

# Dark Sky Protection for Myakka River State Park

**UPDATE: May 9, 2025**

Miri Hardy, PhD - Executive Director  
Friends of Myakka River

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In my December 13, 2024 presentation to the MRMCC,

- I illustrated increased light pollution at MRSP and in the river corridor
- Reviewed existing relevant policies and management objectives
- Discussed next steps to reduce detrimental impacts from light pollution on MRSP and the river corridor.

**Progress since December 13, 2024**

# **Chair letter to the BCC**

## **December 27, 2024**

Commissioners:

As you may know, the Myakka River Management Coordinating Council (MRMCC) was envisioned by Senator Bob Johnson and created by the Florida Legislature in 1985 (F.S. 258.501), as a unique citizen/agency amalgam. Despite Senator Johnson's intentions, the wild and scenic designation only applies in Sarasota County. The Council he imagined and created has worked for nearly four decades to provide management guidance regarding the Myakka River in general and the State-designated Wild and Scenic River in particular. The Council was charged by the Legislature to provide non-binding advisory opinions. This letter is just such an opinion.

On December 13th, Miri Hardy, representing Friends of Myakka River, made a presentation to the Council documenting the damaging effects of light pollution and she showed dramatic satellite imagery demonstrating the increase in light pollution in the Myakka watershed. She outlined the following next steps:

- To seek necessary action to control and reduce negative impact and growing threats to the park and the river from light pollution, Friends of Myakka River plan to meet with Sarasota County Commissioners to share the attached presentation (shared with the MRMCC on 12/13/24) with their concerns.
- Per feedback from SC staff, Friends of Myakka River plan to request actions necessary for implementing enforceable protections for the park and river as per policies outlined in the UDC and the Sarasota County Comprehensive Plan.

Following her presentation, Stacey Mazza-Gilkison (Friends of Myakka River's council member) motioned that in light of the concerning increase in light pollution at Myakka River State Park and the Wild and Scenic Myakka River Corridor, as illustrated in Friends of Myakka River's presentation to the Council, she moves *that the council directs the chair to write a letter supporting Friends of Myakka River's efforts to seek necessary action by the Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners to control and reduce negative impact to the park and the river from light pollution.* Becky Ayech seconded. Caroline Ritchey, Howard Berna, Sabrina Weiss, Emily Barnett and Frank Gargano abstained. The motion passed.

Commissioners, the Wild and Scenic Myakka River Designation Act and the DEP approved management plan call for "preserving and enhancing" the natural resources values of the Myakka River.

For example, the Act states: *"Permanent protection and enhancement of the ecological, fish and wildlife, and recreational values within the river area, primary emphasis being given to protecting agricultural, aesthetic, scenic, historic, archaeological, and scientific features."*

**In light of the attached presentation, The Council shares Friends of Myakka River's concerns about the growing detrimental impact of light pollution and supports Friends of Myakka River's efforts to to seek necessary action by the Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners to control and reduce negative impact to the park and the river from light pollution.**

Sincerely,

Jono Miller

2024 Chair, Myakka River Management Coordinating Council

**Article by Derek Gilliam in the Herald Tribune**  
**January 4, 2025**



**Sarasota-Manatee advisory council supports measures to keep skies dark amid development**

[heraldtribune.com](http://heraldtribune.com)

# **Meetings with Sarasota County Commissioners**



- In February and March, 2025, I had one on one meetings with the 5 SC Commissioners to:
  - Share evidence of growing light pollution
  - Discuss why this is an issue
  - Request actions necessary for implementing enforceable protections for the park and river as per policies outlined in the UDC and the SC Comp Plan
  - Review dark sky best practices

- In April 2025, the BCC directed staff to review other jurisdictions for their best Dark Sky practices and provide a report.
- I have asked for an appointment with the Chair to touch base and discuss next steps.