

# THE KINGFISHER

KEEPING WATCH OVER OUR RIVER



Vol. 10 Fall 2013

## Riverkeeper Update



Compromise can often be essential for healthy relationships, effective governance, and a functional society. The recent shutdown of the federal government was a stark reminder of this fact. However, some things are just too valuable to sacrifice and too important to be included in the tradeoffs, such as the St. Johns River, our springs, and our aquifer. Once their health is compromised, it can be extremely expensive, difficult, or even impossible to restore, and then we all end

up paying a much higher price in the long run.

Unfortunately, the scales are often tipped heavily in favor of the economic forces that drive the decision-making process, and our waterways and the public ultimately lose out. ALL of the costs and benefits are usually not carefully considered and scrutinized, and the value of our environment and services provided to society are not, and often cannot, be quantified and accurately measured against the perceived economic benefits. Now, enter politics, hubris, greed, regulatory loopholes, and the limitations of our scientific knowledge and technology into the equation, and the die is cast.

Just look at the recent rash of toxic algal blooms in the St. Johns and the massive die-offs of manatees, dolphins, pelicans, and sea grasses in the Indian River Lagoon. Those are the result of past decisions that put short-sighted economics before the environment and did not fully account for the cost of pollution, expense of cleaning it up, or the economic value of clean water. Unfortunately, complex but imperfect cost-benefit analyses

rarely heed the common sense words of Ben Franklin – “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

At St. Johns Riverkeeper, we work hard each and every day to make sure our river and the public to whom it belongs do not receive the short end of the stick. We provide the St. Johns with a voice and seat at the table when decisions are being made that affect its future. We hold our elected officials, regulatory agencies, and those who pollute the river accountable for implementing protective safeguards, enforcing and upholding the laws, and ensuring consistent compliance and stewardship. We also try to make sure the public is educated about the river, informed about the issues, and engaged in the process. It is imperative that an honest, open, and thorough analysis and dialogue takes place when decisions are made that impact the health of our St. Johns.

Cases in point are the proposed dredging of the St. Johns and Adena Springs Ranch, the massive cattle operation that would further harm Silver Springs. We all want good jobs and a sound economy, but it must not come at the expense of the health of our priceless river and springs. These resources are much too valuable and important to risk by making hasty, ill-informed decisions. We will continue to make sure the river's voice and your voices are heard loud and clear and that the future of the St. Johns and Silver Springs are not wagers in a risky crap shoot.

For the River,

*Lisa*

Lisa Rinaman – Your St. Johns Riverkeeper



October algal bloom at Doctors Lake Marina. Lab reports found toxin levels 200 times higher than what is considered safe for recreational use of water.

# The Green Monster Strikes Again



After receiving numerous reports of algal blooms throughout Clay, St. Johns and Duval counties, your Riverkeeper had two samples of the green slime tested at reputable GreenWater Laboratories in Palatka. The test results detected total microcystin toxin levels at 1085 and 2080 micrograms per liter, or more than 50 and 100 times higher than the recommended recreational exposure threshold of 20 micrograms per liter from the World Health Organization (WHO).

The shockingly high toxin levels from our samples prompted additional testing to be conducted by the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) at Doctors Lake Marina in Clay County. Those test results showed total microcystin toxin levels at 1120 and 4350 micrograms per liter.

Algal blooms often occur as a result of an excessive concentration of harmful nutrients in our river and waterways. Too much nitrogen and phosphorous can feed the uncontrolled growth of algae, depleting oxygen in the water needed by fish, reducing light that is essential to submerged vegetation, and threatening the health of both humans and aquatic life.

St. Johns Riverkeeper will continue to monitor the situation with the hope that by this time this newsletter reaches you, the colder weather will force the Green Monster back into hibernation and you can resume enjoying your river. To learn more about what you can do to reduce your impact on the river's health, take the River Friendly pledge on [www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org](http://www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org).

## News & Notes

To celebrate their 30th anniversary, Black Creek Outfitters is having a series of online auctions and fundraisers through the end of 2013 to benefit St. Johns Riverkeeper (SJRK). Go to the anniversary page at [blackcreekoutfitters.com](http://blackcreekoutfitters.com) to learn more and bid on great outdoor gear. Congrats and thanks for your ongoing support, BCO!

St. Johns Riverkeeper (SJRK) is currently the beneficiary of "Donate the Dimes" at Whole Foods Market in Jacksonville. Through January 19, 2014, customers using re-usable shopping bags can donate their 10 cents per bag refund to us.

SweetWater Brewing Company's annual "Save Our Water" campaign raised more than \$7,500 from the Bote SUP raffle, Void Magazine, Mellow Mushroom, O'Brothers, and numerous other restaurants. Thanks to everyone who participated for your generous support!

Rachael Merkt, a student at Bolles and the sailing club president, held fundraisers at her school, collecting \$180 in donations for SJRK.

Aqua East donated \$600 in proceeds from a SUP raffle.

