



Welcome!

Thank you for supporting and volunteering for Apalachicola Riverkeeper! We appreciate and depend on the ongoing support our volunteers provide. We believe in the necessity and right of citizens to play a primary role in the protection of their environment. To put that belief into action, we offer the following volunteer positions in which you can help Riverkeeper and act on your passion for clean water and a sustainable flow for the Apalachicola River:

- Clean-up Captain
- Outings Leader
- Outreach and Event Assistant
- Office Assistant
- River Patrol
- Water Sampler
- RiverTrek Support Crew

Guidelines for each of these positions are included in this handbook.

Please contact Doug Alderson, Outreach & Advocacy Director, if you have any needs or questions (doug@apalachicolariverkeeper.org; 850-296-5089). You can also refer to the [staff page on our website](#) for additional contact information.



Volunteer/Intern Policy

Volunteers are critical to the success of Apalachicola Riverkeeper and are essential to our success. A volunteer or intern is anyone who, without compensation or the expectation of compensation, performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the organization. Volunteers will be extended the right to be given meaningful assignments, the right to be treated fairly, and the right to effective supervision. In return, volunteers shall agree to actively perform their duties to the best of their abilities and to remain loyal to the goals and procedures of Apalachicola Riverkeeper.

Initial Screen and Assessment

Prospective volunteers are required to complete an application form for consideration in the volunteer/intern program. Prior to being assigned or appointed to a position, all volunteers will be interviewed to ascertain their suitability for, and interest in, a position. The interview will offer the opportunity to learn more about the prospective volunteer and give the prospective volunteer the opportunity to learn more about the organization. Volunteers will also be given the opportunity to ask any questions they may have about the position.

Orientation and Training

All volunteers will receive a general orientation on the nature and purpose of the organization, all pertinent policies and procedures, and to the work to which the volunteer has been assigned. Volunteers will receive specific training to provide

them with the information and skills necessary to perform their volunteer assignment.

Supervision

Every volunteer will have a clearly identified supervisor who will be responsible for support and direction. The supervisor will be responsible for the management and guidance of the work of the volunteer and shall be available to the volunteer for consultation and assistance. Volunteers shall receive periodic evaluations to review their work and progress. Evaluations will include an examination of the volunteer's performance of position responsibilities and a discussion of any suggestions the volunteer may have concerning the position or volunteer program.

Recognition and Opportunities for Advancement

Exemplary volunteers will be made aware of other volunteer opportunities available for which they may be interested in participating and will be given opportunity for advancement for other volunteer positions.

Record of Volunteer Hours, Attendance and Punctuality

Volunteers must be accountable to uphold their commitments to volunteer at established times/places. Volunteers should do their best to be present and on time for each event or activity for which they are scheduled. If you know that you will be late or absent, please contact the person in charge of the event at least 24 hours before you are expected to come or as soon as possible so that alternate plans can be made.

Standard of Conduct

When volunteers are working on behalf of Apalachicola Riverkeeper, each individual serves as a visible representative of our organization. Please be sure your dress reflects a clean and neat appearance. The lasting impression that volunteers make on those they serve and work with reflects directly on all staff, volunteers and board members. All words and deeds should help build our volunteer program and its reputation for quality.

Although we do our best to provide safe conditions for our volunteers, we count on volunteers to be the best protector of their own personal safety. Volunteers should always be aware of where they are and what they are doing. Volunteers should pay particular attention to safety instructions and proper equipment use. Volunteers should speak up if they have a safety concern and report any injuries

to the person in charge as soon as possible.

Grievance Procedure

Volunteers and staff are expected to act professionally and in accordance with their position descriptions. Should a volunteer have a grievance concerning their work environment, they should report it promptly to their supervisor or the Executive Director. Every effort will be made to achieve speedy and effective resolution, and all complaints will be treated confidentially. Confidentiality may not be guaranteed for complaints involving sexual harassment or child abuse.

Discontinuation of Volunteer Service

If you wish to leave your volunteer service for any reason, please contact your supervisor or the Executive Director so that appropriate arrangements can be made. As a volunteer, you have the right to terminate your volunteer service for any reason. Apalachicola Riverkeeper reserves the same right.

Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

As a volunteer at Apalachicola Riverkeeper, you may have access to confidential information. It is also the policy of Apalachicola Riverkeeper to avoid potential and actual conflicts of interest in all our efforts. Volunteers will receive a copy of this policy at their initial orientation. Volunteers will be asked to complete and sign the confidentiality and conflict of interest statement.



Volunteer Cleanup Event: Site Captain Leader Checklist

Name of Cleanup: _____.

Date of Cleanup: _____.

Site Captain Cleanup Instructions

Supplies:

- Water bottle for you!
- Gloves
- Bags
- Hand sanitizer
- First Aid Kit
- Bug spray
- Cleanup Waiver
- Community Service Slips if applicable
- Pen
- Membership Envelopes
- Sharp Objects Box

Get onsite early and set up your area. Table/tent if needed, then lay out the sign-in sheet, bug spray, bags & gloves, sharp objects box. Keep the first aid kit and other emergency items on hand but not available.

Walk the area to scope out the distance, look for trash centers, tires, and identify where people will likely want to go first. Find hazards like rocks, tree stumps, or other things to point out to volunteers.

As people begin arriving, make sure they have signed in and let them know how long before you do a brief safety talk and send them on their way.

General Discussion and Safety Talk: Once your group is assembled, begin the talk.

Introduce yourself and anyone who is helping you

Thank everyone for taking the time to come out and do such important work on behalf of the river. Go over some basic facts about the river basin.

“Has anyone ever heard of Apalachicola Riverkeeper? Do you know what we do?” Go over Riverkeeper information sheet if necessary.

Can anyone tell me what you think the most common trash item is that you will likely find today? Cigarette Butts, do not biodegrade, can last in the river for up to 25 years. One butt pollutes up to 25 gallons of water, so it can create toxic conditions for fish, so please pick them up.

What are some other common items? Fishing Line – becomes ingested by bird and tangles fish and other marine mammals.

Styrofoam and Plastics – never go away, only get smaller and smaller being ingested by birds, turtles and marine mammals, act like plankton floating in our waterways but are not digested and add weight to aquatic life that eventually kills them.

Broken Glass or other sharp objects – DO NOT PICK UP broken glass or sharp objects because they can tear through and break the bag and possibly cut you or others. Leave on the ground or bring to me to put in the sharp objects box.

Safety Precautions – (Only use when in areas this may be necessary!) Tires – whether submerged or just lying on the ground, kick tires before handling them. Tires are disposed of separately from the rest of the trash. Rocky/RipRap shoreline – Tap each rock to check for how secure it is before stepping onto it with your weight. Grass above 1 foot – Watch for critters. You may want to use a grabber and avoid stepping into areas with thick tall grass.

When you have filled a bag, please tie tightly and bring to the place you specify.

Tell volunteers how long the cleanup will be and when you are stopping.

We want to thank you for helping us protect the river and bay today. BE SAFE!
GO CLEAN!

Site Captain Tasks Pre-Cleanup:

1. Set up the area. Bags, Gloves, Tools and Waivers
2. Walk the area to locate known hazards and trash
3. Designate Area where trash bags should go. Preferably, near a public trash can, but not blocking any roadways or pedestrian areas. If there are no public trash cans, then find a landmark you can describe to the city. Good examples are electricity poles which all have a number on the side. Make sure wherever your pile is, it is easy for Waste management to reach it but does not block any regular traffic. It could be up to 6 days before the trash pickup occurs.
4. Give safety talk and begin!

During Cleanup:

1. Keep trash bags piled together. In a nearby pile, stack tires. In a nearby pile, stack other large objects. In another pile, stack natural debris like limbs and weeds. DO NOT pile these items together! Each has its own trash pickup with a separate part of Waste Management.
2. Take Pictures!

3. Help people who have found sharp objects dispose of them in the sharp objects box

Post Cleanup:

1. Count trash bags, tires, and list large objects in a space on the waiver/sign in sheet.
2. Make sure all volunteers signed the waiver and count the number of volunteers to ensure they match the initial count.
3. Gather everyone at the designated time and ensure all trash bags are tied securely and piles are separate and take a group picture.
4. Submit the scanned signed waivers to riverkeeper@apalachicolariverkeeper.org along with totals of each item within two business days of the cleanup if possible.



