



Our Mission:

To restore, preserve and protect the waters of the St. Johns River and its tributaries for current and future generations.

A TASTE OF Jacksonville

Society Benefits Stewards



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The Jacksonville Society of Clubs is hosting a gala fundraiser that will benefit the Stewards. Five clubs' chefs will be cooking up their specialty fares on February 2, at 7 pm. in the University Club overlooking the river.

Mary Baer of WJXT-TV4 and Arthur Crofton of WEJZ-FM will MC the evening with a silent and live auction. Millennium radio will provide music for dancing. You will be able to sample some of the best food you ever tasted.

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 and which are zirconia.

So come out and support this terrific cause. Tickets are tax-deductible, \$50 per person, and black-tie is optional.

Stewards should have received an invitation by mail or you may call 396-3534 to make reservations which are filling up fast.



**CAROL
MATTHEWS**

CHAIRPERSON

Pollution of the Clean Water Act



Did you know that 40% of our nation's rivers still do not meet basic clean water quality standards, three decades after the Clean Water Act was enacted by Congress?

True, we have made progress since 1972, when only a third of the nation's waters were safe for fishing and swimming. But our waters are still in trouble and so is the law that was meant to protect them.

The Clean Water Act is the primary federal law protecting surface waters, aquifers and coastal areas. It required each state to submit a list of polluted waters by 1979. The states would then define the amount of pollutants a body of water could carry - called a TMDL - (total maximum daily load). Then the State was to set a schedule for cleaning up those surface waters who made the list.

Unfortunately, the state of Florida ignored the law and never even listed any water bodies, much less developed a TMDL. After the Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund sued the EPA to get them to enforce the law, the Department of Environmental Protection in Florida listed 700 water bodies throughout the state as polluted. But instead of proceeding with the cleanup, the Legislature ordered the DEP to redefine "pollution" in order to de-list many of the troubled waters.

The proposed rule, disguised as the Florida Watershed Restoration Act, passed the legislature in 1999. It would allow the DEP to redefine pollution from materials that reduce water quality to quantities that substantially change the nature of a waterway, and it would exempt permitted dumping. However, it is not too late to try to stop this political maneuvering.

In other instances, the EPA has also proposed weakening the laws regulating underground injection wells in 24 Florida counties by lowering the standards established by the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Instead of protecting our water and enforcing the prohibition against irrigation, the EPA is now proposing to legalize this contamination of our drinking water supplies. Despite compelling evidence from its own files that deep well injections of sewage is dangerous, they now claim that treated sewage is not harmful, even though no treatment will remove viruses, pathogen and other toxins.

Hearings will be held in Tallahassee in January and February. Contact Linda Young at the Clean Water Network (850-222-8701) for more information and then contact DEP and your state legislators.



Preservation Project Surpasses Goal

“Two years ago it was a vision and today it’s a program,” said Mark Middlebrook, Mayor John Delaney’s chief administrator for the Preservation Project.

The Preservation Project is a \$312 million plan to take land out of development,

improve City parks, and increase access to the St. Johns River and other natural resources in Duval County

The project has already surpassed its original goal to buy 20 square miles of land, roughly up to 10% of the remaining developable land in Duval County. The City and its partners have acquired \$85.8 million in property during the last two years for a total of 27 square miles (17,328 acres) of property.

With the addition of the Pumpkin Hill Creek State Buffer Preserve expansion, the project will be adding 160 properties to a list of potentially eligible projects.

Funding for *The Preservation Project* has come from numerous existing local, state, federal and private sources. Two nonprofit groups, the Trust for Public Land and the Nature Conservancy, helped City Hall acquire most Pres-

ervation Project property. The trust operates in more heavily populated areas along the Intracoastal Waterway and in the southeast, while the Nature Conservancy focuses more on rural land in the north and west.

Mayor Delaney will be able to increase the original price tag of \$312 million to \$363 with an additional \$50 million from the Better Jacksonville Plan funding.

“To address the explosive growth in parts of our community, we can use taxpayer money in one of two ways. We can either expand our roadways, which will only encourage uncontrolled growth and create 12 lane parking lots on our roadways,” said Mayor Delaney. “Or we can have the vision to preserve large tracts of land now and give our citizens the opportunity to experience these unspoiled natural green spaces. When faced with the option of a generic strip mall on every street corner or a beautiful green park for families to enjoy, I think the choice is a natural one.”



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RiverWatch

P.O. Box 54123, Jacksonville, FL 32245

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.

