



Office of Greenways & Trails CONNECTIONS

www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/

Celebrate Florida Greenways and Trails Month in October

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Greenways & Trails encourages residents and visitors to enjoy the many benefits of greenways and trails.



Spring to Spring Trail, Volusia County

Photo by John Moran

Trailride at the Tidewater Trailhead in Goethe State Forest in conjunction with Forest Awareness Month and Florida Greenways and Trails Month.

Trail walks scheduled on the Jacksonville Baldwin Rail-Trail in Jacksonville and on the Legacy Trail in Sarasota provide excellent outdoor excursions.

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October is a fine month for outdoor celebrations. The heat backs down, fall wildflowers color the landscape and thousands of trail miles and greenway acres provide play stations for a multitude of activities.

Florida Greenways and Trails Month events throughout the state showcase Florida's natural beauty and the many ways to enjoy it. (See page 2 for a preview of events.)

Bicycling events include the 15th Annual Rails to Trails Bike Ride on the Withlacoochee State Trail, a century ride and a bike festival on the Blackwater Heritage State Trail, a Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day on the Santos trails on the Cross Florida Greenway and the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Tour (see page 9).

Equestrians may want to register for the 9th Annual Breast Cancer Awareness

Greenways and trails provide residents and visitors of all ages and abilities with year-round access to a wide variety of free health and fitness opportunities, encourage use of alternative, energy-saving forms of transportation, conserve native landscapes and ecosystems and link natural areas with communities. The economic benefits of trails are far reaching. Studies indicate that proximity to greenways and conservation corridors increases property values and trails increasingly attract tourism as an affordable, accessible source of recreation.



~ Presented by American Trails ~

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Volunteers Make Florida's Greenways and Trails Shine/Page 8
St. Johns River-to-Sea Tour Promotes Loop Trail Tourism/Page 9

Cover story continued

Activities for paddlers include the 4th Annual Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival in Fort Myers Beach and a Paddle Florida adventure along the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail in White Springs.

Those who prefer a trail mix can pedal and paddle on the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail.

The Black Bear Festival in Carrabelle, Florida Panhandle Birding and Wildflower Festival and the Florida Keys Birding and Wildlife Festival provide opportunities to learn about native species.

Visit FloridaGreenwaysAndTrails.com to find an event in your area. An online trail guide and downloadable trail brochures provide additional resources for those who celebrate greenways and trails year-round.

The Town of Davie in Broward County Celebrates 20 Years of Trail-building

In 1989, Davie citizens initiated an "Open Space and Trail System" in response to a tragic accident that took the lives of two young girls as they bicycled to school. Today, Davie's trail system provides 135 miles of safe recreational pathways. The Brooke Hodges and Hillary Hedges Memorial Bike Ride on November 14, 2009 will mark the 20th anniversary of this initiative. For details, see www.davie-fl.gov/Gen/DavieFL_SpecNotes/1014BFE05?textPage=1.

2009 Florida Greenways and Trails Month Preview

Here are just a few of the many activities that will take place on Florida's greenways and trails during October. All registered events will be posted on the DEP Office of Greenways & Trails Web site and updated weekly. To register an event, please visit www.FloridaGreenwaysAndTrails.com.

September 26

Marathon
11th Annual Florida Keys Birding & Wildlife Festival
www.keysbirdingfest.org
(305) 852-4486

Ocala
National Public Lands Day
Cross Florida Greenway Volunteer Work Party
www.floridagreenwaysandtrails.com
(352) 236-7143

October 3
Sarasota
Legacy Trail
Discovery Bike Ride
www.legacytrailfriends.org

Ocala
Cross Florida Greenway, Santos
6th Annual Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day
www.floridagreenwaysandtrails.com
(352) 236-7143

October 4
Inverness
Withlacoochee State Trail
15th Annual Rails to Trails Bike Ride
www.railstotrailsonline.com
(352) 637-3239

October 5
Jacksonville-Camp Milton
Historic Preserve
Jacksonville Baldwin Rail-Trail
Bike Hike/Bat Basics/Trail Walk
Jean Schubert (904) 573-2498
Schubert@coj.net

October 8-11

Sebastian
2009 Florida Paddlers Rendezvous
www.kayaksetc.com/florida-paddlers-rendezvous.html
Kristen Beck (772) 794-9900

October 10
Key West
Bike Around Key West
www.floridagreenwaysandtrails.com
Cristina Lindley (305) 360-2532

