

Introducing the Watershed Watch!
This new quarterly newsletter will highlight our work to defend and advocate for the St. Johns River - and the many ways you can get involved.



ST. JOHNS
RIVERKEEPER[®]
For the river. For us all.

WATERSHED WATCH | JULY 2019

FLORIDA HAS A SERIOUS SEWAGE PROBLEM.

And it is having a significant impact on the health of the St. Johns River. Wastewater treatment plants convert sewage into an effluent that either is discharged into our waterways or reused for irrigation. The biosolids, or sewage sludge, that remain are then converted into fertilizers, disposed of in landfills, or applied to agricultural lands. Thirty percent of the 21.6 million people in Florida rely on an estimated 2.6 million septic tanks for their wastewater disposal. When you consider there are also over 68 million heads of livestock in our state, you can imagine how much waste is produced annually.

The big problem is nutrients, nitrogen and phosphorous, that are in our waste don't just go away, but are moved around and sometimes concentrated in certain areas with disastrous results.

Over 70% of all of the sewage sludge that is permitted for land application in Florida is being disposed of in our St. Johns River Watershed. That represents more than 89,000 tons of sludge each year. As a result, high concentrations of phosphorous are running off farmland and into the Headwaters of our River.

As the St. Johns flows slowly north, nutrient pollution from septic tanks, reclaimed water, wastewater effluent, animal waste, and fertilizers enter our River along the way, fueling toxic algae blooms that are harmful to our economy, wildlife, and human health. Since early April and still today, our River has been experiencing toxic blooms throughout the Watershed and we expect it will only get worse as water temperatures continue to heat up and more pollutants wash into our River from summer rains. (continued on page 2)



Drayton Island, FL



SEWAGE PROBLEM, CONT.

Over the years, we have successfully fought for more protective limits on the excessive nitrogen and phosphorous that are polluting our waterways. Unfortunately, nutrient pollution remains one of the most serious water quality problems throughout Florida, and we have much more work to do. This spring, we launched our Don't Feed the Algae campaign, engaging our volunteers and concerned citizens through citizen science, advocacy tools, and Know Your Green programs in communities afflicted with algae blooms.

At the state level, St. Johns Riverkeeper worked hard to get legislation passed this session that would put limits on the sewage sludge that is polluting our River today. Despite bipartisan support, polluter lobbyists killed the bill at the very last minute. In fact, no bills passed to significantly improve water quality in our state. The time has come for Florida to get serious about stopping pollution at its source, and we will need your help to make it happen. Let us put our legislators on notice that Florida's waters need immediate relief from land application of sewage sludge as well as long term strategies to stop algae blooms.

We need your help. Please join, renew your membership, or make an additional gift to help us continue to fight to get the green out of our River. Visit our website to learn more about the algae blooms plaguing our River and ways to take action.



St. Johns Riverkeeper, Lisa Rinaman, toured the algae-infested areas near Palatka with the FDEP Secretary, Noah Valenstein, and the SJRWMD Executive Director, Ann Shortelle.

WELCOME TO THE TEAM

We are thrilled to welcome Gabrielle "Gabbie" Milch, our new Outreach and Education Coordinator, to the St. Johns Riverkeeper team! Gabbie joined our team in March and will help expand and enhance our River's community outreach efforts in the Middle Basin of the St. Johns where she works out of our satellite office in historic downtown DeLand.

Gabbie has over 20 years of experience working with water resource protection and horticulture through UF/IFAS Extension Programs in Seminole County and has a degree in Environmental Studies from Rollins College in Winterpark, Fla. She enjoys kayaking with her family, exploring our River and loves spending time in her garden.

"I do this not for myself, but for my children and their children."



TAKE ACTION! VISIT [STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/BLOG/DONT-FEED-THE-ALGAE](https://stjohnsriverkeeper.org/blog/dont-feed-the-algae)

HEALTH RISKS OF TOXIC ALGAE

TOXIC PUZZLE is a medical and environmental detective documentary that follows a scientific team around the world in a hunt for a hidden killer. The pieces come together in a toxic puzzle where cyanobacteria in our waters become the culprit. Are these organisms, fed by human pollution and climate change, staging nature's revenge on human health?

Save the date! Join us at the Thrasher-Horne Center in Clay County for a live, free screening and panel discussion on the issue of toxic algae blooms and the serious potential health effects they are having on our River and us.

July 11 | 7pm film, 8:30pm panel discussion

**Save your seat for the show online at
StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/Events/ToxicPuzzle**

RIVERKEEPER 2.0

In preparation for St. Johns Riverkeeper turning 20 years old in 2020, we are excited to announce we have been working diligently behind the scenes to refresh our brand while staying true to our past and our mission. Have you noticed our updated logo and new color palette while reading this yet? In other exciting news, coming late summer 2019, we will launch our new website and new software system to make calls-to-action and advocacy engagement easier for you, our loyal followers and friends.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS!

Join, renew your membership, or recruit others to our team and help us protect our river and the wildlife and people who depend on it. Behind every name is a story rich in meaning. Which one do you identify with and makes you think of the St. Johns River the most?

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

Sunfish	\$30	Manatee	\$250
Palmetto	\$50	Cypress	\$500
Osprey	\$100	Kingfisher Society	\$1,000

Learn more about our NEW membership levels and other ways to give at StJohnsRiverkeeper.org.



RIVER FRIENDLY AWARD!

St. Johns Riverkeeper, Earth Works, and Ixia Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society are thrilled to announce Shelley Gill as our 2019 OUTSTANDING River Friendly Yard Award grand prize winner!

A resident of Jacksonville, Shelley's River Friendly story started when she accidentally over-fertilized her grass lawn and killed it. Through trial and error, she has started anew and has been working to make her yard a haven for her family, wildlife, and our River. Today, her yard maintains itself and brings color and life to her neighborhood. We hope Shelley's story will inspire you to take steps to make your yard more River Friendly and maybe even enter the contest next year!

Special congratulations to our esteemed River Friendly Finalists:

Bill Berthet - Best River Friendly Yard:
Wildlife Habitat

Cowford Realty & Design - Best
River Friendly Yard: Small Business

Watch videos of their River Friendly stories and see their yards on our website - StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/RiverFriendlyYard.

**SAVE THE DATE! ANNUAL RIVERKEEPER OYSTER ROAST
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2019 AT 7PM AT GARDEN CLUB OF JACKSONVILLE**

RIVERKEEPER HIGHLIGHTS



Left to right, top to bottom:

- Citizens and students advocating for clean water at the state capitol on Conservation Day.
- Spring Eco-Heritage overnight boat cruise exploring the Middle Basin.
- Rising Tides led an educational paddle on the Silver River.
- Summertime Social at the Rudder Club thanks to our River Patrol and Rising Tides volunteers.
- St. Johns Riverkeeper Board held their annual strategic planning retreat at our office in DeLand, Fla.
- Hosted the Know Your Green program for concerned citizens of Palatka at the St. Johns River Center.
- McCoys Creek cleanup volunteers gathered 35 bags of trash and other debris.
- Human Element film screening and panel discussion on climate change at Sun-Ray Cinema.
- Florida Times-Union 2019 Eve Award Winner: Your St. Johns Riverkeeper, Lisa Rinaman. Congratulations Lisa!

DON'T MISS OUT ON THE NEXT EVENT! SIGN UP AT STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/EVENTS