

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



ST. JOHNS
RIVERKEEPER®

WATERSHED WATCH | SUMMER 2026

WELCOME TO THE SLIME DAYS OF SUMMER

In the heat of late summer, many Florida waterways are coated with fluorescent green slime that can be highly toxic to humans and wildlife. **Excess nitrogen and phosphorus pollution from agricultural runoff, sewage discharges, and excess fertilizer**, along with hot water temperatures, fuel these algae outbreaks.

Too many Floridians accept these toxic harmful algae blooms (HABs) as a normal late summer occurrence, unaware of the potential health impacts from chronic exposure to the toxins that HABs can produce.

New research from the Brain Chemistry Labs and Calusa Waterkeeper **indicates toxins from HABs are aerosolized and potentially inhaled by people far from the contaminated water bodies**. All samples collected also contained the neurotoxin 2,4-DAB, the same toxin found in dolphins with Alzheimer's-like brain damage. ***While we can steer clear of waterways, we all must breathe.***

During our recent SAVe Our River's Grasses Expedition, we had to take precautions to protect our team from the widespread presence of cyanobacteria.

Analysis of samples revealed potentially harmful toxins present at many sites. **Toxin levels detected in Colee Cove were 260 times higher than federal safe recreational standards.**

Throughout our SAV Expedition route, water clarity was severely reduced by a combination of surface blooms, algae mats, and algae suspended in the water column. **This excessive algae growth blocks much needed sunlight to our submerged grasses** and turns the St. Johns into a potential health hazard.

A recently released report by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) and Waterkeepers Florida finds that **the majority of Florida waterways are failing to meet water quality standards while environmental enforcement remains far below historical levels.**

This is why we **continue to advocate** for protective policies that **stop pollution at its source**, stronger enforcement of environmental laws and **more transparency** regarding the state of our river. However, **we can't do this work without you and your voice.**

**Remember this as you head to the ballot box.
Your vote and your voice matters.**





INAUGURAL NEXT WAVE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Fourteen high school students spent their summer tackling some of the St. Johns River's biggest environmental challenges through real-world advocacy projects. As participants in the inaugural Lynda L. Orth Next Wave Leadership Academy, these students gained the knowledge and confidence to become the next generation of environmental advocates.

Participants learned about the river's history and ecology, examined the many ways human activities influence the health of the river, explored how climate change, environmental justice, and nature-based solutions shape the river's health, and heard from local leaders.

It is clear that the future of the St. Johns River is brighter because passionate young people are stepping forward to protect it.



EXPANDING MIDDLE AND UPPER BASIN IMPACT

This year, St. Johns **RIVERKEEPER®** has expanded our research, advocacy, and outreach efforts throughout the Middle and Upper St. Johns River Basins.

Over the past several months, our team submitted public comments on the Upper St. Johns River Basin/ Indian River Lagoon Plan, launched a Biosolids Citizen Oversight Committee, and advocated for the health of the river at water management district and local government meetings.

Through outreach and collaboration, we've partnered with local like-minded organizations to protect our waterways, engage communities, and highlight the diverse ecosystems throughout the Middle Basin. We also hosted an **eco-history talk** exploring the Upper Basin with local historian and explorer Mark Nathan and launched a **PFAS study** investigating potential contaminants in Melbourne's drinking water.

More to come! Stay tuned for updates on our **Middle Basin Plan public comments, PFAS study updates, upcoming advocacy initiatives, and opportunities to get involved** in protecting the entire St. Johns River.

Read more at StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/blog.



OYSTER ROAST TICKETS & SPONSORSHIPS AVAILABLE!



CREATING THE LARGEST OYSTER REEF IN THE ST. JOHNS: RESILIENT RIBAULT

St. Johns **RIVERKEEPER®**, LISC Jacksonville, Riverview Collective Community Organization, and Jax Oyster Conservation teamed up and brought volunteers together this summer to extend the oyster reef along the shoreline at Riverview Park. The reef is in the Trout River within the Resilient Ribault project area.



