

The mission of the St. Johns Riverkeeper is to protect, preserve and restore the ecological integrity of the St. Johns River watershed for current users and future generations through advocacy and citizen action.

[www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org](http://www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org)

## Riverkeeper Update

--By Neil Armingeon, Riverkeeper

**Your** St. Johns Riverkeeper is currently addressing the following issues. You will see that we're busy fighting to protect and preserve the watershed of the St. Johns River.



Riverkeeper Neil Armingeon stands beside one of the remaining "old growth" trees that would be destroyed by the proposed Freedom Commerce Center development.

### Pollution reduction for the Lower St. Johns River

The St. Johns Riverkeeper (SJRK) and Clean Water Network (CWN) have filed a 60-day notice of intent to sue the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) unless this federal agency establishes meaningful nutrient reduction goals for the lower St. Johns River. This proposed action is part of our continuing campaign to hold regulatory agencies accountable for the continuing decline of the river's ecological health.

Nitrogen and phosphorus nutrients entering the river are causing massive blue green algae blooms that harm aquatic grasses and lower oxygen levels. Last September, the SJRK charged that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) pollution reduction plan was insufficient, and it would not protect the river's health. The state ignored that challenge and submitted the plan to the EPA anyway. The EPA has failed to act on the plan partially due to the fact the DEP has not submitted all the necessary information with the plan.

*Continued on page 2*



## Member and Donor Appreciation Party

You are invited to join us Sunday, April 18 from 4 to 6PM at the House on Cherry Street, 1844 Cherry St., with owner Victoria Register-Freeman as our hostess! This award-winning B&B has been featured in *Southern Living* and *The New York Times* and is the first and oldest B&B in Jacksonville. Guests will enjoy delicious food donated by Fisherman's Dock, Camille's Sidewalk Café, and Tidbits. Violinist, Beverly Chapman, will provide entertainment. Please RSVP by April 15 by calling 904-256-7591.

## NEW ST. JOHNS RIVERKEEPER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jimmy Orth is the new Executive Director of the St. Johns Riverkeeper. Jimmy works closely with the Riverkeeper, Neil Armingeon, and the Board of Directors as he oversees the operations of the organization.

Jimmy has extensive experience working on environmental issues in the Northeast Florida area through his previous involvement with other environmental organizations, which included serving on the executive committee and as a regional chairman. In addition, he founded a chapter of an educational program which exposes inner city youth to the outdoors, served as its chair for 5 years, and was recognized with the annual Celebration of Service "Nature of Caring" award.



Jimmy has also had a major role in the organizational efforts of the annual St. Johns River Celebration and Cleanup. In 2002, Jimmy managed the political campaign of Andy Wojcicki who ran for the Florida State Senate. Through his significant volunteer service and activism, Jimmy has demonstrated his commitment to

our River, our environment, and our community.

Jimmy received his undergraduate degree from Florida State University in Marketing and a Masters in Public Administration from University of North Florida. Jimmy is a native of Jacksonville with a passion for the outdoors and for NE Florida. His hobbies include canoeing, off-road biking, and hiking.

## From the Helm

-Roger Bass, St. Johns Riverkeeper Board of Directors Chair

The first definable open water of the St. Johns River begins to flow north out of the St. Johns Marsh. I was looking at a section of open water only 20 feet wide and was told that it was the St. Johns River, quite a contrast to the normal three miles River that I am familiar with in North Florida. I could almost jump across this skimpy little piece of water that is 310 miles south of where the river meets the Atlantic Ocean and is about even with Vero Beach.

Thanks to the St. Johns River Water Management District, I accomplished a long-term goal of mine last December to see first hand the headwaters of the St. Johns River. The District provided two airboats and two very knowledgeable guides (Hector Herrera and Ken Snyder) for me, Riverkeeper Neil Armingeon, and SJRK Steering Committee member Beverly Fleming. We saw the upper basin from south of Blue Cypress Lake to SR 92 North of Lake Hell "N" Blazes and Lake Sawgrass. We rode up dry berms and dikes 10 feet or more above the water level and slid around bends in both mud and open water to confront a tremendous variety of wildlife. We saw 100 alligators from 3 to 10 feet or more, probably close to 100 ospreys, and more than 30 kingfishers (near to the heart of a St. Johns Riverkeeper member -see our logo), as well as snail kite, eagles, coopers and red tail hawks, white ibis, wood storks, gallinules, herons and egrets beyond count.

