

Our Mission | To defend the St. Johns River and advocate for its protection.



ST. JOHNS
RIVERKEEPER®
For the river. For us all.

WATERSHED WATCH | SUMMER 2024

SAVE OUR RIVER'S GRASSES: DIVING INTO YEAR 2

We are excited to report that we are seeing signs of recovery of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) in the St. Johns River.

If you've been following our journey to restore the grasses, you know that SAV is the foundation of our river's health. Sadly, we have experienced a significant decline in SAV in the St. Johns River in recent years. That is why St. Johns **RIVERKEEPER®** (SJRK) launched the *SAVe Our River's Grasses* expedition in 2023. This multi-year initiative consists of a series of field visit expeditions to measure grasses, conduct water quality testing, and identify solutions.

SJRK returned to the river in May for its first trip of the 2024 *SAVe Our River's Grasses* Expedition to continue our efforts to restore the struggling SAV of the St. Johns. Our team travelled an 80-mile stretch of the river from Doctor's Lake in Clay County to Lake George in Putnam County.

We are pleased to report that every monitoring site

along the 80-mile expedition route had SAV.

At several sites, grass lengths were observed to be longer than they were in 2023.

Our team also discovered a greater diversity of grasses, encountering species not observed in 2023.

One of the most exciting highlights was the presence of long, healthy grasses within the temporary enclosures at Dancy Point and San Mateo that are part of the Florida Fish and Wildlife (FWC) agency pilot project. FWC has been installing temporary fencing to protect grasses from grazing wildlife, giving our river's SAV a fighting chance. Once the grass beds are reestablished, the enclosures will be removed. Outside the Dancy Point enclosure, SAV was cropped like all the other unprotected areas, demonstrating the significant grazing pressure that makes it difficult for grass beds to grow and thrive. **Our team is hoping to receive permits soon to install more of these enclosures along our Expedition route later this year.**

LEARN MORE AND SUPPORT US:
STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/SAV



EDUCATION



RESILIENT RIBAUT

St. Johns **RIVERKEEPER**® and LISC Jacksonville joined forces to launch Resilient Ribault, an initiative to address the challenges facing the waterways and communities in the Ribault River area.

This area of the St. Johns River watershed is highly vulnerable to flooding and pollution problems, in addition to numerous socioeconomic factors.

Resilient Ribault aims to provide equitable access and connect residents to local waterways, advocate for much-needed resilience projects and water quality improvements, and address housing and economic issues to create more resilient neighborhoods.

While healthy waterways are critical to our quality of life, this is not the only factor that impacts the overall health and wellbeing of our communities. By working with LISC, community members, and other partners, we are using our collective resources, knowledge and expertise to address problems more holistically to create more resilient neighborhoods.

ONGOING RESILIENT RIBAUT PROJECTS

- We're developing a water quality monitoring program with local scientists designed to better understand the Ribault River's health and its relationship to our community's health.
- We are the Official Park Stewards for Riverview Park on the Trout River and host a monthly day of service there.
- We work with local partners to have regular events in the area and meet with locals to determine community needs.

With your help, we can continue to engage in strategic partnerships and collaborations like Resilient Ribault to have a greater impact throughout our river's watershed.

Read more at StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/Ribault!

SUMMER IN SESSION

Our education team is working hard this summer to continue to teach youth in our watershed about the St. Johns River and how they can play a role in its protection!

We are collaborating with 15 summer camps this summer. We are also working to install a Little Free Green Library at Riverview Park this July!



REQUEST A FALL PROGRAM

St. Johns **RIVERKEEPER**® has educational programs for K-12th graders. We're constantly developing new learning opportunities in and out of the classroom to better serve students and our river.

Visit our website to find and request a program for your class or group.

StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/education

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND GET ON THE WATER WITH US!
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.



Moncrief Creek Cleanup with Eartha's Farm, April 20



Jacksonville Public Library Lit Chat with Jeff Goodell, May 18



Ribault Scenic Drive Park Pop-Up, June 6



Brewing Up Solutions: Indian River County, June 26

GET YOUR FEET WET
ExploreTheStJohns.com



YOU CAN HELP US SAVE OUR RIVER'S GRASSES

St. Johns RIVERKEEPER® will conduct three 80-mile research trips this year as part of our five-year expedition to SAVE Our River's Grasses. Each multi-day trip costs up to \$15,000 for staffing, water quality testing, lodging, fuel, equipment, and supplies.

Please consider a gift to support our efforts to protect and restore these vital grasses.

SUPPORT OUR ADVOCACY WORK

StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/SAV



SAVE THE DATE! 23RD ANNUAL OYSTER ROAST

St. Johns RIVERKEEPER® will host our 23rd Annual Oyster Roast on Friday, November 22 at the Garden Club of Jacksonville.

For sponsorship opportunities, contact Merdith@StJohnsRiverkeeper.org.

FIND A CLEANUP OR OTHER RIVER EVENT NEAR YOU! STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/EVENTS



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BECOME A VOLUNTEER

Volunteering with St. Johns Riverkeeper has never been easier! Our new online platform lets you view and register for all our service opportunities in one place. Visit StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/Volunteer and click "Sign Up" to get started, or use the below QR code.

Scan with your
phone's camera



HEADWATERS UNDER THREAT

Governor DeSantis signed his \$116.5 billion budget that includes \$400 million for a project that as currently designed will inevitably and admittedly redirect polluted waters north from South Florida to the St. Johns River.

Plans for Grove Land will increase pollution in the already impaired Headwaters of the St. Johns. This impact is salt in the wounds of the damage that resulted from Florida's failed sewage sludge policy, consequently allowing South Florida to dump nearly 100,000 tons of its concentrated sewage on ranchlands in our river's headwaters annually.

According to state agencies, reasonable assurances do not exist to support Grove Land's intent or to ensure that no harm will be caused to the Upper St. Johns

and the northern Indian River Lagoon (IRL) near Sebastian.

With approval of this taxpayer subsidy, Governor DeSantis has the opportunity and the responsibility to ensure all necessary safeguards are in place to provide an environmental lift to both the IRL and the St. Johns River. One water body must not be sacrificed for another.



LEARN MORE AT STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/BLOG

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