**NEWSLETTER
EDITOR
Carol Matthews**

Member of River Network
National Environmental

Group

Georgia-Pacific's Pipe Gets The OK



In an 11th hour maneuver by EPA regional director, John Hankinson, an agreement has been signed between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Palatka's largest industry, Georgia-Pacific, a pulp and paper mill. This agreement comes after years of protest by environmental groups, such as the Stewards, Sierra Club, Clean Water Network and Putnam County Environmental Council, who oppose building a pipeline in the St. Johns River. Just three years ago, President Clinton named the St. Johns an American Heritage River, one of only 14 in the U.S., because of its historical, cultural and recreational significance. Critics of the permit, say a pipeline defeats the efforts of so many who have worked to protect the river and they are worried that the EPA is setting a precedence for other rivers to be used for corporate dumping.

For over 50 years the mill has dumped wastewater tainted with nutrients and cancer-causing dioxins into tiny Rice Creek. While Rice Creek eventually flows into the river, it does provide wetland filtering and settling that helps protect the main stem of the river. Ninety percent of the creek's flow is the mill's effluent diluted by massive wells that pump millions of gallons of fresh, aquifer water into the creek to dilute the pollution..

When the last permit expired in the mid-1990s, officials began to look for ways to deal with 35-40 million gallons per day of

polluted wastewater. The pipeline, priced at about \$21 million, was simply the cheapest way to deal with their pollution problems and was supported by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Under the terms of the new permit, GP has an additional 7 years before it must reduce parameters such as flow, color, specific conductivity, chemical oxygen demand and adsorbable organic halides. But the industry has already said that they do not believe that equipment upgrades, suggested by the EPA technical team on paper mills, will work to bring them into compliance.

If they fail, as planned, the new permit will grant GP a 4-mile pipeline into the St. Johns River and 8 mixing zones for their effluents.

Environmentalists object to the new permit on several grounds. First, a pipeline will degrade water quality in the river, which some feel is expressly forbidden by the Clean Water Act. The new agreement was crafted without public input, and briefings the day before the announcement did not include the actual documents. The initial figure for environmental upgrades was \$80 million, but the actual paperwork only requires \$66 million. Many feel this simply becomes the price of admission for open season in the river. The reductions in pollution outlined by the new permit are a step in the right direction, but there is concern that they may never be accomplished, especially if failure is rewarded by a pipeline guarantee. Monitoring is not required and the new agreement does not take into account excessive water usage for dilution.



FINAL AGREEMENT REACHED ON DEE DOT CONSUMPTIVE USE PERMIT

by Nelson Hellmuth

On June 13, 2000 the St. Johns River Water Management District's Governing Board voted to approve a reduction in water usage (consumptive use permit) for the Dee Dot Timberlands Ranch contained in 44,692 acres of privately owned forestland in Duval and St. Johns counties.

The permit would have reduced the amount of water drawn for recreational lake augmentation from 367.8 million gallons per year to 219 million gallons of water per year and would reduce the permit duration from 20 years to 5 years. Mr. Dano Davis of Dee Dot subsequently filed a petition with the Florida Division of Administrative Hearings (DOAH) to change the permit back to the original allocation of water, but was met with a petition by Howard Solomon to further reduce the water usage.

If the vote of the St. Johns River Governing Board were overthrown, the ranch would continue to use over a million gallons per day for the next 20 years simply to maintain recreational ponds, full of aquifer water. The Stewards decided to support Mr. Solomon and filed a petition to intervene on September 29.

After many hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars, the Stewards and Solomon were able

to reach an agreement that was a good compromise between all of the parties.

The following conditions are included in the settlement:

- The revised permit will allow Dee Dot to use 219 million gallons of water per year for the next 12 years, with a review after five years.

- The permit requires permanent staff gauges on all augmented water bodies.

- The Davis family may augment lakes with groundwater only when the water level in each lake is 12 inches below the discharge point, and must cease when the water level rises to 3 inches below that point.

- Inline totalizing flow meters - devices that measure the quantity of water being used - are required on all eight wells used to augment Dee Dot's lakes or ponds.

The work of challenging and protecting a permit is a very time consuming and difficult process that many people cannot afford to do. The Stewards were very fortunate in having the help of Tom Beal, Tom Fortson, Nelson Hellmuth, Noble Enge in the lengthy negotiations with the District and Dee Dot lawyers.

River Celebration, March 17

The St. Johns River Celebration is scheduled for Saturday, March 17, 2001 from 8 a.m. until noon. This is the sixth year of the cleanup which is held in 15 counties from the St. Johns to the St. Mary's Rivers.



