



Office of Greenways & Trails

CONNECTIONS

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

1999 Legislative Session Report

by Suzanne Walker, Planning Manager

Since the Preservation 2000 program began in 1990, over 1 million acres of land have been acquired and protected including many greenways and trails. With the overwhelming passage of Constitution Revision No. 5 in November 1998, voters made it clear that they support continuation of an aggressive land acquisition program in Florida.

The 1999 Legislature responded to voters by passing Senate Bill 908, which created the Florida Forever program. The legislation authorizes the issuance of \$300 million in bonds each year over a period of 10 years for environmental restoration, conservation, recreation, water resource development, historical preservation, and capital improvements to land and water areas.

From a funding perspective, the small Greenways and Trails acquisition program fared well. The allocation for the program increased from an annual amount of \$3.9 million to \$4.5 million. Furthermore, funding for the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) program, run by the Department of Community Affairs, was expanded from \$30 million annually to \$72 million. The FCT program must provide no less than 5% of its funding allocation (\$3.6 million) for recreational trail systems.

Also included as part of Senate Bill 908 were significant changes to Chapter 260, Florida Statutes, (the Florida Greenways and Trails Act), including:

- ⌄ Clarification that waterways (as well as lands) may be designated as part of the Florida Greenways and Trails System
- ⌄ "Grandfathering" of all previously designated trails on public lands and waterways so they will not need to go through the designation process again
- ⌄ Authorizing the Department of Environmental Protection to carry out the five-year implementation plan for the Florida Greenways and Trails System adopted by the Florida Greenways Coordinating Council in September 1998
- ⌄ Creating the new Florida Greenways and Trails Council to advise the Department in the execution of its powers and duties under Chapter 260, F.S. (see article on page 3)

Other bills of interest to our readers that passed include:

Share the Road License Plate (House Bill 601). This legislation provides for a Share the Road license plate. The funds received from the sale of these tags will be distributed to the Florida Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Amateur Sports, a portion to be used to market the



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Dear Friends of OGT,

Change is good. The Office of Greenways and Trails is still undergoing change. Former Acting Director for the Office of Greenways and Trails, Robin Young, is the new chief of the Bureau of Public Lands, Environmental Administrator Jack Maynard moved to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and I have accepted the position of Director for the Office of Greenways and Trails. DEP Secretary David Struhs appointed Bob Ballard as DEP's new Deputy Secretary for Land and Recreation. I'd like to welcome Bob to the DEP team.

Thanks to a productive 1999 Legislative Session, we're on our way to connecting Florida's communities with greenways and trails. The 1999 Legislature passed Senate Bill 908 that created the Florida Forever program. The program authorizes issuance of bonds to aggressively acquire land for environmental restoration, conservation, recreation, and preservation. The OGT annual acquisition program increased by half a million dollars.

Florida Forever also established the Florida Greenways and Trails Council (FGTC) to replace both the Florida Recreational Trails Council (FRTC) and the Florida Greenways Coordinating Council (FGCC). The FGTC will advise DEP on greenway and trail related issues.

Phase I of the implementation plan for the Florida Greenways and Trails System is complete. Our next mission is to act on the recommendations outlined in Phase I: focus public and private resources to acquire, develop, and maintain the greenways and trails system; inform and educate Florida's residents and visitors about the value of the greenways and trails system in maintaining livable, prosperous communities and ecosystems for all of Florida's species. I look forward to working with you as we implement Phase II of the Florida Greenways and Trails System.

Sincerely,

Debbie Parrish
Director
Office of Greenways and Trails

Monty Roberts, The Man Who Talks to Horses, Visits the Santos Equestrian Trail in Ocala

by Leslie Palmer, Public
Information Specialist

Monty Roberts, internationally acclaimed horse "gentler" and author of *The Man Who Listens To Horses*, took time out of his 1999 Join-Up Tour in April to visit the Santos Equestrian Trail in Marion County.

