

RiverWatch



Newsletter of the Stewards of the St. Johns River, Inc.

Fall 2001

2nd Annual Taste of Jacksonville Society Ball to Benefit Stewards

Our Mission:

***To restore,
preserve and
protect the
waters of the
St. Johns
River basin
and serve as a
voice for the
River***



Friday, February 22, at 7 p.m. is the date for the second annual charity event to benefit the Stewards. The Jacksonville Society of Clubs is again hosting A Taste of Jacksonville Society with club chefs from Queens Harbour, Deercreek, University Club, Osprey Cove and others. The chefs will showcase their favorite hors d'oeuvres and desserts. This year's event, after a sellout at the University Club last year, will be held at Queens Harbour Country Club.

Join Mary Baer of WJXT-TV4 and Arthur Crofton of WEJZ-FM as they emcee the evening's silent and live auction. Al Franco, a real hit last year, will again provide music for dancing.

Guests will be able to purchase

souvenir champagne flutes, each containing a gemstone. A jeweler will be on hand to identify which lucky guest actually has won a genuine diamond.

So come out and support this terrific cause. Last year's party allowed us to staff an Executive Director position who has involved the Stewards in many issues during the past year.

Stewards and Society Club members may bring guests and may request that an invitation be sent to them. Stewards should receive an invitation by mail or you may call 396-3534 to make reservations. We are also welcoming donations for the Silent Auction.

Tickets are tax-deductible, \$75 per person, and black-tie is requested.

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Public Stakeholders Coalition for Northeast Florida Environmental Groups Proposed



**CAROL
MATTHEWS**
CHAIRPERSON

The Stewards, under a plan initiated by new board member, Mike Hartman, are proposing a coalition of environmental groups to increase the clout of stakeholders with legislators and regulatory agencies. The idea was presented at the January 12, 2002 Environmental Summit sponsored by the Audubon Society.

The environmental groups present endorsed the concept and agreed on a coalition. It will be comprised of a number of committees with members who have expertise in different area.

Mr. Hartman developed a five page draft demonstrating how coalition groups should be formed, and the necessary steps in achieving positive action on collective environmental issues.

It our hope that the Department of Environmental Protection and the Water Management District will become as interested in developing partnerships with environmental citizen stakeholders as they have been in forming partnerships with the regulated industries.

Hartman says, “ Many citizens have grown cynical about participation (in government) and are often missing from the processes of self-government. The mutual understanding and respect between citizens and government was at the core of our early democracy, but it is now endangered. Positive examples of citizen participation are needed to help reinvigorate the citizen’s faith in the promise of democracy. “

Board of Directors

- Donald LoopExecutive Director..... 284-7378**
- Carol Matthews Chairperson 464-0095**
- Nelson HellmuthTreasurer 269-5909**
- Tom Beal.....284-5250**
- Noble Enge.....287-2820**
- Michael Lurie.....284-7987**
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RiverWatch

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RiverWatch is a publication by the Stewards of the St. Johns River, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to serving as a voice for the St. Johns River and its tributaries since 1990. The newsletter is published quarterly.

We welcome comments from our readers. Please share our message with your friends. Invite them to become a Steward.

**NEWSPAPER
STAFF
Carol Matthews
Don Loop
Thomas Fortson**

Member of River Network
National Environmental Group

Stewards Join Legal Challenge of Georgia-Pacific Pipeline Permit



DON LOOP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Stewards of the St. Johns, Inc. have joined with the Putnam County Environmental Council and Linda Young of the Clean Water Network to legally challenge the issuance of a proposed permit for Georgia-Pacific to construct a 4 mile 48-inch diameter pipeline what will discharge the entire mill's waste water into the middle of the St. Johns River near Palatka.

On May 11, 2001, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) published its final notice to issue the permit. The petitioners contend that G.P. has not provided reasonable assurance that the discharge from the facility would not violate State laws and rules and would not result in the further degradation of the St. Johns River and surrounding tributaries. Petitioners also contend that the permit will adversely affect the fish and wildlife in these waters.