If writer Marjorie Stoneman Douglas had seen the St. Johns Marsh before it was altered, she probably would have referred to it also as "a river of grass." The saw grass marsh looks in many ways very similar to the Everglades.

One or two miles south of where we began, a sheet flow of water slowly moves SW forming the Everglades and then another flows north to form the St. Johns Marsh and eventually the St. Johns River. Like the Everglades, the St. Johns Marsh has been heavily altered by man through the digging of canals and dikes for draining and flood control, conversion to agricultural and harvesting of peat. Between 1900 and 1970 this marsh shrank drastically due to these activities and the assistance of the Army Corps of Engineers. The effect on the St. Johns River of this loss of headwaters and the addition of untreated agricultural runoff was significant. During the 1980's and 1990's, the District and the Corp worked together to eliminate some canals, reflood some purchased agricultural areas, and to create several very large retention wetlands to filter nutrients out of runoff before the water is allowed to again mix with the Marsh and River.

This experience on the upper St. Johns gave me a much greater appreciation of the size and diversity of this river. To truly know the St. Johns River takes a lot of time and effort. It is a BIG river. It is a MAGICAL river. Get out and experience the St. Johns River for yourself.

### KAYAK PADDLE JUNE 13

Paddle with us Sunday, June 13 from 3 to 6 pm.

Kayak Amelia will provide equipment, instruction and guided tour for \$55 per person and will donate all monies to the St. Johns Riverkeeper. Call Kayak Amelia to RSVP: 904-251-0016

### St. Johns Riverkeeper Wish List

- Digital Camera
- Color Computer Printer
- Slide Projector
- PowerPoint Projector
- Four stroke 175-200HP Motor

### Riverkeeper Update – cont'd from page 1

SJRK's notice gives the EPA 60 days to develop a more suitable nutrient reduction plan for the lower river. If they fail to act by the deadline, they will be sued under the Clean Water Act. The Mid-Atlantic Environmental Law Center is representing the SJRK and CWN.

The CWN is an alliance of over 1,100 organizations that endorse the need for strong clean water safeguards in order to protect public health and the environment.

### Georgia Pacific Pipeline

SJRK and CWN recently released excerpts from a report written by Florida State researcher Dr. Robert J. Livingston who had been retained by the Georgia Pacific paper mill to examine nutrient pollution coming from the mill. Livingston reported that the mill was "the single most important influence on the ecological conditions in the St. Johns River" and was responsible for harmful blue green algae blooms in Rice Creek associated with high nutrient loading.

SJRK believes this data warrants another look at the mill's proposed plan to pipe up to 60 million gallons/day of wastewater into the St. Johns River. This data should also cause the DEP to reopen its permit process and the Corps of Engineers' wetlands permit process for Ga. Pacific. SJRK has joined others to fight the Corps' permit by asking that they hold a public hearing to gather additional comments.

### Water Supply/Drinking Water and the River

SJRK attended a St. Johns River Water Management District's (WMD) briefing on the use of the river as a drinking water source in Sanford. The meeting made it clear that many decisions have already been made.

The WMD has determined that between 170 and 200 million gallons can be "safely" removed from the river for drinking water, a number that would supposedly not reduce the river's flow beyond normal minimum levels. The first withdrawals will occur in the middle basin around Lake Monroe, and the proposed intake and treatment plant will be located somewhere in Lake, Seminole, or Volusia County.

SJRK will continue to monitor this issue and report back to our membership.

### Construction Site Runoff

Construction site runoff is clogging our streams, harming aquatic life, hindering recreational boating and reducing property values. SJRK is continually campaigning to prevent and reduce runoff. We field complaints from citizens and refer them to the proper agency, and work with citizens on sediment ordinance violations and illegal wetland filling.