Mr. Roberts, appearing with students from the Marion County Therapeutic Riding School, emphasized the importance of greenways and trails to communities. Mr. Roberts said, "In my term as a Santa Barbara County Commissioner, I recognized the importance of greenways and trails. As a representative of local government, I often heard opposition to a planned greenway. Those same opponents of that greenway or trail would be singing its praises after designation.

Monty Roberts on the Santos Equestrian Trail with Cathy Grey and Matt Schnabel of the Marion County Therapeutic Riding School.

Greenways and trails increase property values, serve as linkages within the community, and make the community more attractive to businesses. I am proud of the emphasis the State of Florida is putting on greenways and trails and commend them for their efforts."

Robert's system, called "Join-Up", relies on cruelty-free communication with the horse through interactive body movements. When done properly, an untrained horse is gentle and rideable. Mr. Roberts donates all proceeds from his appearances to charity. To date he has raised over \$650,000 for different horse-related organizations.

Florida Greenways and Trails Council

by Marsha Rickman,
Planner III



In 1999, we asked the Florida Legislature to provide the leadership and financial commitment that will allow us to implement the recommendations contained in Connecting Florida's Communities with Greenways and Trails. With the passage of Florida Forever, our leaders have taken an important step in meeting this challenge.

As part of this legislation, the Florida Greenways and Trails Council (FGTC) was established to replace both the Florida Recreational Trails

Council (FRTC) and the Florida Greenways Coordinating Council (FGCC). This 21 member council will represent all stakeholders and will advise the Department on greenway and trail related issues. In addition to ten government representatives, there will be five representatives of the trail user community, five representatives of the greenway user community and one member representing private landowners. Five members will be appointed by Governor Jeb Bush with Senate President Toni Jennings and House Speaker John Thrasher each appointing three members.

The council is expected to meet at least four times a year at various locations around the State. Members will

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Department of Environmental Protection Prepares for The New Millennium

Year 2000, Y2K, or the “Millennium Bug” are all names for the computer problem which faces our technologically based society as the eminent date of January 1, 2000, approaches. If you have read a newspaper or listened to the news, you have heard about the “problem.” But what exactly is the problem?

In this Information Age, we have become dependent on computers for everything from running elevators to running water. Many computerized functions require recognition of a specific year, day and time. The problem is many computers and computerized equipment recognize only the last two digits of a year’s date. Therefore, when the calendar changes to the year 2000, many computers and equipment with embedded computer chips will have difficulty interpreting the correct date. The computer may interpret the year to be 1900 or some other year which in turn would cause the computer to operate erroneously. If the computer detects errors, the function the computer is supporting may shut down or not perform correctly.

What does it mean to be ready for the Year 2000? The Federal Reserve uses the following definition: “Systems (e.g. software, hardware, firmware) are defined as ready if they can demonstrate correct management and manipulation of data involving dates, including single-century and multi-century formulas, without causing an abnormally ended scenario within the system or generating incorrect values involving such dates.”

The good news is that DEP and the regulated community are working diligently on becoming Y2K compliant. As DEP completes final testing of mission critical application systems, software, hardware, communications equipment, and embedded chip

devices, the department is also focusing on assisting the regulated community as they work to solve their Y2K problems. For a decade DEP has been working to correct potential Y2K problems in application software. Since November 1997, DEP has been working with the state’s Year 2000 Task Force to work toward Y2K certification. The department has completed an inventory of all software applications, computer hardware, system software, communications hardware and software, and all embedded chip devices. These have all been evaluated and all of the mission critical resources have been fixed, replaced, or will be replaced before the Year 2000.

DEP is also critically concerned with the effect the computer problem may have on water facilities and environmental resources. As part

of its mission to protect public health and the environment, DEP helps assure safe and clean water for all Floridians by setting water quality standards for drinking water and wastewater treatment plants. These plants are owned and operated by local governments or private utility companies. Many of these facilities operate with some level of computerization. Monitoring, operations and maintenance, communications, laboratory analysis and reporting are areas that could be affected by the potential year 2000 computer problem that could ultimately lead to public health and environmental problems. Although the primary focus is on public water supply and wastewater treatment, the department is evaluating other industry sectors regulated in the waste and air programs that might present public health or environmental problems.

