

# THE KINGFISHER

KEEPING WATCH OVER OUR RIVER



Vol. 11 Autumn 2014

## Riverkeeper Update



The good news is that our economy seems to be rebounding, albeit slowly. However, that does not necessarily bode well for our river. Unfortunately, population growth and economic development have historically resulted in significant harm to our waterways. As more people move into the St. Johns River watershed, more land will be cleared and wetlands filled, more polluted stormwater will run off from streets and parking lots, and more water will be consumed and potentially exploited. In

fact, it could be even worse this time around.

In recent years, ill-informed politicians have gutted our growth management system, slashed conservation budgets, and weakened or eliminated many important environmental protections. We also missed the opportunity to get a handle on our existing water pollution problems and prepare for future environmental challenges during the economic downturn. Instead of setting the stage for a more sustainable future, we have set our river up for potential collapse. As a result, we run the risk of losing ground, making it more difficult and expensive to eventually restore our river's health.

Now, near the headwaters of the St. Johns in Osceola County, Deseret Ranch is seeking approval to develop 133,000 acres for up to 500,000 people. To make matters worse, Deseret is planning to dam two tributaries that flow to the St. Johns to create a huge reservoir to supply water for this massive new community.

Central Florida is moving forward with plans to withdraw millions of gallons of water a day from the St. Johns to meet the future water needs of this fast growing region.

More than 85 springs provide the St. Johns River with a critical source of clean freshwater. However, spring flows are in decline and nitrate pollution is on the rise, a result of over-pumping from the aquifer, failing septic tanks, and runoff from fertilizers and manure. Sleepy Creek Lands, a massive cattle operation, threatens to make matters worse for Silver Springs, by withdrawing more than 2.5 million gallons of water a day from an over-tapped aquifer for up to 9,500 cows.

Near the mouth of our river, JAXPORT wants to remove 18 million cubic yards of sediment and rock to increase the depth of the St. Johns from 40-feet to 47-feet. This would cause salinity to move farther upstream, impacting critical freshwater wetlands, submerged aquatic grasses, and fisheries.

Sprinkled in between will be other residential and commercial developments and unforeseen impacts that will chip away at the river's health.

The cumulative impacts of these proposed projects would negate any progress that has been made and potentially cause a rapid decline in the health of the St. Johns.

However, it doesn't have to be this way. The St. Johns cannot forewarn us of the consequences of our decisions or steer us toward a more sustainable path, but we can and must. We can have economic prosperity without sacrificing our most important economic asset, the St. Johns River. But to achieve this important balance, we must stand united to protect our mighty river.

The solutions aren't always easy or cheap, but they are worth the investment. We have the power to decide the river's future. The question is which path will we choose?

For the River,

*Lisa*

Lisa Rinaman – Your St. Johns Riverkeeper



## Our members matter!

The Members Matter Low Country Boil was a big hit, allowing us to show our appreciation to our members and recruit new folks to our team. As you may know, our membership campaign goal is to increase our membership by 20% by the end of 2014. But we can't get there without your help. Our strength is in our numbers!

Learn more about our ongoing Membership Campaign and how you can help grow our ranks on our website or by contacting [jimmy@stjohnsriverkeeper.org](mailto:jimmy@stjohnsriverkeeper.org).



**WATER  
YOU  
WAITING  
FOR?**

**TELL A FRIEND TODAY  
SIGN UP AT [SJRK.ORG](http://SJRK.ORG)**



## News & Notes

As a part of the Waterkeeper Alliance's Swimmable Water Week, our staff accepted the challenge and all jumped into the St. Johns to demonstrate our support for swimmable, fishable waters in the U.S.



Peterbrook Chocolatier stores donated 15% of proceeds during the weeklong Peterbrook Promise campaign.

Our volunteers staffed a table at Ferry Fest to support the St. Johns River Ferry. Rising Tides, our young professionals group, also organized the Save the Ferry Bike Ride for nearly 100 riders.

Two Rising Tides cleanups hosted by Intuition Ale Works



brought in over 30 bags of trash with just as many volunteers. In addition, \$1 from all pints sold went to help us purchase more cleanup supplies to continue the hard work.

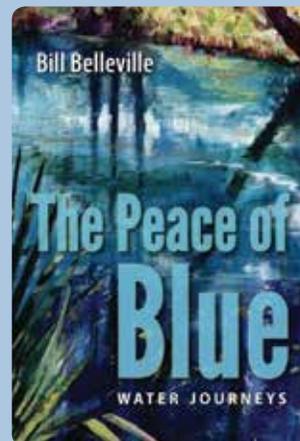
The Avondale W90+ store in Jacksonville donated proceeds from weekly wine tasting events to support our work!