In an attempt to strengthen local ordinances to control and eliminate sediment runoff, the Jacksonville Waterways Commission asked the SJRK to organize a group of citizens

*Continued on page 3*

## Boat Excursions Make Lifelong River Advocates

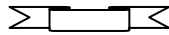
14-year-old Chelsea Mann (below) shares her experiences on the March Riverkeeper boat excursion

The first time I have ever been on the St. Johns River was on the Riverkeeper's excursion. It was a very exciting adventure. I really enjoyed how we got to see all kinds of different animals and birds. The speakers were full of information, and they were really interesting. We got to hear about the St. Johns history and habitat. We got to go to many different places. I never knew the river was so big! This was a very exciting and enjoyable adventure (vacation).



Chelsea was one of 49 passengers on the March 16-18 St. Johns Riverkeeper boat cruise from Jacksonville to Sanford. This trip and the return trip back to Jacksonville on March 19-21 were extremely successful. The dates for the upcoming November boat trips will be determined in April. Call 256-7591 or send an e-mail to [jorth@ju.edu](mailto:jorth@ju.edu) to be placed on the waiting list.

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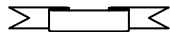


### FROM OUR MEMBERS

*“What made me care about clean water”*

**Donald & Carol Sexauer:** We took a 3-day boat trip with you this past year. Loved it, enjoyed the people, was impressed by the Riverkeeper and care of our water. Want to do it again. So we're happy to be a small part of the Riverkeeper so we all can enjoy it.

**Frederick Wright:** I have sailed for over 60 years and always respected the water. This year I got a bacterial infection from the water in the Ortega River. It is taking over 1 year to cure. Wear Gloves!! It has been and still is a major event.



### Roger Bass Receives Prestigious Award

On April 1, 2004, Roger Bass, Chair of St. Johns Riverkeeper, received the prestigious Nature of Caring award. The award was presented to Roger at the annual Volunteer Jacksonville “Celebration of Service” awards ceremony at the Times Union Center for the Performing Arts. Thousands attend this annual event to honor the efforts of Florida's First Coast volunteers.

This honor was bestowed upon Roger for his efforts in starting the St. Johns Riverkeeper program and his outstanding volunteer contributions to the organization and our community. For more about Roger's award, visit [www.volunteerjacksonville.org](http://www.volunteerjacksonville.org).

### Riverkeeper Update - Cont'd from page 2

to speak to their water quality committee about the impacts of construction runoff on their waterways. The citizens spoke eloquently about problems with Big Fishweir Creek, the Ortega River, and Greenfield Creek.

#### **Freedom Commerce Center**

SJRK continues to work with the local Sierra Club, Florida Wildlife Federation and local citizens to prevent the potential loss of 262 acres of wetlands on the Freedom Commerce Center (FCC) tract. The tract contains the headwaters of Pottsburg and Julington Creeks and is the proposed site of a shopping center. The proposal would be the largest single permitted loss of wetlands in the St. Johns Watershed. SJRK is hosting a public meeting on **April 8 at 7PM at Mandarin Community Club** to inform the public about this proposed project and its impact on the River.

We have met with the developer, city officials, and staff from the WMD to seek ways to acquire the land for preservation. If acquisition plans fail, the groups will take legal actions to stop the project.

#### **Rivertown**

Riverkeeper Neil Armingeon spoke before the St. Johns County Commission at a public hearing on the proposed Rivertown subdivision. Rivertown, a 4,500 home subdivision, is a proposed new development in St. Johns County. The development will destroy 125 acres of wetlands and negatively impact water quality in the St. Johns River and important creek systems. The commission approved the plan at the seven-hour hearing.

Although the odds are very much against us, SJRK will continue to work with citizens in the area during the next steps of the regulatory permitting process.

### St. Johns Riverkeeper

2800 University Blvd.  
Jacksonville, FL 32211 904-256-7591  
[www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org](http://www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org)

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Jimmy Orth, *Executive Director*  
Neil Armingeon, *St. Johns Riverkeeper*

The St. Johns Riverkeeper is a 501©(3) nonprofit membership organization dedicated to maintaining an on the water presence to investigate pollution, respond to citizen complaints and be an advocate for the St. Johns River.

