

THE KINGFISHER

KEEPING WATCH OVER OUR RIVER



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Riverkeeper Update



Over the decades, we Floridians have demonstrated that we can come together despite our differences to help reign in big polluters, enact more protective environmental policies, and stop some ill-advised projects.

The St Johns River serves as a prime example. A newspaper article from 1966 said, "Like a gigantic sewer, loaded with human wastes, oil and toxic acids, the St. Johns River pours a flood of corruption into the Atlantic Ocean."

By 1970, the river was so polluted that Governor Claude Kirk said, "If you fall in, you will die of pollution before you drown." As a result, citizens demanded action and successfully put an end to the 15 million gallons of raw sewage that once flowed unabated into the St. Johns in Jacksonville.

While much progress has been made since that time, the St Johns continues to face disturbing threats. In the early 1970's only about 1.5 million people lived within the river's watershed. Today, that number is approaching 5 million and projected to rapidly increase in the coming years. As a result, the cumulative impacts of so many people are taking their toll on the St. Johns from failing septic tanks and toxic algae outbreaks to stormwater runoff and the loss of important wetlands.

There are many looming threats, as well. Central Florida is seeking to potentially take up to 160 million gallons per day from the St Johns and send it to Orlando's suburbs to water lawns and fuel more sprawl.

In Jacksonville, the proposed dredging project would increase erosion and sedimentation and allow saltwater to move farther up river, likely

damaging or destroying hundreds of acres of wetlands, submerged grasses, and trees in parts of the river and its tributaries, such as Julington Creek and the Ortega River. Critical habitat for fisheries and pollution filters for our river will be lost in the process.

Our river is at critical crossroad, and we must act, together.

St. Johns Riverkeeper has been working hard to better prepare to meet these challenges, including the completion of a new comprehensive strategic plan. We have updated our mission statement and outlined clear goals and strategies to more effectively influence good decision-making for the river, ensure the long-term sustainability of our organization, and engage and activate the community in our advocacy work.

One of the initiatives we are planning for 2016 is a major journey – the "Save the St Johns Tour" – along the river's entire 310-mile length, from the headwaters west of Vero Beach to the river's mouth at the Atlantic Ocean (see insert). We'll be traveling on the St. Johns for 13 days from March 22 to April 3, getting out on the river to save the river. Along the way, we'll meet with local citizens, raise awareness about the threats facing the river and the solutions, and invoke an urgent call-to-action. You can follow the journey online or join our team at one of the many stops and events along the way. By joining together and speaking up for our river, we citizens can save the St. Johns!

For the River,
Lisa

Lisa Rinaman – Your St. Johns Riverkeeper





With your generous support, we did it! We successfully reached our matching gift fundraising goal for the Save the St. Johns Campaign Fund.

As a result, we raised \$300,000 – \$150,000 from our members and the community and a 1:1 matching grant from the Delores Weaver Barr Fund. These funds will be used for the technical, scientific, legal, and public relations support that St. Johns RIVERKEEPER needs to defend the river from numerous looming threats and advocate for sensible solutions.

A huge THANK YOU goes out to the Delores Weaver Barr Fund, The Community Foundation of Northeast Florida, and all of you who contributed to this important campaign!

While we met our fundraising goal for the matching gift, this campaign is far from over. Donate online or mail in your contribution and help us fight for a clean and healthy St. Johns River!

Kids on the River

In 2015, we launched an exciting new partnership with Duval County Public Schools to provide on-the-water learning experiences for Title I fifth grade students in Duval County during the 2015-2016 school year. With additional financial support from CSX, the partnership includes educational boat trips on the St. Johns River for approximately 4,500 elementary school students.

"So many kids have never had the opportunity to experience the St. Johns from the water," explains Jennie Busey, the St. Johns RIVERKEEPER Education Director. "This program offers students a hands-on, comprehensive learning experience that will enhance their knowledge of the river while allowing them to develop a closer relationship to our community's greatest natural resource."

"There is also a lot of joy and excitement in seeing your first manatee or dolphin, too!"

For more info, contact our Education Director Jennie Busey at Jennie@stjohnsriverkeeper.org.



2016 Annual Member Meeting

Thursday, March 3, 2016, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

JU Marine Science Research Institute

Volunteer Orientation to follow from 7:30 – 8:00 pm

St. Johns Riverkeeper had another big year in 2015. We continued to lead the way on numerous projects that threaten the river's health, such as the proposed dredging and water withdrawals from the St. Johns. We also strengthened our partnerships to collectively challenge Sleepy Creek Lands and the Legislature for failing to properly appropriate Amendment 1 funds, and we set the stage for the future with the completion of our Strategic Plan.

Join us at our offices for a recap of 2015, an update on the major issues and a briefing on our strategic plan and what to expect in 2016. We will also let you know how you can get more involved and be an even bigger part of our team.

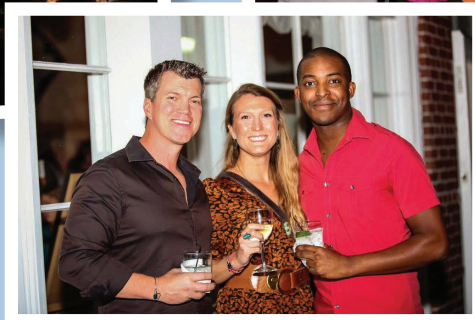
RSVP requested, but not required. Shannon@stjohnsriverkeeper.org or 904-256-7613



The 2015 Oyster Roast - A Party with a Purpose

Thanks to everyone who attended and contributed to the success of the 2015 Oyster Roast. With your help, we had our most successful Roast to date, raising nearly \$200,000 for our advocacy, outreach, and education programs.

Visit our website to see a complete list of all of our sponsors and in-kind donors and photos from "the best party of the year!"



Calendar

- Feb 1
Coal Ash Stories
Sun-Ray Cinema
6:30 - 8 pm
- Feb 6
WaterFest
MOSH, 10 am - 4pm
- March 19
Annual St. Johns
River Cleanup
8 am - noon
- Save the St. Johns Tour
March 22 - April 3
- April 1
Low Country Boil
Sadler Point Marina
- April 7 - 8, 9 - 10
Eco-Heritage Boat Trips

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2-Day Eco-Heritage Boat Trips

ALL ABOARD! Spend two days traveling and exploring the majestic St. Johns River!

TRIP 1:

Thursday – Friday, April 7 – 8

TRIP 2:

Saturday – Sunday, April 9 – 10

The trip spans nearly 100 miles of the St. Johns River from Palatka to Sanford. Enjoy fascinating speakers; stops at Blue Springs State Park, Hontoon Island State Park, and Murphy Creek Conservation Area; wonderful wildlife-viewing opportunities; lodging; delicious catered lunches; and round-trip transportation. Learn more and register on our website for this one-of-a-kind experience.

Cost: \$350 per passenger.



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