Outings Leader Guidelines

Kayak Trips

Thank you for volunteering to be a trip leader for Apalachicola Riverkeeper. Since you have already attended other Riverkeeper outings, you are likely aware of how we do things, but this checklist may come in handy. Most likely, you will be assisting an Apalachicola Riverkeeper staff member, so some of this will be taken care of ahead of time.

Participants are asked to sign up for an eco-educational outing by Thursday before the weekend outing. Most outings are on either a Saturday or Sunday. Therefore, the final sign-up sheet should be available on Thursday evening or Friday morning before the outing. If kayaking, it should be known by then how many people need loaner kayaks and how those will be transported.

Before the trip, it is important to view the weather forecast for the anticipated outing and cancel or postpone in case of dangerous weather. The same is true regarding flood conditions on the river. For Apalachicola River outings, refer to the Apalachicola Blueway webpage for access and mileage information: <http://apalachicolariverkeeper.org/apalachicola-river-blueway/>.

We primarily use these two gages for river conditions:

Chattahoochee USGS gage:
https://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv?site_no=02358000

Blountstown USGS gage:

https://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv?site_no=02358700

If the Chattahoochee gage is below 44 feet, then numerous sandbars will be exposed above Wewahitchka for rest and lunch breaks. If the river is approaching 60 feet and rising on the Chattahoochee gage, then the trip should be cancelled or postponed due to safety concerns. A side creek such as Graham Creek might be a better option.

Gauging group experience:

Ideally, there is one experienced trip leader for every five participants to ensure proper safety. Since there may be beginners in the group, kayak groups should be capped at 15 assuming there are at least three experienced trip leaders. Most groups number 10 or below.

Participants are instructed to bring:

- A trip donation (cash or check) or they can donate via [credit card or PayPal](#).
- Drinking water, snacks, or lunch
- Hat, sunblock
- Change of clothes suggested.
- Dress to get wet. No jeans or boots. Avoid cottons as much as possible.

Each trip leader should bring:

- Tow belt
- Extra paddle
- Cell phone
- First aid kit
- Set of extra clothes in dry bag such as sweatshirt and pants that would fit a variety of sizes in case someone falls in
- Extra water and snacks

Trip leaders should show up at the launch location a half hour to 45 minutes to ahead of time to unload boats, evaluate water conditions, and go over the trip. A lead person and sweep should be designated.

Once the group arrives:

- Gather them together, do introductions and go over planned trip. If there is a shuttle, go over shuttle logistics and do shuttle before continuing group discussion.
- As an icebreaker, ask each person one wildlife species they would like to see on the trip.
- Cover facts about the Apalachicola Basin and quiz the group with some fun questions. Briefly summarize the work of Apalachicola Riverkeeper. Collect donations.
- Emphasize that life jackets must always be worn when on the water and ensure that each person's jacket is snug.
- Ask the group stay together and stay within shouting distance. Don't go ahead of the lead boat or drift behind the sweep.
- Pass out snacks.
- Coordinate the order of launching.

Hiking Trips

For hiking trips, Torreya State Park and the Garden of Eden Trail are the two primary options. There are also nature trails in Chattahoochee parks that might work along with a hike during low water on water management district lands below Bristol (Todd Engstrom is best source of information for this area).

Each trip leader should bring:

- Cell phone
- First aid kit
- Extra water and snacks
- Bug repellent
- Powdered Sulphur if deemed necessary for chiggers and ticks

Trip leaders should gather 15-20 minutes before the designated time to go over trip logistics.

Once the group arrives:

- Gather them together and do introductions. Point out the hike leader and sweep person and instruct people to stay between the two. If warm weather, tell people to be watchful of snakes, ticks, and poisonous plants.
- As an icebreaker, ask each person one wildlife species or unique plant they would like to see on the trip.

- Cover facts about the Apalachicola Basin and quiz the group with some fun questions. Briefly summarize the work of Apalachicola Riverkeeper. Collect donations.
- Once on the hike, the trip leader should frequently pause and look back and make sure the group is keeping up okay.
- Take frequent stops to drink water and point out such things as unique plants, animals or animal tracks, and ecological facts about different habitats.
- Stop at a place for snacks or lunch.