Milton
Blackwater Heritage State Trail
4th Annual Bike Festival
www.blackwaterheritagetrail.org
Kevin Dinwiddie (850) 623-2808

Sarasota
Legacy Trail
Tails on the Trail Dog Walk
www.legacytrailfriends.org

October 10-11
Sarasota
Legacy Trail
Breast Cancer Walk Training
www.legacytrailfriends.org

October 10-16
Palatka
St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Tour
www.bikeflorida.org

October 15-22
Live Oak
Suwannee River Wilderness Trail
Paddle Florida
www.paddleflorida.org
Bill Richards (352) 377-8342

October 17

Milton
Blackwater Heritage State Trail
11th Annual McConnell Wantz Century Bike Ride
www.fennerride.com
Randy Bullock (850) 554-8509

Carrabelle
Forgotten Coast Black Bear Festival
www.carrabelle.org/bearfestival

October 23-25
Niceville- Camp Timpoochee
Florida Trail Association
North Regional Fall Conference
Wallis Mayo (850) 682-6098
jeepersyj@embarqmail.com

White Springs
Fat Tire Festival
www.suwanneebike.org

October 23-November 1
Fort Myers Beach
4th Annual Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival
www.calusabluewaypaddlingfestival.com

October 24
Middle Keys- Grassy Key
Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail
Pedal-Paddle
www.floridagreenwaysandtrails.com
Monica Woll (305) 853-3571 or
(305) 360-0846

October 30-November 1
Palmdale -Fisheating Creek Resort
Florida Trail Association
South Regional Fall Conference
Helen Gallops (954) 205-0731
hgiddyup@bellsouth.net

Did you know ...

Florida's Multi-Use Trail Network Opportunity Map contains more than 8,000 miles of existing, planned and potential trail corridors? This map joins the Hiking and Paddling Trail Network maps to define the vision for a connected trails system throughout Florida, and determine eligibility for funding to purchase land under Florida's greenways and trails acquisition program. In July, OGT reported to the Florida Greenways and Trails Council that an estimated 1,710 miles of corridors within the more

than 8,000 miles in the Multi-Use Trail Network are already in public ownership for an existing or planned trail. This means that Florida is more than 20% of the way toward establishing what is likely the most ambitious and comprehensive planned trail network in the nation. This speaks to the popularity of trails in Florida as community and regional projects, as well as the importance of working to continue to protect opportunities for multi-use trails in the nearly 80% of the Multi-Use Trail Network that is not currently in ownership for a trail.

Multi-Use Trail Network Opportunity Map 2009 Public Ownership Analysis



Middle School Student Becomes 'Spokes'-man for Bike Trail

Corey Smith, a seventh grader at River Ridge Middle School in New Port Richey, is like most twelve-year-olds. He likes sports, music and video games; but he is a young man with a mission. Corey lives off Moon Lake Road, a heavily traveled, narrow, two-lane road with no sidewalks or bike paths. Moon Lake was designed for vehicle traffic only, not for pedestrians or bicyclists. Corey saw a problem and said: "Someone should do something about it." He decided to tell Pasco County Commissioners about the problem and what he wanted them to do.

In December, 2008, Corey stood before Pasco County Commissioners and asked them to build a trail along Moon Lake Road so he and his friends could ride their bikes to school. He had diligently researched the project and provided County Commissioners with aerial maps he obtained from New Port Richey GIS which identified where he wanted to place sidewalks and crosswalks.

He provided information about available funding through "Safe Routes to School" from the Florida Department of Transportation and he quoted an excerpt from an article he read in the November 2008 edition of *Parks and Recreation Magazine* which stated: "In 1969, 50 percent of all children walked to school. Today, that percentage has dwindled to 15 percent. Walking and biking to school provides children with the benefit of daily physical activity, teaches



Twelve-year-old Corey Smith has asked Pasco County Commissioners to build a trail along Moon Lake Road so he and his friends can ride their bikes to school.

personal responsibility, allows children to enjoy the outdoors and provides social opportunities to connect with friends and neighbors."

Corey also cited his conversation with the Pasco County Engineer where he discovered the widening of Moon Lake Road was identified in the County's Master Plan.

The only problem, Corey told the Pasco County Commissioners: "The widening project is scheduled for the year 2022 and I will be 26

years old then. I would like to have the trail built before I get my driver's license."