Some of the key issues that will be challenged in a State Administrative Hearing are:

- Discharge will contribute to violations set forth in the Florida Administrative Code Chapter 62-302, including but not limited to, chemical specific limits and effluent limits.
- Petitioners dispute the contention that mixing zones (dilutions areas) are legal or appropriate.
- Petitioners contend that G.P. should not be able to receive the permit with the present treatment for nutrients.
- Mandates of Chapter 403, Florida Statutes and chapter 62, Florida Administrative Code could be violated by the issuance of a permit authorizing a discharge directly into the St. Johns River and was and is, a problem because of the adverse effects such a discharge would have on the River.

Other issues that will be challenged in the formal Administrative Proceeding include, but are not limited to, dissolved oxygen, BOD (biological oxygen demand), dioxin, chlorinated organics, absorbable organic halides and chemical oxygen demand and color.

The Stewards of the St. Johns feel that the Georgia-Pacific mill should be required to treat its waste water to meet the standards clearly spelled out by Florida law. Simply transferring the point of discharge from Rice Creek to the St. Johns River is not a satisfactory solution. The theory behind the pipeline is that the larger volume of water in the St. Johns will more rapidly dilute the pollutants in so called "mixing zones". The normal flow rate of the river in this area is less than one mile per hour so the dispersion of solids is minimal at best. The simple fact is that the same amount of pollutants will still be present regardless of the point of discharge. The old adage, "dilution is not the solution to pollution" certainly applies here.

The formal Administrative Hearing Proceeding is scheduled for this coming February or March. Much time and effort has been invested developing a strong technical case to object to the proposed pipeline. Tim Keyser, attorney and member of Putnam County Environmental Council, has been the local leader and coordinator for all the efforts on this project. Mr. Keyser provides considerable legal time at no charge and should be commended for his commitment to protect and protect the St. Johns River. Five members of the Stewards Board of Directors have also spend considerable time working with Tim Keyser to prepare a highly credible technical position to document our concerns. Linda Young and others have also supported this major effort.

In summary, the outcome of this hearing is still uncertain but many credible people feel that the River will be further damaged if the proposed pipeline is constructed and a waste water discharge of as much as 60 million gallons each day is pumped into the River. Our involvement in such actions as these is the primary reason for the Stewards, and we thank our membership for their continued support with these important issues.

by Thomas Fortson



Nutrient Discharges Sewage Treatment P

The lower basin of the St. Johns River from Palatka to the Mayport has excessive nutrients. In spite of the American Heritage River designation and much other well meaning political rhetoric and bravado, the simple fact is that the overall health of the St. Johns River continues to decline. The major cause of the continued degradation of the river is the tremendous discharge of nutrients

into the river. This excessive nutrient contamination was determined by a St. Johns River Management study done for the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in 1998.

The amount of nutrient-laden waste water discharged into the river daily is staggering—260 (mpd) million gallons per day. A visual image of the volume—260 million gallons per day—can be illustrated by picturing an 18-wheel tanker truck full of waste water. Each day, the equivalent of 44,826 tanker truck loads of waste water is discharged into the St. Johns River from Palatka to the ocean. If these 44,826 tanker trucks were lined up (bumper to bumper), the trucks would extend from Jacksonville to south of Miami. The Georgia Pacific Mill in Palatka contributes 40 million of the 260 million total, and this paper mill waste water contains many harmful contaminants other than nutrients.



It would take 44,826 of these trucks to haul off the waste water discharged in to the St. Johns

Nutrients - primarily nitrogen and phosphate - come from other sources as well such as wetlands and forests. Farms using excessive fertilizer with little or no natural buffer capable of absorbing nutrients; city paved streets and parking lots; and sprawling residential developments with manicured lawns and auto dependent life styles also contribute nutrients. Yet, the greatest amount of nutrients (over 80%) come from point source waste treatment plants.

While nutrients are critical to life, excesses overfertilized the river. A review of the 1998 study indicates that about 86% of the nitrogen in the river in the Duval and Clay County segment of the river comes from waste water treatment plants. The study shows that point source waste treatment plants and non-point sources, such as those listed in the paragraph above, have increased nitrogen loads to 2.4 times the natural background level and total phosphorous (TP) loads to 6 times the natural background which would exist without the waste water discharges. Instead of growing the natural, beneficial species of aquatic plants, this overfertilized condition causes an abundance of algae growth. This excessive algae blooms effects the transparency of the water and prevents the sunlight needed by the river grasses and other desirable plant species. As the excess algae dies, the dead algae sinks to the bottom and decomposes in a process that

Continue River's Decline; Plants Major Culprits



A sample of river water infested with algae

removes oxygen from the water. Without enough oxygen, some aquatic species must leave the area and those species that can't leave, generally die. This repetitive algae decomposition process eventually reduces the grass beds needed to nurture aquatic life in the river. The photo, at left, shows an algal bloom, caused by excessive nutrients, that will reduce aquatic plant growth, and the health of fish, shellfish and other organisms.