Outreach & Event Instructions

Thank you for volunteering to help staff our outreach table! Below are instructions for setting up the booth at an event!

Tent Canopy Setup (if needed):

Remove tent from zippered case. Setup can be difficult for one person but is easier with someone on each leg corner and everyone pull the legs away from the center. Sometimes you can ask a neighbor or the event volunteers for assistance. Push the red buttons to loosen and lock the different parts. If

conditions are windy, each leg of the canopy must be attached to one of the weights to keep it grounded.

Booth Materials Set Up:

Next place the table at the front of the booth and cover with tablecloth. You may need weights or blue plastic clips for use on windy days.

The camp chairs can be used during slack time, but please stand up when someone approaches and during busy times. Do not stand behind the table since it creates a barrier. Instead, stand off to the side or at a front corner to engage passersby. Do not be aggressive but smile and be friendly.

Be sure to set out our donations jar. Make sure the jar is “seeded” with \$2-3 just to get things going.

Please wear a volunteer nametag and return it after your shift.

Guest Interaction:

Start by asking if they are familiar with Apalachicola Riverkeeper and then tell them about us – that we are a non-profit advocate working for the health of the Apalachicola River and Bay. Mention that we are funded totally through memberships, donations, and grants – we receive no government funding – and memberships are tax deductible.

Encourage visitors to add their email to the clipboard if they would like to receive further information and mention our Website and Facebook page.

If they are interested in becoming a member:

We have membership envelopes to sign up new members or if anyone wants to take one home. Have them check off which membership level and make sure they fill out name, address, and credit card info section. Make sure to get a legible phone number. If they pay cash, put cash inside the envelope and seal it.

Selling Merchandise:

If we are selling merchandise (shirts, ball caps, etc.) we can take cash, checks or credit cards. You can use the membership envelopes and have them fill out their information and just write down on envelope if it was shirt, ball cap, etc.

River Issues:

Feel free to discuss some of the issues facing the river, such as water withdrawals, and use our literature for more information. Please do not engage in a debate, however.

If you feel uncomfortable discussing any of the issues, it is okay to say that you are a volunteer and don't know and tell them they can visit the website and you can hand them a fact sheet as well.

Booth Breakdown:

At the close of the event, please pack up all the materials carefully so nothing is damaged.

Again, ask for assistance with taking the canopy down. If you are taking the booth materials with you, coordinate to drop off at office or with a staff member.

If you bring your camera, be sure to send photos as the event is going on. We love to post on Facebook the hard work our volunteers do for us!!

Office Assistant

If you are interested in working in Apalachicola Riverkeeper's office, check with staff to see what duties might need to be done (or they might contact you). These duties may include:

- Clerical assistance such as putting labels and stamps on postcards and inserting letters in envelopes.
- Preparing copies of educational materials and organizing materials for outreach activities.
- Organizing t-shirts or other merchandise and tidying up the supply cabinet and sweeping the floor.
- Covering the office by greeting visitors and answering phones if staff must be out.



River Patrol Volunteer

Thank you for expressing an interest in helping Apalachicola Riverkeeper to monitor our River and its tributaries. Because the Apalachicola River is 107 miles long and its sub-basin is Florida's largest forested floodplain, covering 144,000 acres, it is extremely difficult for Apalachicola Riverkeeper to monitor the entire River basin. The River Patrol helps us assist regulators by monitoring our waterways, identifying potential problems and regulatory violations, and reporting them to the appropriate regulatory agency. Without the River Patrol, many problems would go unnoticed and unresolved.

If you want to begin your volunteer service as a member of our River Patrol, please carefully read and agree to abide by the policies and terms of the volunteer agreement before you commit yourself to this important program.

To join the River Patrol, let the Outreach & Advocacy Director know what sections of river and/or adjoining waterways you wish to patrol. If you have any questions about the policies, procedures, or how to properly complete the Log or the River Patrol Incident Report, we are available to assist you. We are hoping that River Patrol members can resolve most problems without requiring the assistance of Georgia Ackerman, the Riverkeeper. This will allow Georgia to focus her attention and energy on the most critical problems and issues involving the health of the Apalachicola River. With the help of volunteer River Patrol members, we can effectively identify and address more problems affecting our waterways without compromising our limited resources.