The Commissioners were so impressed with the thoroughness of Mr. Smith's presentation that they did more than just listen to this twelve-year-old. The Chairman of the Board directed staff to look into funding sources for the project. The Pasco County Community Traffic Safety Committee and the Pasco County District School Board applied for "Safe Routes to School" grants on Corey's behalf.

The Pasco County Greenways and Trails Committee identified Moon Lake Road as a potential trail and have named it "Corey's Trail". There has been a concentrated effort to move the project forward so Corey can attend the ribbon cutting for "Corey's Trail" while he is still in school at River Ridge.

Speaking to government officials is not a new concept for Corey. Four years earlier, at age 8, Corey attended the National Legislative Forum in Washington, D.C. While there, he had private audiences with two members of Congress so he could tell them what he liked about Parks and Recreation.

Never underestimate the power of youth. Their voices are strong and true and can steer local government in the right direction as was made evident by the efforts of this twelve-year-old 'spokes'-man in Pasco County.

Mark your calendars...

Paddling Events Around the Bend



Photo By Doug Alderson

The 4th Annual Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival, October 23-November 1, celebrates the 190-mile marked Great Calusa Blueway and features paddling clinics, competitive races, a kayak fishing tournament, guided tours, family events, and more, including the annual paddlers' picnic and raffle sponsored by The Florida Paddling Trails Association.

When cooler winds prevail, keep your kayaks and canoes within easy reach because several Florida paddling events are coming your way.

The 2009 Florida Paddlers' Rendezvous from October 8-11 starts things off. It will feature guest speakers and several days of paddling trips in the Sebastian/Vero Beach area. For more information, log onto www.kayaksetc.com/Florida-Paddlers-Rendezvous.html. The main contact person is Kristen Beck of Kayaks Etc., (772) 794-9900; kayaksetc@msn.com.

Just a few days later, from October 15-22, up to 200 paddlers can join Paddle Florida for a 123-mile journey down the storied

Suwannee River. The event is held twice a year in cooperation with the Florida Park Service and the Suwannee River Water Management District. To learn more, log onto www.paddleflorida.org.

In southwest Florida, from October 23-November 1, the fourth annual Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival celebrates the 190-mile marked Great Calusa Blueway. The multi-day festival includes paddling clinics, competitive races, a kayak fishing tournament, guided tours, family events and much more. Also, as part of the festival, don't miss the annual paddlers' picnic and raffle sponsored by the Florida Paddling Trails Association. This year's picnic will occur on Sunday, October 25, at the San Carlos Resort. To learn more about this week-long festival, log onto www.calusabluewaypaddlingfestival.com.

After the Calusa Blueway Festival, stick around southwest Florida for the first-ever Paradise Coast Kayak Symposium, from November 11-15. Organized by Saltwater Sports of Naples, the symposium will feature speakers, workshops, guided trips and more. To learn more, log onto www.saltwatersportsflorida.com.

The first ever Weeki Wachee Paddling and Music Festival will kick in the New Year

from February 19-21, 2010. Designed to celebrate the Nature Coast and area rivers, the festival will feature workshops, equipment and boat demos, guided tours, music and more. John Norris and Staci White of the Florida Paddling Trails Association are the main organizers, working closely with Weeki Wachee State Park officials, local government representatives and outfitters. Contact John and Staci for more information: jnorris@floridapaddlingtrails.com; swhite@floridapaddlingtrails.com.

On the East Coast, mark your calendars for the annual Kayak Spring Expo at Okechee Park in West Palm Beach. Sponsored by Adventure Times Kayaks and Okechee Park Rentals, the multi-day event of kayak demos and skills classes usually occurs on the first Friday, Saturday and Sunday of March. For more information and specific dates, log onto www.kayakkayak.com.

To learn about other organized paddling related activities held throughout the state, a calendar of events can be found on the Florida Paddling Trails Association website, www.floridapaddlingtrails.com and through various paddling clubs and outfitters. A little searching will surely turn up a paddling event near you.



Photo By Doug Alderson

Paddling the Weeki Wachee.

Paddle Florida's Fall Festivities

October 15-22, 2009

By Bill Richards



Photo courtesy of Bill Richards

In our inaugural event last year, over 160 paddlers enjoyed camping, paddling, campfires and camaraderie while paddling 123 miles on Florida's majestic Suwannee River. Participants bring their own camping gear and boats and paddle each day on the Suwannee. Before and after each day's paddle, we feed our adventurers breakfast and dinner. An additional 'lunch snack' is provided on the river. Everyone's luggage is shuttled to the next overnight stop and, after dinner, they are treated to some of the best music this side of heaven.

