



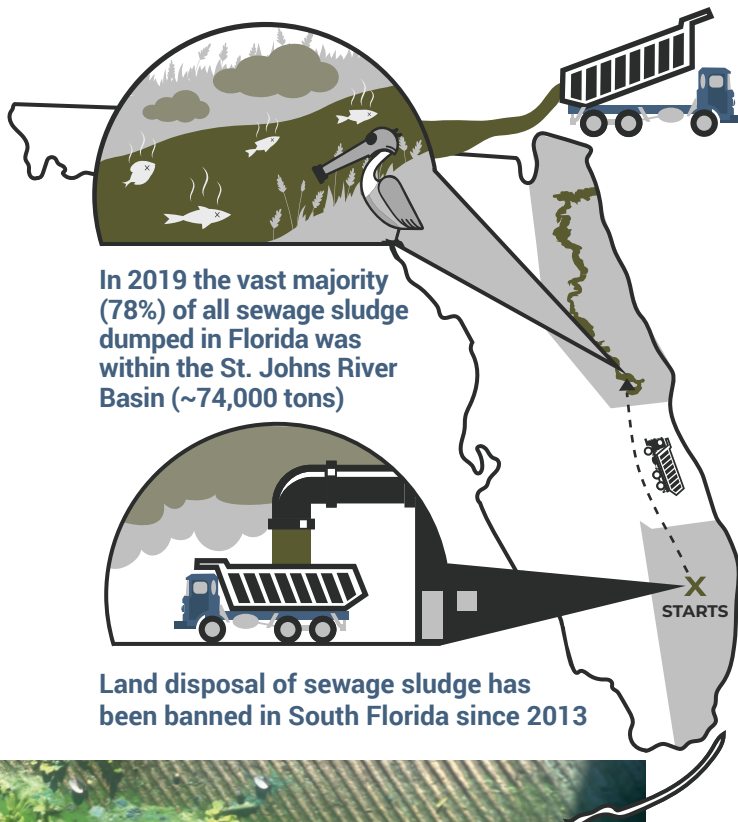
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# Our Water. Our Communities. Our Future.

## Our Impaired St. Johns River's Sewage Sludge Crisis

The dumping of sewage sludge (biosolids) on land along the St. Johns River and Florida's other impaired waterways is causing harmful algal blooms which have destructive effects on wildlife, the natural environment, and the many people in our communities who depend on the river. Sewage sludge is the semi-solid pollutant left over when utility companies separate water from comingled human and industrial waste. This sludge not only supplies free fertilizer but also can contain heavy metals, pharmaceuticals, and "forever chemicals", such as PFAS that have ruined farmers' livelihoods, poisoned water supplies, contaminated food, and are linked to health problems including cancer.

## The History Behind Our Sewage Sludge Problem



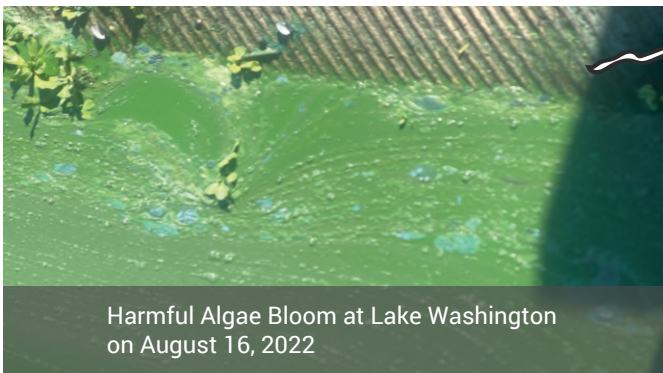
During the early 2000s Lake Okeechobee and other South Florida waterways were suffering through toxic algae blooms fueled by nutrient pollution. To reduce excess phosphorus runoff and the resulting algae outbreaks, the Florida Legislature passed a state law banning the dumping of sewage sludge in South Florida.

**SOUTH FLORIDA'S SOLUTION?  
TRUCK THEIR SH\*T NORTH AND  
DUMP IT ALONG OUR ALREADY  
IMPAIRED AND UNPROTECTED  
ST. JOHNS RIVER.**

## Sludge Pollution Causes Toxic Algal Blooms

This massive influx of sewage sludge impacts us all by causing potentially toxic algal blooms. On August 16, 2022, a massive algae bloom dominated Lake Washington (the drinking water source for the City of Melbourne), which is located just north of some major sewage sludge dumping sites.

This algae has the potential to produce cyanotoxins, posing serious adverse health effects to humans, including children who are more susceptible to these toxins that scientists fear can cause brain development deficits.



Harmful Algae Bloom at Lake Washington on August 16, 2022



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## Spearheading the Coalition to Protect Our St. Johns River

In advance of the 2023 legislative session, we are spearheading a coalition of concerned citizens, organizations, and elected officials to advocate for legislation to ban the dumping of sewage sludge along the St. Johns River and Florida's other impaired waterways - just as it has been banned in South Florida since 2013. The Public Trust for Conservation is uniquely equipped with the legal and technical expertise to lead this campaign to protect the St. Johns River and Florida's other impaired waters from the continued threat of sewage sludge. We have spent years coordinating the scientific assessments of ecosystems near sewage sludge dumping sites. This data, along with published studies from the St. Johns River Water Management District, shows that excess nutrient pollution from sewage sludge is causing damage to our threatened and already impaired aquatic ecosystems.

### Taking Legal and Legislative Action

The science makes it clear that sewage sludge is to blame for phosphorus increases in the St. Johns River. The St. Johns River and Florida's other impaired waterways throughout the state must now receive the same legislative protections as South Florida since our waters now share the same phosphorus pollution problems. South Florida should no longer be permitted to pollute the St. Johns River and other waters already impaired with their potentially toxic waste.

The Public Trust for Conservation is primed to take legal action to challenge the misapplication of sewage sludge at a ranch in the St. Johns River basin if we are unable to secure additional protections for the St. Johns River during the 2023 legislative session. Our potential legal challenge will draw attention to this grave situation and the need for South Florida to take full responsibility for the waste they generate and stop sending their sh\*t north.

### Join Our Clean Water Coalition

This is an uphill battle, but we must persevere and we must *succeed*. The future of our river and our natural environment depends on it. The Public Trust for Conservation cannot do this alone.

Please support this campaign in any way possible to bring attention to this critical threat. Our proposed legislation will provide the targeted protection that our St. Johns River and Florida's other impaired waterbodies urgently need. Our legislation also includes the development of funding mechanisms. The resulting funding will help with the extensive costs when local utilities transition away from the seemingly less expensive land application of sewage sludge to more environmentally responsible treatment methods. The conversion of this waste byproduct into more valuable and versatile products should create a high enough economic barrier to reduce the likelihood that the products created will be over-applied within watersheds that would be harmed by additional nutrient pollution.

Dumping of sewage sludge along St. Johns River



Dead bivalves outside a sludge disposal site

The mission of the Public Trust for Conservation is to protect the lands, waters, wildlife, and natural resources of Florida. The Public Trust has an established record of swiftly and effectively responding to protect imperiled public resources, using community action, education, and targeted advocacy.

*Please contact us and let us know how you can help us mobilize the support of policymakers and our elected officials that can deliver the crucial legislative relief our St. Johns River and other impaired waterways in Florida so desperately need.*

### Contact

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