Please, use the agency contact information that is provided to report problems and to follow up with the appropriate agency representative until the problem is properly addressed and resolved. Although we ask that you make every effort to

personally resolve issues that you may encounter while on patrol, we are available to assist you if the effort becomes too time consuming or the problem is significant enough to require our involvement.

Thanks again for your support of Apalachicola Riverkeeper and your commitment to the health of the Apalachicola River and its tributaries.

How to Report an Incident

If you have any questions, call or email the Outreach & Advocacy Director.

1. DOCUMENT

- Take a photo
- Get a GPS coordinate and/or a location based on bridges, roadways, businesses, etc.
- Fill out a River Patrol Incident Report (supplied to you upon volunteering)

2. CONTACT THE PROPER REGULATORY AGENCY

- Use your phone list to locate the proper contact
- Get a case number or some documentation of what you report
- Ask how to follow up on the complaint. When? Who?
- Notify the Outreach & Advocacy Director that you have filed a River Patrol Incident Report. Follow-up on your case per agency instructions.
- Document follow-up and final resolution of the incident
- If you are unable to continue or believe the incident you observed is serious enough to warrant the immediate attention of the Riverkeeper and are UNABLE to contact the Outreach & Advocacy Director, contact the Riverkeeper office (850-653-8936).

3. RECORD KEEPING

- Keep a record of the River Patrol Incident Report
- Log and report to the Outreach & Advocacy Director

APALACHICOLA RIVERKEEPER POLICY FOR RIVER PATROL MEMBERS

1) All River Patrol members shall be current members of Apalachicola Riverkeeper.

2) River Patrol members are volunteers, will not be paid for their services, and assume their own personal risks and liabilities while performing River Patrol duties and activities.

3) River Patrol members will not be reimbursed for voluntary and personal expenses. These include boat time, fuel, insurance, etc. Any purchase beyond normal boat expenses may qualify for reimbursement if the purchase is pre-approved by the Riverkeeper Executive Director and/or Board of Directors and is within the approved budget of Apalachicola Riverkeeper.

4) River Patrol members must read and sign the Volunteer Agreement and will be expected to abide by Riverkeeper policies and all provisions contained in the Volunteer Agreement.

APALACHICOLA RIVERKEEPER OPERATING POLICY

Apalachicola Riverkeeper will attempt to address any violation of existing laws regarding water quality violations and habitat destruction in the Apalachicola River Watershed. Apalachicola Riverkeeper will generally follow the following sequence:

1) River Patrol members investigate a perceived or actual problem, including data collection if necessary, to determine the magnitude and potential source. Photo documentation should be obtained if possible.

2) Report the incident to the proper local, state, or federal regulatory agency. Follow up to determine if the situation has been resolved.

3) If a violation appears to be continuing or willful, Apalachicola Riverkeeper will use all legal means at its disposal to correct the situation. These steps may include contacting both elected and appointed government officials, notification of press and other public media and filing lawsuits to obtain a remedy.

In general, Apalachicola Riverkeeper will exert its influence at public hearings and/or meetings, and with regulatory agencies to improve legislation and enforcement to protect our streams and rivers.

Apalachicola Riverkeeper will devote much of its energies to educating citizens about the problems facing our watershed and to possible solutions to these problems.

Where to Report a Violation

If you see a suspected violation, help the river by reporting it to the appropriate agency. Contact us if you need assistance. We're here to help!

Good source for all issues is [Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Northwest Office](#): 850-595-8300 (Pensacola) or the DEP Panama City Office: 850-872-4375.

Hazardous Material Spill / Marine Spill: Oil, gas, sewage, paint, any toxic substance, or any substance running into a stream, wetland or river. When in doubt, call [State Watch Office](#) (800) 320-0519 and [Coast Guard National Response Center](#) (800) 424-8802

Wetland Violation: Any fill material such as dirt, broken concrete dumped into a marsh or swamp. Contact Florida DEP regional office (see above); Northwest Florida Water Management District (large subdivision/ industry) (850) 539-5999; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers- Enforcement (904) 232-3697.

