

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



ST. JOHNS  
**RIVERKEEPER®**  
For the river. **For us all.**

## WATERSHED WATCH | SPRING 2023

### SAVE THE GRASSES EXPEDITION

Historically, the tidal balance of salt and freshwater of the St. Johns River has enabled healthy underwater grasses to thrive, providing critical habitat for fresh and saltwater species. This thriving estuary is now at risk.

**The river's underwater grasses are disappearing, the wetlands are stressed, and fish habitat is vanishing from the St. Johns River's ecosystems.**

Submerged aquatic vegetation (SAVs) are an important biological indicator of river health, and are sources of refuge, oxygen, habitat, and food for many species.

Yet, scientists have concluded that the vast majority of SAVs have disappeared in the Lower St. Johns River, with estimates as high as 99%. SAVs do periodically decline as a result of droughts or hurricanes, but the grasses typically begin to bounce back within a few years. However, **this time is different**. The grasses in the St. Johns have not returned since Hurricane Irma, but why? What is preventing the regrowth of the SAV? **Government environmental agencies have offered**

**several possible reasons, but consensus has not been reached and more needs to be done.**

### WE ARE SEEKING SOLUTIONS

**St. Johns RIVERKEEPER recently launched a multi-day expedition to investigate the case of the lost grasses.** Our team spent several days on the water monitoring the most threatened habitat of the St. Johns River. We patrolled an 80-mile stretch of the river between Doctors Lake and Lake George in search of remaining SAV beds, answers to our questions, and possible solutions to restore this vital habitat.

**To assess current conditions and identify possible reasons for the decline, water quality data was collected for several parameters.** Aboard St. Johns RIVERKEEPER's patrol boat, the Kingfisher, our team also met with homeowners, anglers, scientists, and community leaders to collect observational intel and data. **This is part of our ongoing effort to save the grasses that are so critical to the health of our river.**

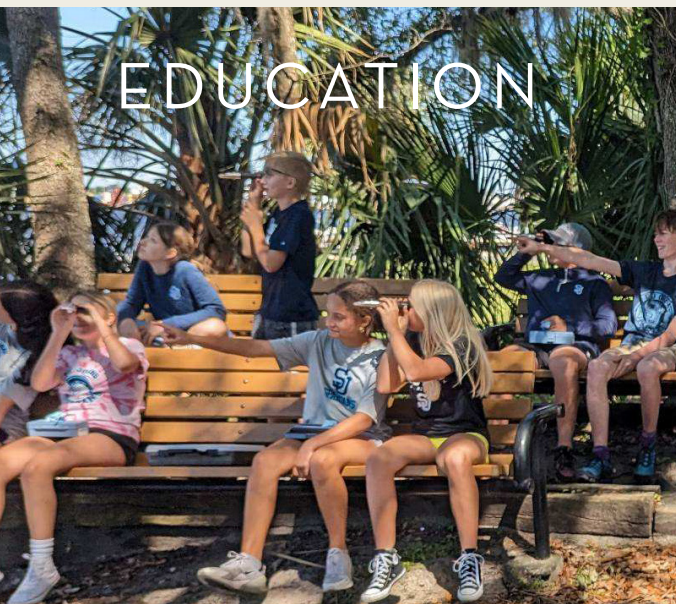
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Lower Basin Office: 2800 University Boulevard N, Jacksonville, FL 32211



# EDUCATION



## FAMILY EcoEXPLORATIONS

This summer, St. Johns RIVERKEEPER's education team is offering monthly educational EcoExplorations for K-12 students and families to learn about and protect our river together!

Our first excursion is to Blue Cypress Park in Jacksonville on June 24. We'll learn about pollution through an Enviroscape model, and then we'll be stewards of our river by cleaning up the park.

Email [jamie@stjohnsriverkeeper.org](mailto:jamie@stjohnsriverkeeper.org) for more information.



## EXPERIENCING THE RIVER

Our education team has introduced more than 1,200 K-12 students to the river so far this year through educational boat trips!

[StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/education](http://StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/education)



## GREAT ST. JOHNS RIVER CLEANUP

St. Johns RIVERKEEPER partnered with counties, businesses, and nonprofits throughout the watershed to clean up the St. Johns River and its tributaries during the First Annual Great St. Johns River Cleanup, supported by Bronco Wild Fund. Over 75 cleanups took place in Duval, Putnam, Orange, Seminole, St. Johns and Volusia Counties during the month-long Great St. Johns River Cleanup! Between March 18 and Earth Day, April 22, more than 1,300 volunteers joined official county cleanups or organized their own.

### HERE'S WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED TOGETHER



**76**  
sites cleaned



**1,302**  
volunteers



**1,462**  
bags of trash



**29,336**  
pounds of trash

Learn More: [StJohnsRiverCleanup.com](http://StJohnsRiverCleanup.com)

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND GET ON THE WATER WITH US!  
[STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/EDUCATION](http://STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/EDUCATION)



## GET YOUR FEET WET!

We love to help you *Get Your Feet Wet* along our river!  
Find upcoming events at [StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/events](https://StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/events).



Reunite the Rivers Concert at Jacksonville University, Feb. 4



Climate Change and the St. Johns young professionals meetup at Tabula Rasa Brewing, Feb. 16



Ocklawaha River Paddle in Palatka, March 4



Secrets of an Urban Park at Riverview Park, April 2



## EXPLORE THE ST. JOHNS

St. Johns RIVERKEEPER launched a new website to help river enthusiasts and novices alike discover new places to visit along our watershed - Explore the St. Johns!

When you visit [ExploreTheStJohns.com](https://ExploreTheStJohns.com), you can search based on the activity you are interested in - hiking, birdwatching, biking, kayaking, boating, dining, eco tours, places to stay and more - and you can find a slew of parks, boat launches and other points of interest to visit throughout the St. Johns River watershed! Use the map view to find something in your area, or make a day trip to discover a new part of the river.

An important part of our work is to educate people about the wonders of the St. Johns and introduce them to the many beautiful and special places throughout the river's watershed.

Explore the St. Johns is your one-stop-shop for your next adventure along the watershed by foot, bike, 'yak or boat. Get ready to *Get Your Feet Wet* in a whole new way!

## FIND YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE!

[ExploreTheStJohns.com](https://ExploreTheStJohns.com)





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## SAVE THE DATE!

St. Johns RIVERKEEPER's most impactful annual fundraiser, the **Oyster Roast**, will be on Friday, **November 17 this year!**

Mark your calendar now and save the date for the best party of the year at the Garden Club of Jacksonville.

If you or your business are interested in becoming an Oyster Roast sponsor, please contact Meredith Jespersen at [meredith@stjohnsriverkeeper.org](mailto:meredith@stjohnsriverkeeper.org).

Address Service Requested

## UTILIZING THE CLEAN WATER ACT

Using the Clean Water Act (CWA), we are partnering with Public Trust for Conservation to stop facilities with repeat permit violations from discharging polluted industrial stormwater runoff into our waterways.

**A recent settlement with Berman Bros. Inc. resulted in the implementation of additional controls and best management practices to reduce the pollution in its stormwater.**

Industrial facilities can be major contributors of metals and other contaminants in our waterways. According to the annual State of the River Report, high concentrations of metals continue to be a problem in the tributaries and saltwater section of the lower St. Johns River. **Many of the metals, such as cadmium, are considered highly**

**toxic to both wildlife and humans.**

We are currently taking legal action against two additional facilities that are in violation of the CWA due to excessive industrial stormwater pollution. Working with Public Trust, we will continue to monitor permits and use the CWA when necessary to protect our river.



**PLEASE CONSIDER A GIFT TO SUPPORT OUR ADVOCACY WORK FOR THE ST. JOHNS RIVER.**  
[STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/GIVE](http://STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/GIVE)