

## Ixia Chapter Conservation Newsletter, May 16, 2021

Momentum is building in Jacksonville to finally make something of two tremendous and underutilized assets: The Shipyards property and Metropolitan Park along the north bank of the St. John's River. Competing visions exist for these connected, publicly owned properties which total over 70 acres.

One vision seeks to convert them into [parks and green spaces with free and open access to the community and visitors](#), improving the area's resiliency to flooding while spurring economic investment in the area by converting the parcels into attractions. The other vision is for the [massive development of a Four Seasons hotel](#) right on the riverbank, excluded to the public, and more hard scape and development right on the water.

Florida Native Plant Society Ixia Chapter is part of a coalition known as [Riverfront Parks Now](#) helping to craft the first version which imagines a string of interconnected parks with open access to the community all along the North Bank, including the Shipyards and Met Park.

Pursuing a parks and public first plan for the river with Ixia having a seat at the table through RPN would assure native plants are not only included in the project, but featured throughout. The development and developer first plan would have little space for any plants, and you can be assured whatever plants are used would likely be decorative and ornamental to pursue the high-end, manicured aesthetic of the Four Seasons.

This Thursday, May 20, at 5:30 PM, the Jessie Ball duPont Fund will be hosting a public meeting via Zoom for interested parties to learn more and share their thoughts on what's important to them when it comes to Jacksonville's riverfront. [You can register for that meeting here.](#)

This process is early enough where your voice in favor of parks and green spaces can make a difference.

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A resident of The Villages wants an apology from a public official there who [termed her Florida Friendly yard a "dump"](#) after neighbors complained about its natural look.

As we all have experienced, one of the greatest obstacles native plants face is America's indoctrination and "group think" around the aesthetic of the manicured, lawn-centric yard as status symbol and "normal."

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Another opportunity for you to raise your voice in [opposition of a proposed mine](#) on the edge of Okefenokee Swamp. With the M-Cores/"Roads to Ruin" toll roads largely defeated, I believe this is now the most pressing and dangerous threat to our wider area's environmental protection.

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Did you know there is a [whale species endemic to the Gulf of Mexico](#)? Its total population numbers just 50 individuals.

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[My podcast](#) partner Craig Pittman's latest article for the *Washington Post* takes a look at [the nation's first Chief Heat Officer](#) who will be hired in Miami and tasked with helping residents there cope with rising temperatures.