

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



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

WATERSHED WATCH | FALL 2022

RESILIENCE ON THE RIVER

Many communities along the St. Johns saw devastating affects after Hurricane Ian. Historic flooding from the Headwaters to Putnam County inundated homes with water, muck, and raw sewage. Millions of gallons of raw sewage spilled into the river and its tributaries, triggering toxic algae outbreaks that affected communities far downstream. Matters were made worse in many areas when Nicole came six weeks later.

Hurricanes Ian, Nicole, and predecessors Matthew and Irma underscore the importance of ensuring that the St. Johns River is healthy enough to withstand shocks to its system, while continuing to support a thriving seafood industry and outdoor recreation economy.

HERE IS HOW WE DO IT:

Stop the Land Application of Sewage Sludge. Sewage sludge from South Florida spread on farms and ranches in the Upper St. Johns is undermining our river's health. Nutrient pollution runs off into the river, triggering toxic blue-green algae outbreaks that can kill

submerged aquatic vegetation (SAVs). The river's SAVs filter out pollution, provide habitat for fish and wildlife, and absorb carbon dioxide.

Reunite the Rivers. Reuniting Silver Springs, the Ocklawaha and the St. Johns will provide an additional 150 million gallons a day of freshwater to the St. Johns, offset saltwater intrusion, revitalize eel grass beds (SAVs), reconnect historic migratory fish patterns, and reestablish 15,000 acres of forested wetlands. Restoring the natural connection of The Great Florida Riverway will increase the river's resiliency from Welaka to Jacksonville, recover 20 lost springs, and provide additional habitat for manatees.

Combat Climate Change. By taking responsible steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to sea level rise and a warming planet, we can create resilient communities and help protect our river for future generations. Now is the time for JEA and utilities and cities throughout the watershed to phase out coal and commit to clean, renewable energy sources.

LEARN MORE AT

STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/BLOG

EDUCATION



“FOREVER CHEMICALS” IN OUR WATER

Waterkeeper Alliance recently released an unprecedented new report regarding the prevalence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in American waterways.

A total of 113 local Waterkeepers surveyed 114 waterways across 34 states and the District of Columbia (D.C.).

The results are startling - **83% of the waters tested across the country were found to be contaminated by PFAS, including the St. Johns River.**

PFAS compounds, or “forever chemicals,” have historically been used in products like fire suppressant foams, stain-resistant and waterproof fabrics, and non-stick cookware. Sewage sludge is also a known source of PFAS, yet 50,000 tons of sludge are dumped annually on farms and ranches in the Upper St. Johns without the requirement for testing.

These dangerous chemicals accumulate in people, animals, and aquatic life, and take thousands of years to break down. PFAS exposure is linked to serious health conditions such as cancer, liver damage, decreased fertility, and increased risk of asthma and thyroid disease.

These findings validate the Waterkeeper Alliance’s call for increased monitoring and regulations to limit exposure and restrict the flow of PFAS into our waterways.

CALL TO ACTION

- Tell the Florida Legislature to stop polluting the St. Johns with South Florida’s Sewage Sludge and PFAS.
- Tell Congress to pass the Clean Water Standards for the PFAS Act.

Learn More and Take Action: waterkeeper.org/pfas

TAKE YOUR CLASSROOM ON THE RIVER

St. Johns Riverkeeper is offering educational boat trips for 4th-6th grade classes. On each River Exploration (RiverX) trip, students will rotate through a variety of hands-on learning activities that correlate with state science standards.

Thanks to generous grants from the Jim and Tabitha Furyk Foundation and the Edna Sproull Williams Foundation, RiverX boat trips are free for all Duval County Public Schools. Title I schools also receive free transportation to and from the dock.

Email jamie@stjohnsriverkeeper.org for more information.

NEW OFFERINGS

The education team is hard at work developing new programming focusing on resiliency, ecological restoration, family outdoor activities, opportunities for more rugged EcoAdventures, volunteering for teens, and more for 2023.

GET YOUR FEET WET CAMPAIGN

At the beginning of this year, St. Johns RIVERKEEPER announced our *Get Your Feet Wet* campaign.

Throughout the year, we provided opportunities for the public to learn about and explore our watershed.

We hosted **paddles throughout the watershed**, from the headwaters to the estuary. Four **expert speakers** participated in our Wine & Wisdom on the Water series with the St. Johns River Taxi. We partnered with more local businesses and corporations than ever to **clean up the river and its tributaries**. We **brought boaters together** on the St. Johns and Ortega Rivers for four Tiny Dock Concerts. We **partnered with local naturalists and other nonprofit organizations** to host hikes, birdwatching and more.

We look forward to the continuation of this initiative in 2023, and hope each of you has a chance to enjoy the river we are working each day to protect and improve.

SJRK TEAM EXPANDS TO PUTNAM

Recently, St. Johns RIVERKEEPER launched a series of Meet & Greets throughout Putnam County to introduce Jessica Finch, Welaka resident and our new Community Engagement Coordinator. The meetings were held in Welaka, Palatka, and Crescent City to inform Putnam County residents about our advocacy priorities, build community support, and seek feedback regarding plans to reunite Silver Springs, the Ocklawaha River and the St. Johns River.

Our team now spans Duval, Putnam, and Seminole Counties, and we have an active Headwaters Advisory Council of volunteers in Indian River County. We will always work to protect all 310 miles of the St. Johns River!



December
2012

TEN YEARS OF CLEANING UP MCCOYS CREEK

Our Rising Tides young professionals group just hit an impressive milestone this month: **10 years of cleaning up McCoys Creek**, a tributary of the St. Johns in Jacksonville.

Rising Tides was established in 2011, and started cleaning up the creek in 2012. Those who have continually participated over the years have been able to see firsthand **the difference that consistent maintenance has made** on this waterway and the neighborhoods it flows through.

Every month, typically on the third Sunday, Rising Tides is out on the creek with buckets, grabbers, grain bags from breweries to reduce plastic waste, and volunteers who show up month after month, rain or shine. There are always new faces and old, but steadfast water warriors like Alicia Smith, who has captained these cleanups for 10 years with her infamous white cleanup van, Eric Byrnes and Daniel Kreichelt, current committee members, are the ones who keep this project going!

THANK YOU RISING TIDES!

Learn More About Rising Tides
StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/rising-tides



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ROAST FOR THE RIVER

River and coffee lovers alike can enjoy their morning jolt with a side of charity in support of the St. Johns River this holiday season. Bold Bean Coffee Roasters has created a signature *St. Johns Blend*, available now for a limited period of time, with partial proceeds from sales benefitting St. Johns RIVERKEEPER.

Stop by any Bold Bean location in Jacksonville to pick up a bag of *St. Johns Blend* and a co-branded mug, or order yours online at boldbeancoffee.com.

Address Service Requested

SJRK LEGAL TEAM TAKES ACTION

SJRK has teamed up with the Public Trust for Conservation to tackle polluted industrial stormwater runoff utilizing the Clean Water Act.

We have reached a settlement with our first targeted facility that resulted in substantial actions to clean up their facility and improve their stormwater management practices to reduce dangerous runoff. The facility also agreed to contribute to the newly formed Northeast Florida Environmental Conservation Fund at The Community Foundation of Northeast Florida. These funds will be used to protect and restore Northeast Florida's environment.

We are currently in negotiations with three other facilities that are out of compliance with their permits.

Since our inception, St. Johns RIVERKEEPER has frequently utilized the Clean Water Act to hold polluters accountable and ensure protective policies are in place. Our efforts have stopped illegal wastewater discharges, reduced the frequency of sewage spills, and led to a reduction of nutrient pollution in our river.



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