

Our Mission | To defend the St. Johns River and advocate for its protection.



ST. JOHNS  
**RIVERKEEPER**<sup>®</sup>  
For the river. For us all.

## WATERSHED WATCH | SPRING 2021

### STOP SENDING SOUTH FLORIDA'S SEWAGE NORTH!

For more than three years, we have sounded the alarm about the sewage sludge runoff that is polluting the St. Johns. We have participated in rule-making workshops, met with regulatory agencies and legislators, submitted comments, and advocated for solutions to fix this serious water pollution problem. While our efforts have helped lead to some improvements, the state continues to come up short in protecting our river.

For decades, utilities have disposed of sewage sludge, a byproduct of the wastewater treatment process, by applying it to farms and ranches. In the early 2000's, this cheap disposal method resulted in the runoff of high concentrations of phosphorous that continue to fuel toxic algae blooms in Lake Okeechobee. In response, the Florida Legislature tightened rules for the Lake O watershed, resulting in the relocation of nearly 100,000 tons of Miami's sewage sludge north to the St. Johns River watershed.

Since South Florida began trucking its sewage sludge north, the St. Johns River has been plagued with

frequent toxic algae blooms that have dramatically spiked in recent years.

Unfortunately, recent legislation intended to address the sewage sludge problem fails to adequately protect our waters and our communities. The bills that passed only offer incremental changes to a bad rule, failing to protect all Florida waters equally and failing to prevent South Florida from sending sewage sludge to our watershed.

To that end, we are partnering with the Public Trust Environmental Legal Institute to use sound science and the legal means to hold the state accountable, prevent this harmful transfer of pollution, and compel the state to invest in technologies and practices to sustainably manage Florida's growing volume of sewage.

All Floridians deserve clean water. One community should not be forced to endure the sewage and pollution of another. More soon about how you can help, as we take a stand for all Florida Waters.



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Lower Basin Office: 2800 University Boulevard N, Jacksonville, FL 32211



## DON'T FEED THE ALGAE

As summer begins and temperatures rise, we are entering prime algae bloom season. In fact, we have already received several reports of blooms from the Lake George and Palatka areas.

Warmer waters and more polluted stormwater from more intense storms create the perfect conditions for the rapid growth of blue-green algae or cyanobacteria. Resulting algae blooms cover the surface of the water with green slime, blocking sunlight from reaching submerged plants, reducing dissolved oxygen, and producing toxins that can be harmful to human health and wildlife.

Nutrient pollution that fuels the blooms comes from a variety of sources including industrial and municipal wastewater, fertilizers, manure, and sewage sludge. Toxins produced by algae blooms can cause rashes, stomach cramps, nausea, diarrhea, and respiratory irritation. As a result, do not recreate, boat, swim, or fish near an algae bloom. If skin contact does occur, wash off immediately and thoroughly with clean water and soap.

### What you can do:

- Do your part by properly maintaining septic tanks and minimizing your use of fertilizers, especially when storms are expected. If you do use fertilizer, apply the proper amount and use a slow-release, organic product to reduce the likelihood of runoff.
- Keep leaves and grass clippings out of storm drains. As leaves and grass break down, more nutrients are released into the water.
- Contact your elected officials and voice support for funding to remove failing septic tanks, prevent flooding and implement green infrastructure to capture and treat stormwater.
- Visit the Florida Algae Bloom Dashboard to check water quality status and report blooms: [floridadep.gov/algalbloom](http://floridadep.gov/algalbloom). Also, report to us at [Report@SJRK.org](mailto:Report@SJRK.org).

## ALL ABOARD FOR KIDS!

Join us on the third or fourth Wednesday of the month on board the St. Johns River Taxi to learn about your St. Johns River.

Thanks to the generous donation of Subaru of Jacksonville we're able to offer TWO 50-minute educational boat trips each month at a reduced rate!

Space is limited so learn more and register online: [sjrk.org/education/homeschool-and-family](http://sjrk.org/education/homeschool-and-family)

## GO TAKE A HIKE!

Join a St. Johns Riverkeeper Educator the first Wednesday of the month along the banks of the St. Johns River or a tributary. While we are outdoors, we will talk about the history, ecology, and issues facing the St. Johns River. Hands-on activities are available and materials will be distributed per family.

## RISING TIDES CLEANS UP

Last month, we were positively overwhelmed with the turnout at our Moncrief Creek Earth Day Cleanup at White Harvest Farms (WHF), an initiative of the Clara White Mission in Jacksonville. Thank you to our Rising Tides young professionals, Jacksonville University students and faculty, and our many board members who attended in force. After cleaning up the creek, we enjoyed fellowship with a delicious cookout from Q's BBQ.

Moncrief Creek runs through the middle of White Harvest Farms, feeding into the Trout River and then connecting to the St. Johns. The farm uses organic practices to grow and provide high-quality produce for the community, minimizing its impact on the creek and surrounding waterways.

Healthy tributaries are vital to the overall health of our River and when restored, they improve water quality and provide better habitat for plant and wildlife. We're thrilled to partner with White Harvest Farms in this initiative to learn more about the waterway, the community, and how we can do more good - together!

**Find a cleanup near you!**  
[sjrk.org/events](http://sjrk.org/events)



## COWFORD REDFISH FISHING TOURNAMENT

**Join us! October 8-9, 2021**

The Cowford is a tournament to highlight the pristine spartina estuaries of the Lower St. Johns River, now increasingly threatened by industrial discharges, sedimentation, over-development and excess nutrient loading from a multitude of sources upstream.

The Cowford benefits St. Johns Riverkeeper's mission to sustain healthy water ecosystems for future generations. We hope that by participating in the Cowford, you too will develop a relationship to the estuaries of the Lower St. Johns and help to protect and preserve this incredible resource for generations to come. Sponsored by Saturiba, Hell's Bay Boatworks and Renn Works Outdoors.

**Register online at:**  
[cowfordredfishtournament.com](http://cowfordredfishtournament.com)

Registration is limited to the  
first 100 participants.



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## SHRIMP YOUR RIDE

The Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp professional baseball team has released a new specialty license plate, with proceeds from the sales going to St. Johns RIVERKEEPER.

In order for production of the plates to begin, 3,000 customers must purchase a pre-sale voucher. Order your plate today and support both the Jumbo Shrimp and our advocacy efforts to protect the St. Johns River!

Order today:

[jaxshrimp.milbstore.com](http://jaxshrimp.milbstore.com)

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# WATERKEEPERS OF FLORIDA

We are proud to have helped launch Waterkeepers Florida and be one of the 13 Water Warriors in the state!

By working together and leveraging our collective resources and expertise, we can more effectively advocate for Florida's unique and priceless water resources. From rivers to lakes, cypress swamps to mangrove forests, lagoons to springs - these resources define our state's identity. 2020 marked another year of challenges and opportunities for Florida's watersheds and Waterkeepers Florida remains a powerful advocate for these important places.

Check out our Waterkeepers Florida 2020 Annual report to learn more at [waterkeepersflorida.org/wkf-annual-report-2020.pdf](http://waterkeepersflorida.org/wkf-annual-report-2020.pdf)



PLEASE CONSIDER A DONATION TO SUPPORT OUR ADVOCACY WORK FOR THE ST. JOHNS RIVER.