Together, more than 30 volunteers installed 84 Pervious Oyster Shell Habitat (POSH) modules. Forty modules were installed along the living shoreline in August 2025, which are already recruiting oyster growth. This is now the largest artificial oyster reef in the St. Johns River watershed.

A single adult oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water a day. By providing habitat for oysters to grow, this project will help to improve water quality and demonstrate the benefits of nature-based solutions.

Funding for this project comes from legal challenges by SJRK and Public Trust for Conservation and settlements with industrial facilities that were illegally discharging polluted stormwater into local waterways. The oyster reef project will improve water quality near one of the facilities that was out of compliance with its permit and contributed to the fund.



Photo Credit: City of Jacksonville



SJRK LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

Lisa Rinaman, St. Johns **RIVERKEEPER®** since 2012, has announced her candidacy for Jacksonville City Council District 7. Because the **RIVERKEEPER®** role requires a full-time commitment to protecting and defending the St. Johns River, Lisa has decided to step down in the spring of 2027. She will continue serving until then and support a smooth transition.

The Board of Directors has formed a search committee to identify her successor.

St. Johns **RIVERKEEPER®** enters this transition from a position of strength, with a talented staff, engaged Board, loyal supporters and clear strategic direction.

Our mission and programs will continue without interruption. We remain focused on defending the river, educating and engaging our community, holding polluters accountable and ensuring the St. Johns has a strong voice for generations to come.

Scan this QR code to read/watch the full statements from our board, ED and Lisa.



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

StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/education

FIND A CLEANUP OR OTHER RIVER EVENT NEAR YOU!

StJohnsRiverkeeper.org/events



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

2800 University Blvd. N.
Jacksonville, FL 32211
www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org
info@stjohnsriverkeeper.org

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PUBLIC LANDS PASSPORT

Saturday, September 26 is National Public Lands Day. During the month of September, St. Johns **RIVERKEEPER®** is challenging you to get outside and explore public lands throughout our watershed!

Public conservation lands are vital to maintaining healthy waterways. Challenge yourself to discover more of the St. Johns!

Get your passport today:

PublicLandsPassport.com

Address Service Requested

CLEAN WATER LAWSUIT

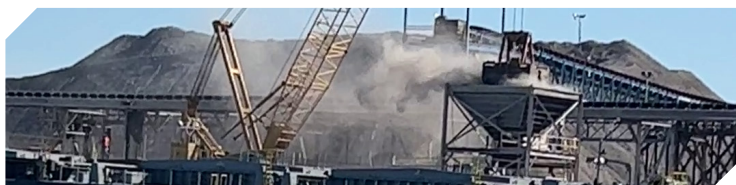
Represented by the Public Trust for Conservation, St. Johns **RIVERKEEPER®** has filed a lawsuit against the **Keystone Terminal** in Jacksonville for illegally discharging coal ash into the river, improperly managing ash during transport and storage, and contaminating groundwater. These ongoing violations continue to **expose the St. Johns River and area residents to dangerous contaminants** like mercury, cadmium, lead, selenium and arsenic.

In 2017, Puerto Rico (PR) banned the permanent storage of coal ash, a by-product of burning coal, after studies found high levels of cancer and other serious health conditions. As a result, the investor-owned coal plant began shipping its coal ash on barges to Jacksonville nearly 18 miles up the St. Johns River to the **Keystone Terminal** where it is

temporarily stored and then trucked to a landfill in Folkston, Georgia.

In March 2021, a barge carrying coal ash from PR crashed into the jetties near the mouth of the St. Johns. **Up to 9,000 tons of coal ash spilled** into the surrounding waters, demonstrating the danger of transporting toxic waste on our local waterways.

We are determined to hold Keystone accountable for these ongoing violations and ensure that potentially toxic ash does not continue to pollute our river and threaten human health.



PLEASE CONSIDER A GIFT TO SUPPORT OUR ADVOCACY WORK FOR THE ST. JOHNS RIVER.

StJOHNSRIVERKEEPER.ORG/GIVE