

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 2022

HOW FAR WE'VE COME: FREE THE OCKLAWAHA

For years, we have worked to raise awareness about the aging Rodman/Kirkpatrick Dam, and the benefits of breaching it to reunite Silver Springs, the Ocklawaha and the St. Johns. Recent public surveys and polls have confirmed overwhelming support for restoration.

In September/October 2021, the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) conducted an online survey to collect feedback regarding the Kirkpatrick Dam and Rodman Reservoir. **Over 86.5% of the participants expressed a desire to restore a free-flowing Ocklawaha River. Only 5.9% of responses were in favor of retaining the dam and reservoir.**

Then in February of this year, highly regarded public opinion researcher Barcelo & Company released a scientific poll of likely voters in Putnam and Marion counties regarding the dam and restoration. **They found that nearly 80% of likely voters in these two counties favor breaching the dam and restoring the natural flow of the Ocklawaha. Only 6% were opposed to restoration.** Additional polling focusing exclusively on residents of Putnam County found **nearly 75% of**

likely voters in the county support breaching the dam, with only 7% in opposition.

A new economic briefing released February 15 by Florida TaxWatch “supports the breaching of the Kirkpatrick Dam and the partial restoration of the natural flow of the Ocklawaha River,” as this solution was found to be **in Florida taxpayers’ best interest.**

A recently released dam assessment report reclassifies the dam **from low hazard to high hazard**, meaning a failure could result in the loss of life and significant economic losses. This provides one more important reason to urgently move forward with restoration.

While we are disappointed the Florida Legislature failed to take action during the recent legislative session, our collective efforts continue to build significant momentum towards a free-flowing Ocklawaha. Overwhelming support and commitment from people up and down The Great Florida Riverway have brought us closer to restoration than ever before. Stay tuned for next steps and how you can help finally **#FreeTheOcklawaha!**

LEARN MORE AT STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/OCKLAWAHA



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

EDUCATION



TAKE YOUR CLASSROOM ON THE RIVER

St. Johns Riverkeeper is offering educational boat trips for 4th-6th grade classes. On each River Exploration (RiverX) trip, students will rotate through a variety hands-on learning activities that correlate with state science standards.

Email ashleigh@stjohnsriverkeeper.org for more information.

EDUCATIONAL ECOCRUISE

Hop on board the River Taxi with our education staff the 3rd or 4th Wednesday of each month to learn about the St. Johns.

ECO ADVENTURES

Join a St. Johns Riverkeeper Educator the first Wednesday of the month along the banks of the St. Johns River or a tributary. While we are outdoors, we will talk about history, ecology, and issues facing the river.



MIDDLE BASIN UPDATE

St. Johns RIVERKEEPER works to protect all 310 miles of the St. Johns River, including the Middle Basin section, which stretches from the Econlockhatchee River to the Ocklawaha River.

SEMINOLE AND VOLUSIA 2070

In late 2021, we held two 2070 growth management workshops in partnership with 1000 Friends of Florida to develop a coalition of advocates for sustainable development in Volusia and Seminole Counties. The *Florida 2070* project reveals that if we continue with the status quo, more than a third of Florida's lands will be developed and development-related water demand will more than double by 2070. On the other hand, if we promote more compact development patterns and increase protected natural lands, we will save 1.8 million acres of natural and agricultural land.

WETLAND DEVELOPMENT THWARTED

Unity Resorts, LLC recently planned to build a Tree House Resort on wetlands along Shell Creek in Lake County, FL. Your St. Johns Riverkeeper wrote a letter of objection, and our Middle Basin Coordinator went to the planning and zoning meeting to voice concerns and oppose negative impacts to our river's wetlands. The application was withdrawn thanks to opposition from St. Johns Riverkeeper and the community.

