

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 2023

### STATE OF THE ST. JOHNS RIVER REPORT

The 2023 Lower St. Johns River Report (LSJRR) provides a stark reminder of the fragile health of our river and its tributaries, but also documents the powerful combination of responsible regulation, reasonable incentives, education, citizen advocacy and political will to protect Florida waters.

The 2023 LSJRR reports that total nitrogen (TN) levels are satisfactory both in the mainstem and the tributaries. **This reduction demonstrates that collectively we can reverse the trajectory of pollution in the St. Johns.** But, it takes public outcry and legal maneuvering to hold those polluting – including industry, utilities and government – accountable. **After several St. Johns Riverkeeper-led lawsuits and public outcry, the Lower St. Johns River Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) and 2006 River Accord pollution plans were born, tackling and succeeding in reducing nitrogen to some degree in the St. Johns River.** However, it did not go far enough.

The 2023 LSJRR also reports that TN levels are slightly increasing in the river's freshwater mainstem. Severely polluted tributaries throughout Duval County threaten human health with fecal bacteria, heavy metals and other contaminants. Rising water levels and increasing saltwater intrusion are changing our river's ecology and threatening submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) as well as the fisheries that depend on them. Loss of wetlands due to development and inadequate mitigation are making Northeast Florida more vulnerable to flooding.

**It is critical that we harness our collective commitment to the St. Johns River to ensure the political will exists to restore, protect, invest and value our river for today and for generations to come.**

Follow our blog for updates on our progress in 2024, as we continue to advocate for solutions to climate change, the disappearing grasses, our polluted tributaries, and Florida's growing sewage crisis.

**JOIN US AS WE DIVE INTO 2024!**  
**[STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/BLOG](https://STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/BLOG)**





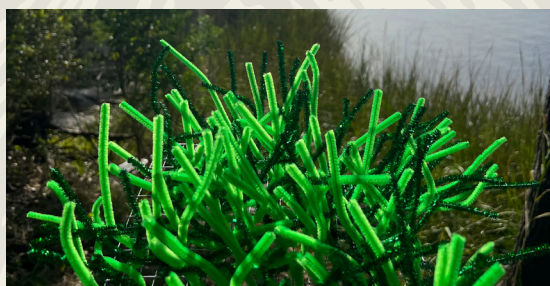
# EDUCATION



## RIVER & ROOTS

River & Roots is a program in collaboration with Clara White Mission and Eartha's Farm and Market to give students hands-on experiences with the land and water that make up Jacksonville's ecosystem.

Middle- and high-school students will travel to Eartha's Farm to learn about sustainable agricultural processes and how they help our St. Johns River Watershed.



## BRING SAV TO YOUR CLASS

We've developed an informative and interactive program tailored for middle-school students about our current efforts to restore the river's underwater grasses.

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

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



## 22<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL OYSTER ROAST

Thank you to everyone who supported St. Johns RIVERKEEPER®'s 22<sup>nd</sup> annual Oyster Roast – our sponsors, auction and raffle donors and participants, in-kind donors, ticket purchasers, and volunteers. Special thanks to Bridget McDonald, our amazing volunteer event chair, who put so much thoughtful work into bringing this year's vision for the event to life!

## HERE'S WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED TOGETHER

262 pounds of recycling and 317 pounds of compostables were diverted from landfills, 1,700 pounds of oyster shells were recycled, and over \$210,000 was raised to support our effective advocacy, education and outreach programs. **Thank you!**



## 2023 VOLUNTEER AWARDS

We celebrated our 2023 volunteer award winners at our annual Holiday Mingle early this month! We are grateful for volunteers who clean up our waterways, help our events run smoothly, tell others about our mission, educate people of all ages about the river and more. **Special thanks to Will Dickey and Ryan Buckley for donating the beautiful photos and framing for the awards.**

Alicia Smith: Volunteer of the Year

Ben and Louann Williams: Educators of the Year

John November: Advocate of the Year

Sadler Point Marina: Business Partner of the Year

Read more about our winners at [StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/blog!](https://StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/blog!)

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



Rising Tides Cleanup of McCoys Creek, July 16



Wetland Preserve tour in Palatka, October 15



Resilient Ribault Boat Tour on the Ribault River, October 23



Eco-Heritage Boat Tour in the Middle Basin, November 10

**GET YOUR FEET WET**  
[ExploreTheStJohns.com](https://ExploreTheStJohns.com)



## WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR OUR RIVER WARRIORS - THANK YOU!

St. Johns **RIVERKEEPER**® is a privately-funded, independent and trusted voice for the St. Johns River and the public to whom it belongs. We are a 501(c)(3) organization and rely on the support of our members, donors, and volunteers to accomplish our mission - to defend the St. Johns River and advocate for its protection.

Your year-end contribution allows us to continue our effective advocacy, education and outreach efforts across our watershed.

You can use the enclosed envelope to make your additional contribution, or simply to update your contact and volunteer interests as we enter the new year.

Thank you for being a part of the SJRK community - we couldn't do our important work without your support. For the river, and for us all!

**MAKE A YEAR-END GIFT**  
[StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/give](https://StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/give)

**FIND A CLEANUP OR OTHER RIVER EVENT NEAR YOU! [STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/EVENTS](https://STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/EVENTS)**





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## WE HOLD POLLUTERS ACCOUNTABLE

Earlier this year, a concerned homeowner in Toco reported an odor and discoloration in the water of a drainage ditch that flows directly into the St. Johns. Our team tested water samples from different parts of the contaminated area to pinpoint the cause of the pollution, alerted the proper authorities, and did our due diligence to follow up with the agencies and at the site to ensure the pollution was stopped at its source. **For the river!**

Address Service Requested

# SAVE OUR RIVER'S GRASSES

Submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) is the foundation of our river's health – providing biofiltration, fish habitat, and more. Sadly, the St. Johns River is suffering from the near demise of these essential grasses. **In search of answers and solutions, St. Johns RIVERKEEPER® (SJRK) launched a 5-year effort, the SAVe our River's Grasses Expedition, earlier this year.**

In October, we completed our third and final expedition of the 2023 SAV growing season. **Over four days, our team once again surveyed an 80-mile stretch of the river between Doctors Lake and Lake George searching for remaining grass beds, taking measurements, conducting water quality testing, and investigating solutions to restore this vital habitat.**

**We are currently working with homeowners, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and local bass anglers on an initiative to install small enclosures along our Expedition route. The temporary fences prevent SAV from being decimated by grazing wildlife before healthy grass beds can be reestablished. This strategy has proved successful in some areas of the river.**



**LEARN MORE AT [STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/SAV](http://STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/SAV)**

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