This fall, we have booked some new artists and some old favorites for our entertainment lineup. After our first night at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park on the 15th of October, the entertainment lineup begins with Jacksonville's Tammerlin at Suwannee River State Park. Further downriver at the Suwannee River Rendezvous Campground and Resort, Paddle Florida favorite Magda Hiller will entertain us with her unique brand of off-beat, musical promiscuity on the 18th. Other surprises are being planned for the rest of the trip. Our final night's party at Fanning Springs on the 21st is always a crowd-pleaser, before we do the final nine miles and everyone departs near mid-day on Thursday the 22nd of October. Additionally, we will have all breakfasts and dinners prepared by our award-winning caterers, Jim and Cheryl Hollis.

For those who haven't had enough musically-induced relaxation they can go back to where we started, as the critically and musically-acclaimed Mag(nolia)fest will be beginning at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park.

As ever, we will have our crack staff at the ready to address any and all issues that arise during the week. All of our volunteers know that the reason the event is so much fun, is because the paddlers always rise to every challenge. River travel and singing around the campfire has taken place on the Suwannee for over 12,000 years. We are just the humble inheritors of this tradition.

The Florida Park Service is a great partner in this endeavor, as we will be staying at many of the recently-completed facilities that make up the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail.

Join us for a great trip on Florida's beautiful Suwannee River this fall.

By October the summer heat will be just a memory, so come join us, and... always remember to... go with the flow.

For more information, go to www.paddleflorida.org or call Bill Richards at (352) 377-8342.



The Suwannee River Wilderness Trail extends 170 miles from the Florida/Georgia border in rural north Florida to the Gulf of Mexico.

Florida Hosts Successful Southeastern Equestrian Trails Conference

Central Florida was the perfect setting for regional and national equestrian networking



Christopher Douwes, the Federal Highway Administration's Trails and Enhancements Program Manager, spoke about including equestrians in transportation and recreation.

The Southeastern Equestrian Trails Conference (SETC) held in Gainesville, July 9-12, 2009, is one of the nation's largest equestrian conferences. Though described as a regional conference, it attracted national visitation with approximately 173 participants, including 67 attendees who traveled from as many as 22 other states. As the 2009 SETC Coordinator, Helen Koehler, President of the Board of Directors for the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation, was responsible for bringing the conference to Florida and she did an outstanding job of developing the three-day event as a memorable and educational experience.

Topics for the 23 presentations at the conference ranged from helping future generations become involved in the equestrian lifestyle, as presented by a young US Pony Club member, to a session by the Chairman of the Back Country Horsemen of America—a genuine cowboy from Utah. The Federal Highway Administration's Recreational Trails Program, a major sponsor of the conference, held its annual State Trails Administrators Meeting in conjunction with the SETC. Following the meeting, the trail administrators welcomed the opportunity to move from

the conference room on to the trails for the mobile workshops, which generated useful dialogue between the administrators, land managers and conference participants. The mobile workshops arranged by the SETC coordinators offered a wide range of experiences. Some spent time at the observation tower at Paynes Prairie for a panoramic view of the Prairie and a chance to spot some Cracker Horses and bison. Others visited the Silver River Museum and enjoyed a guided tour of the museum and pioneer settlement, which included Cracker Horses, a jeep tram tour of several natural communities and a guided pontoon boat ride on the Silver River. For those with an interest in motorized trails, there was a trip to Croom Motorcycle Area in the Withlacoochee State Forest.

A trip to the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway highlighted some of the best equestrian trail riding opportunities in the region, including America's first Land Bridge, which is a permanent trail connection across Interstate 75, linking the east and west sections of the Greenway. Fully landscaped with native Florida vegetation, the Land Bridge allows safe passage across this six-lane highway for equestrians, hikers and bicyclists. Another workshop featured a tour by a horse-drawn trolley through the "Horse Capital of the World™." Participants enjoyed this relaxing ride where they could appreciate beautiful horses in their natural setting, including thoroughbreds, Tennessee walkers, paso finos and quarter horses.

The DEP Office of Greenways & Trails would like to thank Helen Koehler for her exceptional commitment to Florida's role as the host state and her generosity in donating the net proceeds from the conference to the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation. The next Southeastern Equestrian Trails Conference will be held July 15 -17, 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia.