REMEMBERING BILL BELLEVILLE

Bill Belleville was a renowned environmental writer and filmmaker and a true friend of our river and St. Johns Riverkeeper. In partnership with Friends of the Wekiva River, we recently organized the First Annual Bill Belleville Memorial Paddle on the Wekiva River. More than 20 paddlers came together and enjoyed this stretch of the watershed that Bill loved so much. Learn more about Bill and the St. Johns by reading his acclaimed book, "River of Lakes."

ARE YOU RIVER-FRIENDLY?

The choices we make in our own backyards now will affect our river well into algae bloom season. Warmer waters and increasingly polluted stormwater from intense weather create perfect conditions for the rapid growth of blue-green algae, or cyanobacteria.

Nutrient pollution that fuels these blooms comes from a variety of sources, including industrial and municipal wastewater, fertilizers, manure, and sewage sludge.

What you can do:

- Properly maintain septic tanks and **minimize your use of fertilizers**, especially when storms are expected. If you do use fertilizer, apply the proper amount and use a slow-release, organic product to reduce the likelihood of runoff.
- Keep leaves and grass clippings **out of storm drains**.
- Create beds using **native or low-maintenance plants** next to water bodies, streets, driveways, and sidewalks.
- **Contact your elected officials** and voice support for funding to remove failing septic tanks, prevent flooding and implement green infrastructure to capture and treat stormwater.
- Visit the Florida Algae Bloom Dashboard to check water quality status and report blooms: floridadep.gov/algalbloom. Also, report blooms to us at report@sjrk.org.
- **Get Your Feet Wet** in your river-friendly efforts: participate in one of our cleanups! Rising Tides, our young professionals group, hosts one each month on McCoys Creek.

Find a Cleanup Near You
StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/events



GET YOUR FEET WET

St. Johns RIVERKEEPER's 2022 *Get Your Feet Wet* campaign is well underway. We launched this exciting new initiative to provide resources and opportunities for the public to learn about and explore the St. Johns River and its watershed.

We are creating opportunities to introduce people to the many beautiful and special places along the St. Johns, foster a deeper appreciation for our river, and demonstrate what we stand to lose if we don't protect it.

Highlights include:

- **Paddles**, from the headwaters in Blue Cypress Lake to the estuary in Duval
- **Guided Hikes** to discover flora and fauna & learn about the history of the watershed
- **Wine & Wisdom on the Water** boat trip each month featuring local river experts
- **Tiny Dock Concert Series** featuring local, renowned artists from a variety of genres

Find an Upcoming Event Near You
StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/events



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SHRIMP YOUR RIDE

The Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp professional baseball team has released a new specialty license plate, with proceeds from the sales going to St. Johns RIVERKEEPER.

In order for production of the plates to begin, 3,000 customers must purchase a pre-sale voucher. Order your plate today and support both the Jumbo Shrimp and our advocacy efforts to protect the St. Johns River!

Order today:

jaxshrimp.milbstore.com

Address Service Requested

WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE

This year, the Clean Water Act turns 50! This landmark legislation has dramatically reduced pollution and improved water quality across the United States, including in the St. Johns Watershed. Unfortunately, deregulation and lack of enforcement have slowed down progress. It's time to take back the Act!

The ACT50 initiative celebrates the Clean Water Act by looking back at our successes and strengthening the Act for the next 50 years of clean water. Many waters across the country remain polluted due to governmental failures to implement and enforce the Act. That's where Waterkeepers, like your St. Johns Riverkeeper, come in.

Check out Waterkeeper Alliance's interactive website to learn more at waterkeeper.org/act50.

Since our inception, St. Johns Riverkeeper has frequently utilized the Clean Water Act to hold polluters accountable and ensure protective policies are in place. Our efforts have stopped illegal wastewater discharges, reduced the frequency of sewage spills, and led to a reduction of nutrient pollution in our river.

**CLEAN
WATER
ACT⁵⁰**

PLEASE CONSIDER A GIFT TO SUPPORT OUR ADVOCACY WORK FOR THE ST. JOHNS RIVER.
STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/GIVE