The event is sponsored by the Water Management District and Keep Florida Beautiful. Last year more than 28,000 volunteers removed over 2 million pounds of garbage from the rivers.

To volunteer this year, please call (800)298-4850 and tell them you are a Steward.

New Neighbors

*Ichetucknee River
40 miles northwest of Gainesville*



*Suwannee American Cement
(Anderson Columbia)*

Last summer, David Struhs, Director of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and Governor Jeb Bush canoed the Ichetucknee and were so impressed with its beauty that they promised to protect this state treasure for our future. They refused to grant a permit for Suwannee American Cement to build a \$130 million cement plant 3.5 miles from the Ichetucknee River, citing the company's poor environmental record as the determining factor in denying the permit application.

A DEP report states, "the applicant is unable to provide "reasonable assurance" that the facility will comply with applicable rules and laws. While the permit met all required technical standards, Suwannee American's relationship to other companies with poor environmental records prevented them from providing the required reasonable assurance, necessitating the denial. Eight other permits sought by those related companies were subsequently denied over the next few months."

Secretary Struhs said, "This decision should place the regulated community on notice that compliance counts."

But apparently, it didn't count enough, because by November the DEP and the Governor had changed their minds and reversed the decision

in favor of granting the permit. Suwannee American will have to change their philosophy, sell a limerock mile to the State, install a pollution monitoring system, resolve all five pending environmental enforcement cases against them, restore the environmental damage they have already caused on the Blackwater River near Pensacola, contribute \$1 million for a study, conducted by the DEP, of the Suwannee, Ichetucknee, and the Santa Fe Rivers. They must also reduce mercury emission from the plant that will burn coal and used tires to produce 1 million tons of cement each year and employ 80 people.

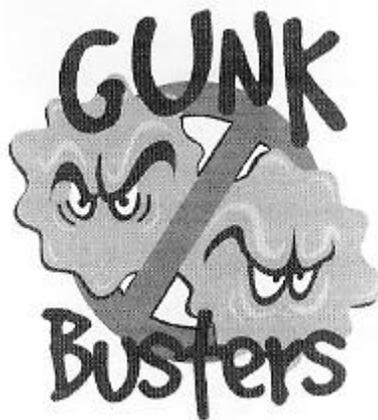
The Ichetucknee Rivers has been designated an Outstanding Florida Water and offers a unique recreational opportunity to over 200,000 visitors per year. Tubing down this river is part of the Florida experience that should not be missed. Can this sanctuary be protected from its cement plant neighbor?



Keep your legislators informed about your wishes and make sure Suwannee American is a good neighbor.

Who you gonna call?

How you ever wondered what to do with common toxic materials left in containers around your home? The **Gunk Busters** are coming to save the day!



In an attempt to reduce indiscriminate disposal of hazardous household wastes, the City of Jacksonville, at the suggestion of Councilwoman, Elaine Brown, will begin a pilot program to give citizens a safe way to dispose of hazardous materials. Items such as paints, rechargeable batteries, drain and pool chemicals, aerosol cans, antifreeze, and pesticides can not be discarded in the garbage. Instead a mobile disposal unit will be placed in each city council district once throughout the coming year.

Before her proposal, some residents had to drive more than 30 miles to the city's collection facility at 2675 Commonwealth Avenue.

Part of Ms. Brown's concern is that less than 2% of this household hazardous waste is being properly disposed of.

Councilwoman Elaine Brown sponsored a resolution calling for a feasibility study to be done for a system of mobile collections in neighborhoods too far from the Westside facility to encourage a high level of participation. The Jacksonville City Council passed the resolution and the city's Solid Waste and Resource Management Division then studied the potential of a publicized campaign.

The educational campaign will attempt to reach households by educating children in grades 3-8. The program will focus on informing the public about what



items are considered hazardous wastes, promoting awareness of household chemicals on the environment, and motivating the public to use the designed areas. Children will be given trading cards and coloring books. Adults will be reached by radio and TV advertising and billboards.

"If we agree that certain hazardous materials need to be handled and disposed of carefully, then we can do a more effective job of making it easier to get rid of the bad stuff," Brown says.

When such toxins are improperly disposed of in our landfills, they may damage the aquifer and soil disposition for the future.



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"/> \$5 Student | <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Small Business | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Sustaining | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Patron |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Captain | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Admiral | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

My area of interest is in _____

Print Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

Phone (h) _____ (w) _____ FAX _____

Office Use:

Date

Ck. #

Membership:

New

Renewal

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.
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