HB 169 – Equine Activities Act signed into law by Governor Charlie Crist on June 1, 2009

The Equine Activities Act, known as Nicole's Law, requires children under 16 years of age to wear an American Society of Testing and Materials approved helmet when riding on public lands. Trainers, leasers and renters of horses must provide a helmet if a child does not have one. Parents cannot waive this requirement. An exemption exists for events where helmets have not historically been used. A violation of this law is a non-criminal infraction of \$500.

The law becomes effective October 1, 2009. The enrolled legislation may be viewed at www.flsenate.gov/data/session/2009/House/bills/billtext/pdf/h016904er.pdf.



Be smart, wear a helmet – every time . . . every ride.

Gopher, Frog & Alligator

U.S. Forest Service Opens Newly Paved Multi-use Trail



*Photo by Mary Anne Koos
Florida Department of Transportation*

*Doing the honors of the ribbon cutting for the GF&A Trail opening are (l to r):
Garth Smelser, Deputy District Ranger, Apalachicola National Forest;
Bob Crim, State Project Management Engineer, Florida Department of Transportation;
Paul Johnson, President, Wakulla County Chamber of Commerce*

The property is managed as part of the Apalachicola National Forest, the largest national forest in Florida with 564,961 acres on gently rolling terrain. The forest includes one of the last remaining longleaf pine/wiregrass communities in existence and hosts the largest red-cockaded woodpecker population in the world.

For a map of the GF&A Trail visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/apalachicola/recreation/maps/ApalachicolaGFATrailmap.pdf>.



*Photo by Stephen Hodges
Tallahassee-Leon Co. Planning Dept.*

To celebrate National Bike Month and “Get Outdoors Florida!” on May 16, bikers, hikers and skaters met in the Apalachicola National Forest to reopen the Trout Pond Recreation Area and the new 2.4-mile paved GF&A Trail. The GF&A Trail, also known as the Gopher, Frog and Alligator Trail, derives its name from the historic Georgia, Florida and Alabama Railroad. The GF&A Trail has the potential for becoming a 53-mile trail corridor connecting Tallahassee and Carrabelle. Funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation, the first paved section of the GF&A Trail crosses Springhill Road following a portion of the historic rail corridor and crossing Fisher Creek. The Trout Pond Trailhead offers hiking paths, a fishing dock, a picnic area and bathroom facilities.

Along the Big Bend Scenic Byway, the trailhead is located approximately five miles south of the Tallahassee Regional Airport on Springhill Road/SR 373. The event coincided with the end of Bike to Work Week, which promotes bicycling as a healthy, economical and environmentally friendly way of traveling.



*Photo by Mary Anne Koos
Florida Department of Transportation*

Cyclists were among several types of trail users who attended the grand opening ceremony and took the opportunity to explore the newly paved 2.4-mile section of the GF&A Trail within the Apalachicola National Forest.

Cheers to the Volunteers!

Celebrating the valuable volunteers who support Florida's greenways and trails



The Monroe Youth Challenge Program from Key West High School partnered with Maya Töthman of the Florida Keys Wildlife Rescue and Mike Bashom of TRASHED in the Keys for a cleanup at the Spanish Harbor historic bridge.

Florida Greenways and Trails Month is a fitting time to salute the many volunteers who contribute to the development and maintenance of these lands and waterways year 'round. From the Panhandle to the Keys, countless individuals and organizations invest time and energy in helping clear, clean and enhance the state's greenways and trails for the safety and enjoyment of Florida's residents and visitors.

Volunteers provide a vital extension of the state's financial resources and help promote welcome tourism during this critical economic period. The numbers are inspiring, with over 345 individuals recording 46,000 volunteer hours for this past year! Beyond routine maintenance, these hours reflect innovative projects such as building mountain bike pump tracks and fitness trails, amphitheater stage construction, paddling trail improvements and safety patrols.

Under the guidance of OGT Trail Specialist Monica Woll, the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail (FKOHT) volunteer program is growing through the Paradise Paddlers and Pedalers user group and the "adopt-a-trail/bridge" litter control programs. Monica, and Cristina Lindley, OGT's Public Outreach Coordinator for the FKOHT, are successfully recruiting high school groups and other

organizations (including Master Gardeners!) to assist with clean-ups, monofilament recycling, tree planting and landscaping with native vegetation. The FKOHT recently even attracted assistance from a spring break group from Washington, D. C. (OK—so it wasn't such a hard sell to bring spring breakers to the Keys, but how many come to help with the clean-up efforts?!)