The Florida Statutes and Administrative Codes for the last 4 years have stated that nutrients are a big problem. "The Department (DEP) finds that excessive nutrients constitutes one of the most severe water quality problems facing the State. It shall be the Department's policy to limit the introduction of man-induced nutrients into the waters of the State. Particular consideration shall be given to the protection from further nutrient enrichment of waters which are presently high in nutrient loadings." *The St. Johns River most certainly qualifies for consideration under this very specific Florida Law.

Some improvements are being made but far too slowly and small in scope to preserve and restore the health of the river. Clay County has been a strong leader in upgrading their waste treatment plants to AWT (advanced waste treatment). Much of the Clay County waste discharge is treated to a level that allows it to be reused to water golf courses on Fleming Island. JEA is in the process of upgrading 5 large treatment plants, processing about 100 million gallons/day, by adding a biological nutrient removal process to these plants. It should be noted that the JEA upgrades are being done voluntarily and not because any requirement has been mandated by the DEP, the point source regulator for waste water. The restoration of healthy grass beds that support aquatic life requires that the same type of waste water treatment upgrades be instituted by some 30 plus additional waste water treatment facilities. Improvement in waste water treatment needs to be taken now...not 10 years from now. As outlined above, it is Florida Law that nutrient reduction be accomplished.

In summary, the St. Johns shows severe signs of stress from excessive nutrient loadings from waste treatment plants. Advanced Waste Treatment will remove approximately 80% of the current level of nutrients in waste treatment discharged to the river. The slow transition to AWT is resulting in a continuing decline of the St. Johns. Commercial fishermen and crabbers have been very vocal about the declining catches in recent years as a result of declining river health. The citizens of the lower St. Johns basin, primarily in Duval, Clay and Putnam counties, should continue to put pressure on elected local and state officials to see that Florida Law is enforced by the agencies empowered with the responsibility of protecting and restoring our rivers. The St. Johns River is one of our most treasured assets in North Florida. The River cannot protect itself and the enforcement agencies continue to run studies and write plans that seldom are translated to action. It is up to the River's owners -the citizens - to take a stronger stance on insisting that river conditions improve as mandated by Florida Law.

* Florida Administrative Code, Chapter 62-302. Surface Water Quality: Section 62.302.300 Antidegradation Policy for surface waters.



Legislative Policy Statements

The following topics outline where the Steward's Board stands on legislative bills that may appear in this session in Tallahassee. We welcome comments from the membership and encourage you to contact your representatives. .

- **Air Quality**
SUPPORT promotion of low sulfur fuel and encourage the state to meet EPA requirements mandated by 2004
- **Aquifer Storage and Recovery**
OPPOSE blanket exemptions to primary drinking water standards for aquifer storage and recovery, and any exemptions in counties where ASR is specifically prohibited
- **Arsenic**
SUPPORT efforts to strengthen drinking water standards for arsenic
- **Environmental Protection**
OPPOSE efforts that make certain water management district orders and rules not subject to review and *OPPOSE* requirements that make citizen action more difficult
- **Everglades Funding**
SUPPORT funding of CERP from general funds or dedicated funding source, but *OPPOSE* any use of P2000 of Florida Forever fund balances to meet the Everglades Funding needs.
- **Florida Forever**
SUPPORT funding for land acquisition at historic levels and not at the expense of other environmental programs and *SUPPORT* efforts to allow local governments to share title with the State on lands acquired through Florida Forever funding.
- **Growth Management**
SUPPORT growth management initiatives that preserve the State's role in protecting the short and long term environmental integrity of Florida's natural resources.
- **Performance-based Permitting**
OPPOSE recording offenses that will impede voluntary settlement of violations and cause excessive litigation.
- **Recycling**
SUPPORT efforts to restore waste reduction and recycling grant funds and to give local governments more flexibility in meeting recycling goals.
- **Self-Audit**
SUPPORT environmental self-audits, but *OPPOSE* privilege and immunity for polluters.
- **Septic Tanks**
SUPPORT efforts to strengthen existing septic tank laws or rules.
- **TMDL**
OPPOSE threats that lessen protection of the State's water resources and weaken TMDL legislation.
- **Water Supply**
SUPPORT efforts to require counties to consider water supply availability when applying their comprehensive plans, or as a concurrency issue similar to roads or sanitary sewers. *SUPPORT* plans to encourage or mandate water conservation and the promotion of reuse and reclaimed water.
- **Wetlands**
SUPPORT the development of a method to identify and protect important local and regional wetland resources, the continued use of mitigation banks, regional off-site mitigation areas and other suitable mitigation options. *SUPPORT* the authority and interests of local governments in protecting wetlands and other natural resources.

