

THE KINGFISHER

KEEPING WATCH OVER OUR RIVER



Vol. 14 Autumn 2017

Riverkeeper Update



The recent hurricane had devastating consequences for so many people in the watershed of the St. Johns as the waters of the river and its tributaries inundated low-lying areas throughout the region.

While we must join together to address the immediate needs of those affected by the storm, we must also use this as an opportunity to assess our vulnerabilities, learn from our mistakes, and rebuild and move forward with

policies that will better protect our river and people in the future.

Over the next 80 years, more than 6 million Floridians will be threatened by rising sea levels, according to a 2016 study. By 2030, \$69 billion in property will be at risk from climatic changes, \$15 billion of that from sea-level rise alone.

A recent University of Florida report found that sea level is rising along Florida's east coast six times faster than anticipated. Rising seas, warmer waters, stronger storms, flooding and saltwater intrusion is Florida's new reality.

While we can't put the brakes on rising waters, we do have a choice. We can fortify our rivers, beaches, and communities to better absorb the impact and implement policies that are more protective of our natural systems. Or, we can proceed with the status quo of unsustainable policies and projects that continue to put us and our waterways at more risk.

We can become more resilient by first acknowledging and addressing the mistakes of the past. Over the last century, we have filled in thousands of acres of wetlands, floodplains, springsheds, and forests throughout the watershed. We now know that these natural systems provide critical ecological services to humans and wildlife alike. For instance, wetlands absorb floodwaters, reduce storm surge, filter pollutants, provide habitat, and recharge our groundwater.

While those natural systems may now be lost, we can diligently work to protect those that remain. That is why we continue to fight so hard for the proper implementation of Amendment 1, to ensure that those funds are being used to buy critical conservation lands that will help protect our river and protect us from future storms. We can also utilize Low Impact Development practices that are designed to reduce impervious surfaces, retain natural hydrologic features, and reduce the footprint of developments. We can implement "green infrastructure" that utilizes

trees, plants, green spaces, and natural systems to slow down, capture, and treat stormwater and reduce storm surges.

In the past, we have installed over 2.6 million septic tanks systems throughout Florida, contributing to the serious fecal coliform bacteria problem in the tributaries of the St. Johns. Rising seas and future storms will only make those systems more vulnerable and this pollution and human health problem much worse. Public and private utilities are also vulnerable, as we have seen during Matthew and Irma with millions of gallons of untreated sewage flowing into our waterways. While most of the problems were due to power failure, many of the sewage spills were the result of stormwater infiltrating the systems in low-lying areas or those with aging infrastructure. By removing failing septic tanks and upgrading our wastewater infrastructure, we can make progress towards restoring the health of the St. Johns and mitigating the impacts of rising seas.

We also must stop making decisions that continue to put our river and communities at more risk. The St. Johns River Water Management District continues to issue permits for groundwater pumping that cause more harm to our aquifers, making them more susceptible to saltwater intrusion and pollution. The SJRWMD also wants to eventually withdraw up to 160 million gallons of water a day from the St. Johns to quench the thirst of Central Florida. Reducing this much flow from the river will only increase pollution problems and allow saltwater to move farther upstream.

At the mouth of the river, JaxPort plans to deepen and widen the channel. This will further accelerate the movement of saltwater upstream and amplify the impacts from sea level rise and storm surges.

Unfortunately, our legislators have also been working against our environment and against Floridians. In recent years, they have eliminated the state agency responsible for growth management, weakened protections for our waterways, and slashed the budgets of our environmental agencies.

Enough is enough. Now is time to respond to Irma's wakeup call by committing to sustainable growth, protective policies and long-term strategies that will restore our river and make us more resilient in the future.

Investing in restoring the St. Johns and its tributaries will improve our quality of life under normal conditions and will protect our community under extreme conditions.

Our river will sustain us, if we sustain our St. Johns.

For the River,

Lisa Rinaman – Your St. Johns Riverkeeper

Dredging Endangers Our River

For nearly six years, we have worked diligently to ensure that the proposed dredging has been thoroughly evaluated and appropriately mitigated, and the community has the necessary information to make a fully informed decision.

Unfortunately, the Army Corps of Engineers has consistently failed to provide a thorough analysis or require adequate mitigation to offset the damage, and a comprehensive public vetting has never occurred. In addition, independent analysis has raised significant doubts about the economic viability of the project.

Despite these unresolved concerns, JaxPort plans to begin dredging at the end of this year. As a result, we will continue with our lawsuit against the Army Corps in an attempt to protect our river from the significant harm that will occur. As the lawsuit proceeds, we will provide you with updates. You can find more information about this and other issues on our website.



News & Notes

The Aveda Earth Month campaign raised \$29,000 this year, helping us to reach more people and continue our work for clean water. Thanks to all of our Aveda salon partners throughout the watershed who helped make the campaign such a big success!



Thanks to SweetWater Brewing Co. and participating bars and restaurants, we raised \$12,000 through the annual Save Our Water campaign.

Jane Durocher, our Middle Basin Advocacy Director, successfully opened our new office in DeLand. At the opening, 38 people attended a new volunteer orientation.

