



**Jimmy Peluso
City Council District 14
Candidate Survey**

1. What do you consider to be the most significant threats to the health of the St. Johns River? What do you specifically plan to do to address these problems, if elected?

The long lasting threats to the St. Johns River are all related to human activity. The lack of water infrastructure and investment towards capturing nutrients has threatened so many water bodies in Florida, but none is larger than the St. Johns River. I consider this to be one of our greatest threats. The basin of the river is made up of 18 counties, and as we see more growth in those counties, we should expect tens of thousands of new automobiles and people who could impact the river. The goal should be for the city to update and execute a new version of the "River Accord." Created in 2003, the plan was intended to reduce the number of septic systems in the city and help clean the river, though implementation in recent years has been slow and political activity has been anemic. I would like to see the plan updated, and further integrate into the DEPs Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) for the lower St. Johns River. The BMAP would provide some real "teeth" to the accord and make sure that Jacksonville, and other counties and municipalities in the region, take the time and effort to find new solutions to reduce nutrient loads and prepare for the additional growth in the region. This would also provide the city and other partners with more resources than we previously had before.

2. Would you support the creation of a Chief Resiliency Officer position? What other measures do you think are necessary to create a more resilient Jacksonville?

I would be very supportive of creating a Chief Resiliency Officer (CRO) in the city. It is desperately needed, and should be required by our municipal code. I would also petition for our city to re-join the "100 resilient cities" pledge which we left in 2015, after Mayor Curry took office. The financial assistance from the group could have provided our city with the funds to hire a CRO and provide recommended projects that could have been started by now. Funding is available from the state and state agencies, such as the St. Johns River Water Management District, through its cost-share program. We can take advantage of the program, just like St. Augustine has done, and prepare our city with competitive projects for grants. St. Augustine received almost \$1.5 million in 2018 from the District for it's projects, and we should be following suit.

3. Do you support dredging the St. Johns River from 40-47ft. and contributing significant local tax dollars to the project? If so, would you also support adequate funding to mitigate the damage to the river and low-lying communities that may experience additional flooding?

I will only support the dredging of the river when we see significant mitigation funding. Mayor Brown requested \$50 million for mitigation, and that should be the benchmark for further negotiations with the federal government as the city proceeds with dredging. We will need significant funding for flood mitigation measure near the mouth of the river, which will include converting properties into wetlands and soil remediation. This funding should also be used to assist low lying communities, though only after these areas are selected by the city.

I personally believe our city should push for the breaching of the Rodman Dam, and leverage our relationships in Tallahassee with our new Governor (a Jax native) to finally make progress on re-establishing the natural flow of the Ocklawaha River into the St. Johns. It would provide the river with cleaner waters from a cleaner source.

4. Some counties, such as Alachua, have adopted enhanced wetland protections. Would you support enhanced local wetland protections to reduce the loss of wetlands in Duval County, such as larger buffer and more stringent mitigation requirements?

I would support enhanced protections. It would be an ideal tool to help contain growth in the city and will be useful to keeping our river clean.

5. What, if anything, would you do to encourage or require Low Impact Development and Green Infrastructure to treat and manage stormwater in Jacksonville?

One of my major campaign themes is to change the growth model in Jacksonville and pursue growth in areas where infrastructure currently exists (infill development). I would like to see the city use impact, mobility and concurrency fees to incentivize developers to build and develop closer to the city center as opposed to areas where there is just open land or wetlands. We could reduce the fees in areas where there is already infrastructure, but we should increase fees for areas outside of the more urban areas.

The city and state could provide a fund specifically used for green infrastructure.

6. Would you support investing in projects that will allow us to further reduce nutrient loading into the St. Johns, or buying credits to meet the City's BMAP and permit requirements?

I would prefer investing in projects. Investment means we are proactively pursuing a cleaner Jacksonville and I would rather take the time and money to solve problems

today, rather than use credits to mask the problem and continue growing further outward.

7. Would you support a comprehensive plan to restore tributaries to the St. Johns River in Duval County?

I would support a comprehensive plan, but it will likely take state and regional partners in order to truly be successful. We will need DEP, the SJRWMD and nearby counties for support and cooperation.

8. What will you do to address this serious ongoing problem of failing septic tanks and to ensure that the City can fulfill its BMAP obligations for the tributaries?

I would pursue pushing JEA to increase the septic tank removal program, though the city and JEA currently intend to spend \$30 million over five years, we should increase the timetable and spending on the program. The city still has about 60,000 to 85,000 septic systems and we should be pursuing policies that require JEA to remove the majority of them within the next 20 years.

9. Do you think Duval County should allow permits for new septic tanks, or require the use of performance-based treatment systems?

Duval County should place a moratorium on new septic systems. The use of performance based treatment systems could be used under certain circumstances.