Aqua East hosted its annual SUP Race on Six Mile Creek from Outback Crab Shack and raffled off a brand new SUP board to benefit SJRK. Thanks guys!

We partnered with the Jacksonville Songwriters Residency to create a new St. Johns River category for the annual Gram Parsons Songwriting Contest. The winner, Al Poindexter, won a \$250 prize for his original composition "Hyacinth Drift" that you can hear on his website [www.alpoindexter.com](http://www.alpoindexter.com).

We organized a public event at Tree Hill Nature Center to celebrate the release of Bill Belleville's newest book, "Peace of Blue: Water Journeys."

SJRK entered a team in the annual Jacksonville Dragon Boat Festival. We placed 2nd in the Community Category and had a blast competing on the St. Johns while supporting a great



# Give the gift that keeps on giving

This holiday season, give the gift of the river to your friends, family and co-workers.

Here are some great ways to support St. Johns Riverkeeper, while giving those on your shopping list a gift with purpose:

- A gift membership is great way to benefit our river all year long. Give the gift of membership on the JOIN page of our website or call our office today.
- Make a gift in memory of a loved one or in honor of someone who cares about the St. Johns.
- Give a gift certificate for passage on our next 2-day Eco-Heritage Boat Trip in April 2015.
- Riverkeeper merchandise makes great gifts. We have tote bags, notecards, hats, tees, and fishing shirts and our popular "Get Your Feet Wet" guidebooks to the St. Johns. Contact [carol@stjohnsriverkeeper.org](mailto:carol@stjohnsriverkeeper.org) or 904-256-7591.



cause, In The Pink and breast cancer awareness.



Jennie Busey, our Education Director, led a "Get Your Feet Wet" breakout session at the WJCT Teach Conference.

Participating teachers learned about the class programing and field trip opportunities that we provide and ways they can successfully bring the St. Johns River into their classrooms.



We are now partnering with Clay County to provide outreach and education programs at community events and public schools throughout the county.

The SweetWater Brewing Company Save Our Water Campaign raised nearly \$7,000 through the sale of raffle tickets and paper fish at restaurants throughout Jacksonville. Thanks to all who participated and congrats to Mellow Mushroom for being the top campaign fundraiser this year!



Once again, Folio Weekly readers voted the St. Johns Riverkeeper "Best Environmental Activist". We are proud to be the voice for your St. Johns River and grateful for the recognition!



## Calendar

- November 21  
Oyster Roast  
Garden Club  
7 pm
- November 23  
McCoys Creek Cleanup  
with Engine 15  
10 am – noon
- December 6  
Holiday Boat Trip  
10 am – Noon
- December 11  
Holiday Mingle  
Riverkeeper Office  
4:30 – 7 pm
- December 14  
McCoys Creek Cleanup

**ST. JOHNS**  
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# Oyster 13th Annual Roast

**Friday, November 21, 2014**

**7 o'clock in the evening**

**Garden Club of Jacksonville**

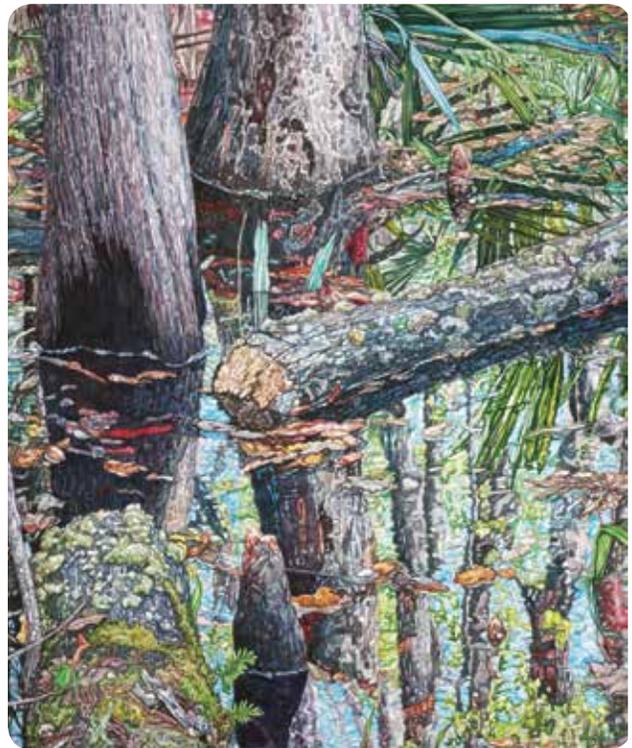
**1005 Riverside Avenue**

Join us for live music, silent auction, fabulous food  
by Biscottis and succulent oysters.

Purchase tickets online or call 904-256-7591.

*Featured Artist:*

*Kathy Stark, "Julington-Durbin Creek Preserve"*



Become a member or donate online at [www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org](http://www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org).