Our documentary, *Troubled Waters*, has been traveling throughout the state, with screenings in Melbourne, Tallahassee, DeLand, Gainesville, Palatka, Jacksonville,

Tampa and Enterprise. Upcoming screenings are planned for Orlando and New Smyrna Beach.

We led cleanups for employees from Anheuser-Busch and Bacardi at Joe Carlucci Boat Ramp and members of Rotaract and NAIOP at the Northbank Riverwalk.

Thank you to the 70 people who participated in the second annual J.R. Edwards Memorial Cleanup of Goodbys Creek, benefiting St. Johns RIVERKEEPER.

Our young professionals group, Rising Tides, received the 2017 Starr Bishop Award from the City of Jacksonville for their ongoing cleanup efforts of McCoys Creek.



Our River Patrol volunteers hosted their first annual Summer Social at the Rudder Club with sailing, paddling, and good times!

Our annual Low Country Boil was a huge success! We appreciate our sponsors and everyone who came out to Sadler Point Marina to enjoy delicious food from Fisher-

Full STEAM Ahead

For the third year in a row, St. Johns RIVERKEEPER is partnering with Duval County Public Schools to offer educational boat trips on the St. Johns River for fifth graders attending Title I schools.

The successful STEAM Boat Trip Program has so far benefited over 8,500 students. For the 2017-2018 school year, over 6,000 students from 76 different Title I schools will be eligible to participate. Many of these kids have never been on a boat before or had the opportunity to see a manatee or dolphin in the wild.

Thanks to CSX, The Next Generation of the Bradley-Turner Foundation, the Edna Sproull Williams Foundation, and EverBank for making this program possible.

We need volunteers!

If you are interested in volunteering on the boat trips, contact Emily@stjohnsriverkeeper.org.



man's Dock and Saturiwa Trading Company, craft beer from SweetWater Brewing Co., and live music from Porch Swing.

A sold out crowd at Sun-Ray Cinema enjoyed 25 locally-produced short films about the waterways of Northeast

Florida at this year's Swim Shorts Film Festival. We are grateful to Laura Bearl, the festival organizer, and Sun-Ray Cinema for their support.

Our first ever "Backyard Bash" featured Rattleshake Snake and Strangerwolf performing live in the backyard at Cowford Realty & Design. We raised \$800 through raffles and donations and had a blast with tie-dye!

The fifth annual River Ruckus focused on the recreational

opportunities provided by the St. Johns. A downtown kayak tour, SUP lessons, fishing clinic, river cleanup and kids games were all great reasons to visit the Riverside Arts Market and raise a ruckus for the river!

The second annual DeBary Beer Festival raised \$11,000 in proceeds which were donated to St. Johns Riverkeeper. Thanks to Central 28 Brewery for all their support and help reaching new supporters in Central Florida.



We are continuing to focus on engagement trainings that help take volunteers to the "next level" of leadership for the river! We've hosted several algae bloom awareness classes and microplastic education courses. Check our website for more about these programs!

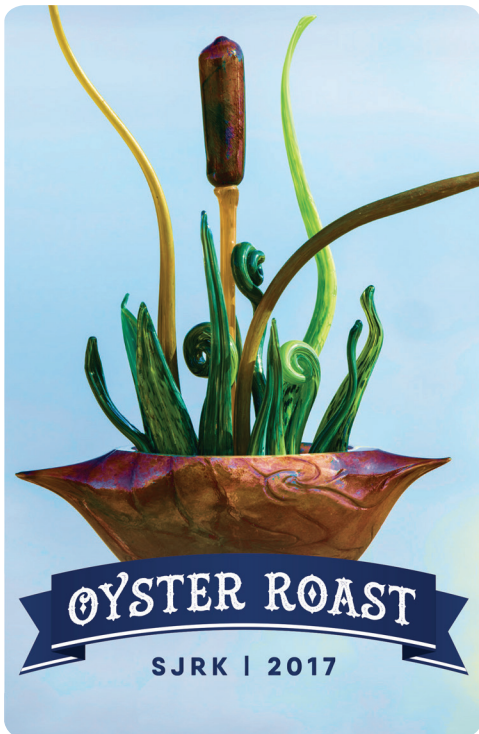
Calendar

- October 29
Ghost Trees Paddle
- November 16
Troubled Waters,
Orange County
- November 19
McCoys Creek
Cleanup & Paddle
- December 2
Holiday Social,
Deland office
- December 15
Member Appreciation
Boat Trip

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16th Annual Oyster Roast

Oyster Roast Featured Artist Reception with Brian Frus

Thursday, October 26, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

Jacksonville University Glass Studio

Learn about the art of glass blowing and how the St. Johns inspired Brian's sculpture for the Roast.

16th Annual Oyster Roast

Friday, November 17, 7 pm

Garden Club of Jacksonville

Join us for delicious food from Fisherman's Dock and Biscottis, live music, and an outstanding silent auction!

For tickets and more info, visit our website.

Become a member or donate online at www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org.