We partnered with North Florida Land Trust for Moppin' Up McCoys, a community initiative to restore McCoys Creek. Nearly 200 people participated in the cleanup, collecting 6,792 pounds of trash, tires, and debris. Thanks to our site captains from First Coast Outfitters, JumpingFish, Jackson-

ville Jaycees, Rising Tides and the Gastro Gnome Food Truck for helping make it a big success!

In October, we hosted the Save Silver Low Country Boil at Sadler Point Marina to raise awareness and funds to



protect Silver Springs. Our volunteers, led by Bryan Mickler, prepared a feast for over 170 people. It was a wonderful evening with music from This Frontier Needs Heroes, delicious food donated by Black

Hog Farms and Fisherman's Dock, craft beer from Intuition Ale Works, and a sunset cruise provided by Jacksonville Water Taxi.

Shannon and Jennie led a 2-part lecture series for the UNF OLLI program called "Your St. Johns River." Participants learned about the river, then joined Blue Heron River Tours for a 2-hour cruise around Hontoon Island for wildlife and bird watching!

The fall Eco-Heritage boat trips sold out quickly and were enjoyed by everyone! Dates for our April trips will be on our website, soon.



# Issues Update

As usual, there are no shortage of pressing issues top of mind in the Riverkeeper offices. We are committed to keeping you well informed and provide opportunities for you to get engaged in our work to protect the St. Johns. **Visit our website and connect on Facebook for updates about these important issues and others, and learn what you can do to help.**

**Save Silver Springs** – If we can't save Silver, what can we save? Silver Springs and the Silver River are critical to the health of the St. Johns. Both are threatened by a massive cattle operation that would use up to 5.3 million gallons of water a day and contribute to the pollution problem already degrading these waterways. To fight back against this ill-conceived project we're going to need your help. Please make a donation and take action today!



**To Dredge or Not to Dredge** – Will the proposed widening and deepening of the St. Johns cause significant harm? Is the damage to our river and the huge price tag associated with this project worth it? We will continue to make sure these questions are asked, a thorough environmental and economic assessment is completed, and all the facts are on the table. We can't afford to roll the dice with the future of our river.

**Numeric Nutrient Criteria** – When you think about the recent toxic algal blooms, this is what should come to mind – the need for more stringent limits on the nutrient pollution that is poisoning our river. We continue to fight for more protective pollution limits that are science-based and enforceable. Stay tuned as we try to put an end to the "Green Monster" and protect our river's health.

Rising Tides, our young professionals group, was chosen as the best environmental "Civic" organization by the City of Jacksonville Environmental Protection Board.

Keep Jacksonville Beautiful honored SJRK with a 2013 "organization" category award.

We recently won Best Environmental Activist by Folio Weekly readers. Thanks to everyone who voted for us!

Over 90 people joined Rising Tides for a bike ride between Mellow Mushroom and the St. Johns River Ferry to raise awareness and support for the continuation of the ferry. Sponsors included Table 1, Cortello Hair Salon, and Jacksonville Orthopaedic Institute.



The first Rising Tides camping trip included a paddle on the Silver River and the Ocklawaha. Thanks to Matt Keene from First Coast

Outfitters for helping lead such a great outing!

We recently launched an exciting education program that engages students in monitoring water quality in the

St. Johns River and sharing data with other participating schools. So far, we have 5 sites being monitored by four participating schools: Mayport Coastal Sciences Middle School, St. Marks Episcopal Day School, Greenwood School, and Assumption Catholic School.



Freshman students from The Bolles School joined SJRK and San Marco Preservation Society to install over 50 storm drain markers and remind residents - "Only Rain Down the Drain."

Our River Patrol volunteers have been very active monitoring the recent algal blooms and assisting with several community events and university research projects. Thanks to Walton Cheney for piloting our Kingfisher boat to help support the "Up the River" event and the inaugural Jacksonville Dragon Boat Festival.

## Calendar

- Oyster Roast  
November 22, 7pm  
Garden Club of Jacksonville
- December 12  
4:30 - 7pm  
Riverkeeper Annual  
Holiday Mingle  
Jacksonville University,  
Marine Science Re-  
search Institute (MSRI)  
2800 University Blvd N  
Jacksonville 32211

Tour our offices, meet staff and fellow members, celebrate the year's accomplishments  
shannon@stjohnsriverkeeper.org



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phone 904.256.7591  
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# OYSTER ROAST

12th Annual

12th Annual Oyster Roast  
Friday, November 22, 7 p.m.  
Garden Club of Jacksonville

Join us for live music, delicious food from Biscotti's, silent auction and succulent oysters!



Enter the raffle for this painting by acclaimed artist Henry Von Genk III valued at \$7,500.

Purchase Oyster Roast tickets and enter the raffle on our website, [stjohnsriverkeeper.org](http://stjohnsriverkeeper.org)!

Become a member or donate online at [www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org](http://www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org).