Fish kill/dead marine organisms such as fish or shrimp floating on top of the water or collected along the shore. FMRI Fish Kill Hotline (M-F 8-5 p.m.) 800-636-0511 and the FWC Fish Kill Hotline and Public Wildlife Alert Hotline (available 24/7) 888-404-3922.

To report a **dead or injured manatee** or other marine mammal, always call the Wildlife Alert Hotline – 888-404-3922 so immediate assistance can be dispatched.

Algae Bloom: To report an algae bloom in the river or a stream. Please send us pictures and GPS coordinates, if possible. Apalachicola Riverkeeper, Georgia Ackerman (850) 321-6262.

Abandoned Vessel: To report an abandoned or derelict vessel, contact the FWC: 850-488-5600. There are numerous laws regarding [salvaging and removing abandoned vessels](#).



Water Sampler

Pollution monitoring is a cornerstone to many waterkeeper organizations worldwide, including Apalachicola Riverkeeper.

After Hurricane Michael in 2018, we wanted to know what water quality changes were occurring in the water due to the storm impact (from wind and flooding), including turbidity, dissolved oxygen and pollution at various points along the Apalachicola River and Chipola River. Fishkill along the lower Apalachicola and Dead Lakes was of significant concern. The water quality monitoring program allows us to establish baseline data to document changes in parameters such as pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen, salinity and nitrogen.

Brief description of the program: Water quality sampling components reveal much about the chemical, biological and physical characteristics of a waterway. The primary objective of the program is to implement and maintain a baseline monitoring program for routine water quality sampling and to identify areas of concern where restoration efforts could be effectively targeted.

The Water Quality Monitoring Program of the Apalachicola River includes:

- Water sampling at multiple sites near:
 - Chattahoochee, FL
 - Blountstown, FL
 - Wewahitchka, FL

Each sampling site is downstream of adjacent town with minor industry, agriculture and wastewater treatment facilities. Additionally, as an

example of the significance of water sampling, Scholz Power, a closed coal power plant is located near Chattahoochee. Due to a legal challenge by Apalachicola Riverkeeper a few years ago, the plant is presently cleaning up their leaking coal ash ponds. Episodic testing revealed arsenic and other toxins here, resulting in our legal challenge under the Clean Water Act.

- A data collection and distribution system that the public can access.
- Collaborative partnership with our fellow Riverkeepers and Florida State University's Environmental Science department.
- The Outreach & Advocacy Director oversees the program which includes the recruitment and training of skilled volunteers who will be involved in the sampling and data reporting.

Results: Baseline data for water quality parameters including dissolved oxygen, turbidity, pH, salinity and bacteria (such as e-coli) will be established and shared with stakeholders, including the State of Florida.

There are also opportunities for microplastics monitoring in partnership with the Apalachicola National Estuarine Reserve. Inquire with the Outreach & Advocacy Director.



RiverTrek Support Crew

The Annual October RiverTrek has evolved into the major fundraising event for Apalachicola Riverkeeper. Up to 16 participants paddle the entire river five days from Chattahoochee to Apalachicola. Prior to this, they have raised funds in a “walk-a-thon” style by reaching out to friends, family and businesses in a friendly competition to see who will be the top fundraiser(s). All proceeds go to Apalachicola Riverkeeper.

RiverTrek requires volunteer assistance in several areas:

- Assist with associated fundraising events prior to RiverTrek. These may include brewery events, fish fries and wine and cheese socials.
- Assist RiverTrek paddlers with fundraising, especially the solicitation of businesses.
- Assist with pre-RiverTrek paddles and a safety class.
- Loaning a suitable sea kayak to a RiverTrek participant if needed.
- Being part of the motorboat support team during RiverTrek.
- Transporting dinners to RiverTrek participants during the event.
- Supplying food and entertainment during RiverTrek.
- Being a guest speaker during RiverTrek.
- After RiverTrek, assist with sending thank you notecards to all donors.

Contact: Doug Alderson, Outreach & Advocacy Director
 (doug@apalachicolariverkeeper.org; 850-296-5089).