presentation on drones and AI. Mr. Brown's presentation started with explaining the difference between Administrative AI (e.g. writing reports) which use large amount of public data (with the risk of incorrect data) and Technical AI which use disciplined data sets for a specific objective. Mr. Brown communicated how Technical AI is quickly becoming cost effective due to the increased computing speed and the availability of GPS drones and multichannel high-resolution cameras. Mr. Brown discussed the need to have calibration and validation data. Mr. Brown provided the following case studies:

- Tracking Marsh Restoration in Savannah River. Tracking growth and viability of planted sea grass.
- Monitoring Ecosystems in Vero Beach – Identifying red mangrove, Australian pine, and seagrass when clear water conditions allowed.
- Identify Vegetation in Wildlife-Urban Interface to monitor exotics and fire risk.
- Presentation on how AI can make mistakes if not provided with appropriate information. The example was a case of AI evaluating cancerous and non-cancerous moles. The AI provided pictures of cancerous and non-cancerous moles. More cancerous mole pictures had measuring rules included in the pictures than the pictures of non-cancerous moles. This contamination of the data set resulted in the AI correlating the risk of cancer to the presence of a measuring rule in the image.
- Solar Site Feasibility and Wetland Mapping. For this study, CDM Smith used deep learning to evaluate the extent of uplands and wetlands in support of solar site feasibility.

The presentation has been uploaded to the WRTF webpage and includes additional case studies.

Vice Mayor Marci Woodard thanked Brandan for the presentation and communicated that it was good to see the disciplined approach used by Technical AI as the frequent hallucinations of (administrative) AI have been concerning.

Mr. Brown's presentation included information/encouragement that AI will improve engineering and environmental productivity. Increased productivity is needed as "There is a 400,000 to 800,000 position deficit each year." There were some questions about the source of this range of numbers as it seems high. Mr. Linton is following up with Brandan on his sources.