Calendar of events

**February 22 -
Remember the
Jacksonville Society of
Clubs Ball
to benefit the Stewards.
Call 396-3534 to reserve.**



February 9th - Water Education Celebration: FREE DAY
Visitors to the Museum of Science and History (MOSH) will be informed through interactive displays, activities and lectures about water pollution and the measures that should be taken to save this precious resource. Admission is free all day and programs will run from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. This free day is made possible through the co-sponsorship of the City of Jacksonville Environmental Protection Board and the St. Johns River Water Management District.

March 16th - St. Johns River Cleanup: For the seventh year, thousands of volunteers from 14 Florida counties will spend a Saturday morning removing trash from the St. Johns River as part of the annual *St. Johns River Celebration*, one of many environmental efforts to protect Northeast Florida's natural resources.



Over the past six years of the cleanup, more than 33,900 volunteers have removed nearly 2 1/2 million pounds of garbage from the St. Johns and St. Mary's river systems. Last year in Duval County alone 40,562 pounds was collected. Cleanup begins at 8 a.m. on Saturday, March 16th. The celebration after cleanup begins at 12 noon at Metropolitan Park! For information on specific sites, where to obtain equipment and to sign up, go to the city of Jacksonville's website at www.coj.net and look for the river otter icon pictured above or call Sue Jantz at (904) 630-3420; e-mail to jantz@coj.net.

April 20 - Jacksonville officially celebrates the 32nd annual Earth Day on Saturday at the Jacksonville Landing with a well-supported Ecology Fair. More than 50 local organizations gather to provide the community with



entertainment and environmental information on topics ranging from recycling and conservation to manatees and environmental citizenship.

Did you know? Senator Gaylord Nelson, Founder of Earth Day, served 10 years in the Wisconsin Senate, was twice elected Governor of Wisconsin, and, in 1962, began an 18-year career in the U.S. Senate. Born in 1916, Nelson, after graduating from UW Law School, served 46 months in WWII, including Okinawa. Nelson's many achievements include legislation to:

- Preserve the 2,000-mile Appalachian Trail
- Mandate fuel efficiency standards in automobiles
- Control strip mining
- Ban the use of DDT
- Ban the use of 245T (agent orange)



YES! I want to join the Stewards of the St. Johns River and serve as a "voice for the river". Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of:

- | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Member | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Steward | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Patron |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Captain | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Admiral | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

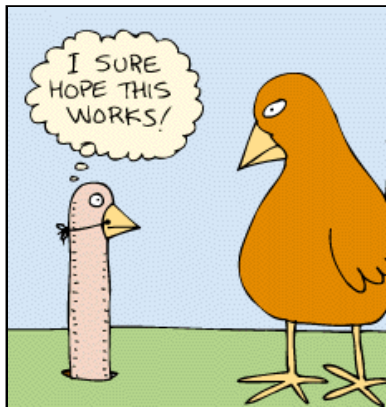
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Membership: New
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Mail to: P.O. Box 54123
Jacksonville, FL 32245-4123



DIAL 800-EDU-SSJR

RiverWatch Hotline

800-338-7757

For all communication, such as reporting spilled fuel, sewage discharge, illegal dumping or any hazards. Call to volunteer or request meeting times and date. A Steward will provide information, or direct your call to the proper authority and follow up.

STEWARDS OF THE ST. JOHNS RIVER, INC.
P.O. BOX 54123, JACKSONVILLE, FL 32245

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