

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



WATERSHED WATCH | FEBRUARY 2025

25 YEARS: LOOKING BACK AT OUR FOUNDING

Throughout the 1990s, newspaper headlines like “Study shows river loaded with toxins,” “Report says quality of St. Johns worsening,” and “Effluent is pushing St. Johns into decline” were common. State agencies and environmental regulations were not keeping up with the pollution and impacts from the rapid growth and development occurring throughout our Watershed.

Frustrated by the declining health of the River, several **concerned citizens recognized the need for an independent watchdog group to advocate for the St. Johns and hold regulatory agencies and polluters accountable.** In October 1998, they organized a meeting of various citizen stakeholders to explore the possibility of starting a **RIVERKEEPER®** program for the St. Johns.

A steering committee was created, disagreements ensued, but fortunately leaders coalesced around one common goal – protecting the St. Johns River. Due to their hard work and determination, St. Johns Riverkeeper received its license from the Waterkeeper Alliance in December of 1999.

This group of intrepid visionaries were determined to take back their River by raising

awareness, engaging the public, and standing up for the St. Johns and the citizens to whom it belongs. **Science and the best interests of the St. Johns River guided the founders' decisions,** not politics or individual agendas. As a result, the group quickly became a trusted and effective voice for the St. Johns. When threats to the River have emerged, St. Johns Riverkeeper has been there to mobilize citizens, raise awareness, and speak up for the River by taking a stand.

The guiding principles of our founders and their spirit of dogged determination live on with St. Johns Riverkeeper today.

Twenty-five years later, our continued advocacy work is more important than ever before. We have become stronger and more effective as an organization. But, the threats to our River remain just as challenging and daunting as they were in 1999. Protecting and restoring the River is a long game, and we are fully invested and committed to this mission. However, we can't do it without you and your ongoing support. **Together, we'll continue to fulfill the vision of our founders: ensuring a clean and healthy St. Johns – for the River and for us all.**

[STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/25YEARS](https://stjohnsriverkeeper.org/25years)





Resilient Ribault 2024 Highlights

St. Johns Riverkeeper launched Resilient Ribault in partnership with LISC Jacksonville to proactively, strategically and continually work in a specific geographic location in order to create real change in a vulnerable area of the St. Johns River watershed. We hope to develop a model that can be implemented in other vulnerable areas of the watershed in the future.

In 2024, we expanded our impact. We:

- Worked directly with residents of the area to ensure our focus is on initiatives that will make a real impact in the community
- Provided boat tours for residents and stakeholders to experience the Ribault River from the water
- Advocated for upgrades to riverfront greenspaces, resulting in infrastructure improvements at Riverview Park and Ribault Scenic Drive Park
- Launched a water quality initiative to obtain data that will allow us to determine sources of pollution, identify potential solutions, and impel action by local and state agencies
- Targeted local students and educators in the project area to ensure they learn about their river
- Held monthly service days at Riverview Park

We launched 17 boat trips for nearly 300 residents and community partners to experience this beautiful, underutilized tributary. We're also currently working with UF Architecture students to produce designs for a possible park at a former toxic incinerator ash site on the Ribault River.

Read more at StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/blog.

25 Years of Education

Our education team brings the St. Johns River to local K-12 students in classrooms, and brings kids to the St. Johns River through boat trips and other field trips, often free of charge.

In the past 25 years, we have:



reached more than
65,800
students



led over
1,400
educational programs



provided training to
813
local teachers



hosted more than
580
educational boat trips

StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/education

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

[STJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/EDUCATION](https://StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/education)

25 Years of Outreach

Here at St. Johns Riverkeeper, we believe that the more we help people experience and learn about Florida's longest river, the better off the river will be. We have been informing the public and helping local citizens become river advocates for 25 years.

In 2024, we led 23 boat trips along the river and her tributaries for 474 passengers, held events in new locations along the watershed including Mud Spring, Wetland Preserve and Welaka National Fish Hatchery, and led or participated in 115 events.



Throughout the past quarter-century, we have:



participated in
1,650+
community events



led over
870
boat trips



...for more than
40,600
boat passengers



organized
440+
river cleanups

GET YOUR FEET WET IN 2025
[ExploreTheStJohns.com](https://www.explorethestjohns.com)

25 Years of Advocacy

Over the past quarter-century, we have:

- Reached a historic settlement agreement with the federal EPA requiring the state of Florida to adopt measurable limits for nutrient pollution, resulting in a significant reduction in nitrogen in the St. Johns.
- Saved the headwaters of Julington & Pottsburg Creeks by preventing 265 acres of forested wetlands from becoming a commercial office park.
- Formed a coalition to successfully protect Julington-Durbin Preserve from a proposed housing project on the conservation lands.
- Discovered a broken JEA wastewater pipe discharging fecal bacteria & other trash into the Ortega River. The pipe was replaced, the discharge cleaned up, & a settlement required JEA to fund environmental projects to benefit the river.
- Led the effort to prevent plans in Central Florida to withdraw millions of gallons of water a day from the flow of the St. Johns River & the Ocklawaha River.
- Challenged a consumptive use water permit for a massive proposed cattle operation that threatened the health of Silver Springs, leading to a dramatic reduction in the amount of water allowed.
- Launched the SAve Our River's Grasses Expedition to investigate the loss of submerged grasses in the river and implement solutions to restore this vital habitat.
- Succeeded in restoring federal protections for wetlands when a judge ruled that the 404 permitting delegation to Florida violated the Endangered Species Act.

FIND A CLEANUP OR OTHER RIVER EVENT NEAR YOU!
[StJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/EVENTS](https://www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org/events)



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

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Moncrief Creek Cleanup:
February 8 from 9-11 a.m. at
Eartha's Farm & Market

**Life Lab - Conservation and Your
Garden:** February 15 from 3-4
p.m. at the Jacksonville Public
Library Maxville

**Rising Tides McCoys Creek
Cleanup:** February 16 from 10
a.m. - Noon at 2842 Edison Ave

Resilient Ribault Service Day:
March 15 from 9-11 a.m. at Ribault
Scenic Drive Park

StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/events

Address Service Requested

25TH ANNIVERSARY LUNCHEON



Wednesday, March 26 at Noon
DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel:
Jacksonville Riverfront

Save the date as St. Johns Riverkeeper prepares to celebrate our 25-year milestone anniversary in Downtown Jacksonville on the banks of the mighty St. Johns River.

You will hear from your St. Johns Riverkeeper, Lisa Rinaman, as well as keynote speaker Jacksonville Mayor Donna Deegan.

For sponsorship opportunities, contact Meredith@StJohnsRiverkeeper.org.

Visit sjrk.org for tickets and more information!

LEARN MORE AT SJRK.ORG

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