PRESS RELEASE
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CONTACTS:
Jane West: (904) 471-0505 jane@janewestlaw.com
Lisa Rinaman, St. Johns Riverkeeper: (904) 509-3260 lisa@stjohnsriverkeeper.org

ST. JOHNS RIVERKEEPER FILES SUIT TO PROTECT RIVER FROM DEEP DREDGE

Petition challenges Florida Department of Environmental Protection

JACKSONVILLE, FL – On Friday, April 1, 2016, St. Johns RIVERKEEPER filed a Petition for Formal Administrative Hearing against the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regarding the proposed St. Johns River harbor deepening project.

Lisa Rinaman, the St. Johns Riverkeeper will be available for **live interviews from 11:30 am – 1:00 pm at Julington Creek Fish Camp** (12760 San Jose Blvd, Jacksonville, map - https://goo.gl/maps/gZsGmNJySSs). St. Johns RIVERKEEPER will have a professional film crew with live broadcast capability available on site for live remote interviews. Contact Jimmy Orth at 904-485-0164 for more information.

On February 19, 2016, DEP issued a Notice of Intent to issue an Environmental Resource Permit and a Variance to allow the Army Corps of Engineers to dredge 13 miles of the St. Johns River from the mouth of the river to Brills Cut from a depth of 40 feet to up to 51 feet.

St. Johns RIVERKEEPER asserts that the dredging will have significant adverse impacts on the health of the St. Johns River ranging from increased salinity spikes that will damage valuable fisheries to harmful erosion and shoaling. Impacts from the blasting of bedrock and sedimentation from dredging will potentially cause adverse impacts to several endangered species.

"Simply put, this permit fails to protect one of our state's most important natural assets – the St. Johns River," states St. Johns Riverkeeper Lisa Rinaman. "Once the damage is done, there is no turning back. We simply cannot afford to get this decision wrong."

The construction phase alone allows for elevated levels of turbidity for a period of 8 years in the Timucuan National Ecological and Historic Preserve and the Nassau River-St. Johns River Marshes Aquatic Preserve, both Outstanding Florida Waters.

The proposed permit contemplates inadequate mitigation to offset the impacts, instead relying on monitoring to be conducted by JaxPort at its expense pursuant to a Local Sponsor Agreement between the State of Florida and the Jacksonville Port Authority dated February 22, 2016.

The proposed harbor deepening is sought by JaxPort in an attempt to compete with numerous other ports that are vying for a share of the Post-Panamax container ship traffic. Post-Panamax vessels are new, larger class of container ships that are designed to take advantage of the recent expansion of the Panama Canal. Other southeastern ports that are dredging to accommodate this market include: Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah, Port Everglades and Miami.

A copy of the Petition for Formal Administrative Hearing is available upon request.

St. Johns RIVERKEEPER is a nonprofit, citizen-supported organization that serves as an advocate for the St. Johns River and the communities that benefit from this tremendous resource. Our mission is to be an independent voice that defends, advocates, and activates others for the protection and restoration of the St. Johns River.

For more information: www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org