

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



WATERSHED WATCH | SUMMER 2025

NATURE'S WATER FILTER: USING OYSTERS TO CLEAN UP OUR RIVER

St. Johns **RIVERKEEPER**® (SJRK) and Public Trust for Conservation have established **the first fund at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida dedicated to environmental protection.** Funding for the Northeast Florida Environmental Conservation Fund results from settlements with industrial facilities illegally discharging polluted stormwater into local waterways.

SJRK and Public Trust utilize the Clean Water Act to compel companies in violation of their stormwater permits to address pollution problems and achieve compliance. As part of the settlements, the companies pay assessed fines into the new environmental fund instead of to the government. Doing so ensures that the money will be used for **local** initiatives that **reduce pollution in our waterways** and will help reverse some of the damage that has been done.

The Community Foundation announced this spring that the first grant from the fund has been awarded to LISC Jacksonville and the Riverview Collective Community Organization (RCCO), for \$20,000 to **establish an oyster reef in the Trout River along the shoreline at Riverview**

Park. The grant recipients will also provide educational programming to the community and local schools about water quality and the role of oysters in the ecosystem.

SJRK staff and volunteers recently helped install the "Pervious Oyster Shell Habitat" (POSH) modules. By providing habitat for oysters to grow, this project will help to improve water quality and demonstrate the **benefits of nature-based solutions.**

Vertical Oyster Garden (VOG) Program

SJRK also **started a VOG Program** this year, with help from our partners at Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) Florida and the Marine Science Research Institute at Jacksonville University. VOGs consist of recycled oyster shells strung together on a wire that are suspended from docks along the river. Like the POSH Modules, **they create a habitat for oysters to grow.**

We have distributed two rounds of VOGs to homeowners along the St. Johns River and its tributaries in the estuary, and will have another workshop soon to create more!



 **DID YOU KNOW: ONE OYSTER CAN FILTER UP TO 50 GALLONS OF WATER PER DAY!**

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2800 University Boulevard N, Jacksonville, FL 32211



Ocklawaha Restoration Veto

Dear River Warriors,

In a disappointing turn of events, Governor Ron DeSantis vetoed funding this summer that was approved by the Florida Legislature to begin the process of restoring the Ocklawaha River.

While disappointed, we are by no means deterred. **Restoration has only been delayed, not defeated.**

Our vast statewide coalition of nonprofits, businesses, anglers, and individuals is making progress, demonstrated by the fact that the Legislature approved funding in the budget for the first time ever.

The science, economics, and public opinion overwhelmingly support restoration. We are confident that the facts will eventually prevail over the misguided politics that have prevented restoration for over 50 years.

Thanks to all of you for calling the Governor and sending emails. We weren't able to persuade the Governor to do the right thing this time but know that your efforts and support are making a difference and will pay off in the end.

We are also thankful for the leadership of Senator Jason Brodeur and his colleagues in the Florida Legislature who supported funding for a free-flowing Ocklawaha.

St. Johns **RIVERKEEPER**® and our coalition partners know we can right this 50-year plus wrong. Restoration is within reach. But, we can't do it without you.

Together, we will continue this fight to Reunite the Rivers. Our St. Johns is depending on us.

For the River,
Lisa Rinaman



presented by Community First Credit Union

Help protect our river by putting an end to trash and litter! **Middle and high school students in Duval County are invited to enter our student video contest for a chance to win \$500.**

Create a short video that raises awareness about the impacts of trash, the importance of reducing waste, and protecting our river and local waterways! *Submissions due Sept. 30.*

StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/RiverReels

Professional Development

Our education team recently hosted a PD day for local educators to give them tools to help them provide hands-on environmental programs for their students. **This is a new annual offering - we hope to see you for Summer 2026!**

Sponsor Spotlight

For spring 2025 alone, **Constellation Furyk & Friends** sponsored **18** Title 1 RiverX trips for **668** students. Thank you!

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 discover what the St. Johns has to offer, and *Get Your Feet Wet* throughout the watershed! Join us on the river: StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/events



Riverview Park Service Day, April 5



OysterFest with RCCO, April 12



Kayak the Ocklawaha River, June 17



25 Taps for the St. Johns Celebration, August 3



25 Miles for the River

In celebration of our 25th Anniversary, we're inviting the community to join the **25 for the St. Johns** challenge! **Pledge to paddle, hike, bike, or even swim 25 or more miles**, and rally your friends and family to support your journey. **Every mile brings awareness, every pledge fuels protection.**

Step 1: Determine how many miles you want to pledge and how you will complete your goal. Pledge 25 miles in honor of our 25th anniversary, or 310 miles (the length of the St. Johns), if you are really up for a challenge!

Step 2: Set up your personal peer-to-peer fundraising page at sjrk.org.

Step 3: Share the link to your fundraising page and ask your friends, family, and colleagues to sponsor your journey.

The challenge runs throughout September-October 2025. Join this *movement* for the river at sjrk.org.

Save the Date: 24th Annual Oyster Roast

Get ready for our most impactful fundraiser of the year! Mark your calendar for **Friday, November 21, 2025** at the Garden Club of Jacksonville.

FIND A CLEANUP OR OTHER RIVER EVENT NEAR YOU!

StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/events



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Public Lands Day

September 27 is National Public Lands Day! We are planning a stand-up paddleboard trip, a hike and a leisurely walk at Julington-Durbin Creek Nature Preserve.

Get out and enjoy our watershed, and learn about one of SJRK's big "wins" for the river and for public lands that saved part of this very land. As we've seen in recent days with nearby Guana - Floridians must continue to stand up for our public lands and water.

StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/events

Address Service Requested

SEWAGE SLUDGE IN OUR RIVER

Florida produces more than 385,000 dry tons of sewage sludge every year and a **disproportionate share of this sludge is dumped in the Upper St. Johns River Basin.**

More than two-thirds of the state's Class B sewage sludge has been disposed of on farmland along the banks of the St. Johns since this harmful practice was effectively banned in South Florida due to significant pollution run-off.

Not surprisingly, the St. Johns River Water Management District found a significant increase in nutrient pollution throughout the Upper St. Johns that coincides with the increase in land

application in the St. Johns River Watershed. **This uptick in pollution undermines downstream efforts and significant taxpayer investment to reduce nutrient pollution and resulting toxic algae outbreaks.**

Clearly, Florida needs a better, fairer approach to sewage sludge management **that minimizes environmental impacts and reduces risk transfer from one watershed to another.**

Where do we go from here? Read our latest blog post to learn more about contacting your legislator about a responsible solution.

[LEARN MORE AND TAKE ACTION AT STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/BLOG](http://STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/BLOG)

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