**The Kingfisher is a quarterly publication of the St. Johns Riverkeeper and is printed on recycled paper.**

## Current St. Johns Riverkeeper Members (as of March 22, 2004)

*Please let us know if we have made an error in your name and please take a moment to send us your most recent Email address.*

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|   |  | Mr. and Mrs. Danny Weaver                   |   |

**GOT COMPLAINTS OR SEE VIOLATIONS?  
First, DOCUMENT days & times & pictures**

- Sewage**  
call the Dept. of Health.....**630-3274 or 630-3251**
- Illicit Connections**  
call the City of Jacksonville's Care Center.....**630-CITY**
- Water quality/fish kills inside Jax**  
call the City of Jacksonville.....**630-CITY**
- Water quality/fish kills outside Jax**  
call the FL Dept. of Environmental Protection.....**807-3300**
- Construction**  
call St. Johns River Water Management District.....**730-6270**
- Hazardous waste spills**  
call FDEP Bureau of Emergency Response.....**807-3245**  
or The state Warning Point.....**800-320-0519**  
or U.S. Coast Guard.....**232-2648**
- Chemical Spills and Pollution.....630-3404**  
For 24-hour emergency response.....**911**
- Water Pollution.....630-3404**
- Groundwater Contamination.....630-3404**
- Water Well Information.....630-3404**
- Evenings & Weekends.....630-2489**
- The City says that you can FAX a brief description of your problem: 630-3638. Please include a daytime phone number for a return call to discuss the problem.*
- If the job doesn't get done, call the St. Johns Riverkeeper at 904-256-7591.**

*Please consider including the  
**St. Johns Riverkeeper**  
in your estate planning.  
For more information, please call Jimmy at 904.256.7591*

**FIRST COAST BIRDING  
AND NATURE FESTIVAL**

Nature lovers of all ages will get a close up look at the region's abundance of birding and wildlife during the First Coast Birding and Nature Festival when it returns to St. Augustine May 13-16. Participants can select from more than 75 field trips, boat trips, workshops and special events presented by leading experts from throughout northeast Florida.

For a full schedule of events, registration and more information on the First Coast Birding and Nature Festival, go to [www.Getaway4Nature.com](http://www.Getaway4Nature.com) and click on the festival logo. A complete guide to the festival may be obtained by sending an e-mail to [emasters@visitoldcity.com](mailto:emasters@visitoldcity.com) or by calling the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches Visitors and Convention Bureau at 800.653.2489.

***VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!***  
*Contact Jimmy at 904-256-7591 or [jorth@ju.edu](mailto:jorth@ju.edu)*

- Newsletter Editor
- Help design the RK display board and educational materials for kids.
- Website development
- Boat Patrol and Water Monitoring
- Event booth staffing:
  - \*April 17- Earth Day at The Landing
  - \*May 15-Wolfson Children's Hospital Bass Tournament, Palatka
  - \*July 19-24-Jacksonville Kingfish Tournament

## ST. JOHNS RIVERKEEPER CALENDAR

*Call Jimmy for more information:  
904-256-7591*

**April 17:** Earth Day at The Landing

**April 18:** RK Member Appreciation Party at the House on Cherry Street

**May 15:** Wolfson's Bass Tournament

**May 16:** Boat Cruise Reunion Party

**June 13:** Paddle with Kayak Amelia

**July 19-24:** Kingfish Tournament

### **Riverkeeper Meetings**

Riverkeeper board members & steering committee members only

6:00 pm

at Oracal, USA, 7251 Salisbury Rd.

**April 19**

**May 17**

**June 21**

**July 19**

**August 16**

**Sept. 20**

**Oct. 18**

**Nov. 15**

### **THANK YOU....**

Lonnie Loonam and No More Clutter, Oracal, Camille's Sidewalk Café, Fisherman's Dock, Tidbits, S.S. Marine Taxi, Jacksonville University, Ralph Mitchell, Lane Welch, Carrie Schultz, Keith Myers, Deborah Laird, Laurie and Ernie Clark, Shorty Robbins, Beverly Fleming, Beverly Chapman, Andy Chapman, Jennifer Sagan, Bill Dreggors, Bill Bellville, Wayne and Jane Sims, Teresea Sopp, John Hodge, John Burns, Dr. Paul and Willa Nell Wilcox, Karen McCombs, Marcia Lane, Maureen Shaughnessy, Jim Orth Sr., Jeff Marks, Katey Breen, and all of the St. Johns River Cleanup and MOSH volunteers.