Members of "Boatless Fishing" from Fort Lauderdale have adopted the Channel 2 Historic Bridge on the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail for a much-needed monthly cleanup.

Throughout the Keys there are a number of organizations and individuals who help beautify the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail by lending a hand with clean-ups, invasive plant removal, monofilament recycling and landscaping projects. To learn more about the volunteer activities on the FKOHT, call (305) 853-3571.

With so many helping hands to recognize, there is occasionally some time set aside just to play and say "thank you" to our willing friends for their hard work. The FKOHT's first Volunteer Appreciation Picnic was held on April 24 at Curry Hammock State Park. OGT staff member Steve Stanfill treated everyone to slow-cooked pulled pork (an all-night project!), funded by Paradise Paddlers & Pedalers.

In celebration of National Trails Day® on June 6, the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway volunteers enjoyed an appreciation event at the Santos Trailhead, featuring a delicious picnic buffet and live music. Although rain put a damper on some of the

demonstration and tour activities planned by the mountain bikers, equestrians and hikers, this was a great, well-earned opportunity for the trail user groups to come together socially and be acknowledged for their volunteer contributions.



Volunteers clear the entrance to the equestrian trails at the Santos Trailhead of the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway.

The cycling and equestrian trail users hold monthly work programs. The Ocala Mountain Bike Association, www.omba.org, hosts work days on the 2nd Saturday of each month and the Greenway Equestrians, www.greenwayequestrians.org, meet monthly on the 3rd Saturdays. Interested volunteers are always welcome to join—please check the respective websites for details. Florida Trail Association volunteers help maintain the Greenway's hiking trails—visit www.floridatrail.org for a schedule of their activities. To learn more about any of the volunteer opportunities along the Greenway, please call (352) 236-7143.

As we prepare to observe Florida Greenways and Trails Month this October, the Office of Greenways & Trails would like to send out a resounding cheer of thanks to all the individuals and organizations whose volunteer gifts are so appreciated throughout the year. For your presence in support of the state's greenways and trails and the mission of this office, we are truly grateful.

Bike Florida Tours to Spur Development of Long-Distance Loops

by Herb Hiller



Trails, not just bicycling, will benefit when Bike Florida in October rolls out the first in its new program of year-round tours.

“We’re excited about getting loop trails built across Florida because trails are the safest way to get people riding long distances for pleasure and for commutes,” says Hope Howland-Cook, interim executive director of Gainesville-based Bike Florida.

Bike Florida’s program launches October 10, in Palatka with a week-long tour of the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop (SJR2C), the 260-mile route that’s already 40 miles paved and off-road, and that advocates hope to see complete by 2013. A second, nearly sold out week-long tour of the Loop sets off November 8, and a four-day tour on December 4, along a portion of the Loop that begins and ends in DeLand.

The inaugural tour of the Loop last October scored well among its 17 riders. Said St. Johns County Board of County

Commissioners Chair Cyndi Stevenson – who will ride again this October – “Thanks for introducing me to the loop. It takes me to places I assumed were gone in Flagler and Volusia [counties]. I am delighted to see them again and learn how they are. . . so close at hand that I can ride my bike.”

The Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation was a sponsor of last year’s invitational tour, as was the Florida Wildflower Foundation (FWF), The Trust for Public Land (TPL), the St. Johns River Alliance (SJRA) and the East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA). Moves afoot since then, encouraged variously by the Office of Greenways & Trails, by the Florida Bicycle Association, by Bike Florida, by FWF, TPL, SJRA, ECGA and others, call for the Florida launch of trail tourism and of wildflower tourism.

Howland-Cook and Bike Florida founder Linda Crider, now a consultant to the not-for-profit organization, plan to initiate tours

of additional in-state loops as these develop. Currently in discussion are loops through Jacksonville that would overlap with SJR2C between Palatka and St. Augustine, a “green necklace” from Volusia through Seminole, west to the Pinellas Trail, north to the Cross Florida Greenway and Palatka, between there and DeLand also overlapping with SJR2C, and a loop through the Treasure Coast.

Bike Florida’s new tours include all indoor overnights, breakfasts and dinners, maps, cue sheets, luggage transfers, ride leaders, support vehicle and evening programs. Also included are water taxi crossing of Ponce Inlet and a tour-ending houseboat cruise on the St. Johns. Week-long tours are \$1,250; 4-day tour \$625. For details: www.bikeflorida.org.

Herb Hiller serves as Southeast Region Planning Consultant to the East Coast Greenway Alliance.