To manage the problem and allay public concerns for disruption of critical services, Governor Bush has created Team Florida 2000. Under the auspices of Team Florida 2000, the department has been directed to ensure that the facilities DEP regulates are prepared for Year 2000 challenges.

See Y2K, p. 6

“...many computers...recognize only the last two digits of a year’s date. Therefore, when the calendar changes to the year 2000, many computers and equipment...will have difficulty interpreting the correct date.”



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Office of Greenways & Trails
DEP MS 795
2600 Blair Stone Road
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32399-2400
Phone: (850) 488-3701
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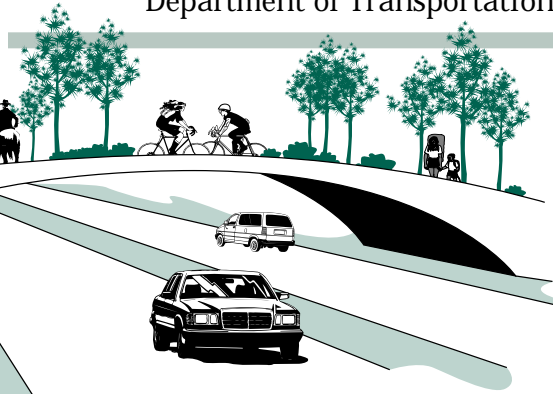
Debbie Parrish,
Director

Leslie Palmer,
Editor, Public
Information Specialist

Our Field Office is located at:
8282 SE Highway 314
Ocala, FL 34470
Phone: (352) 236-7143

Construction to Start on the First "Land Bridge" in the U.S.

by Mariano Berrios,
Project Development Engineer
Department of Transportation



For several years, the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Office of Greenways and Trails have been discussing and evaluating ways to reconnect the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway on either side of Interstate 75. With the availability of federal Transportation Enhancement funding, this project has become a reality.

After a period of approximately 14 months in the design phase, construction of the first "Land Bridge" in the United States is becoming a reality. The Cross Florida Greenway at I-75, as the project is known, will be constructed on I-75 in Marion County within the limits of the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway (Greenway). The location is approximately one mile north of the I-75 interchange with County Road 484. Bids for the project were opened on March 31, 1999. The contract was awarded in April to the firm of Baker, Heavy and Highway, Inc. and construction is expected to start in July.

Designed by the firm of Daniel, Mann, Johnson and Mendenhall, the structure incorporates some very unique features. The 52.5' wide structure consists of a 16.5' bank run shell multi-use trail along its center and 18' wide "planters" on each side. The trail is to be used by hikers, bicyclists and equestrians to cross I-75, which had bisected the Greenway when the interstate highway was

built. Vegetation will be planted on the "planters" to screen the view and the noise of the highway from the trail users. The vegetation will also give the structure a unique view from the highway. Plantings will include Saw Palmetto, Chicksaw Plum, Rusty Lyonia, Yellow Hawthorne and others to match the native vegetation of the project area as close as possible. The structure will also have a trail gathering area in the center. Walls and monuments on the structure itself will have a fieldstone facing consisting of Marion County fieldstone. The approaches to the structure will be landscaped with plantings native to the area.

The goal is to make the trail users feel as if they have never left the Greenway while crossing I-75. The structure will also provide an opportunity for wildlife connectivity by reconnecting both sides of the Greenway across I-75. The overpass is expected to be a major attraction for the equestrian community in the Ocala area. Most of them will be accessing the overpass from a proposed 250 acre multi-purpose horse and agricultural park to be constructed southeast of the structure within the Greenway property.

The DOT's efforts during design are to be commended since the uniqueness of the project required coming up with an innovative design never before used in the U.S. Similar structures have been constructed but they better fit the category of tunnels rather than a bridge structure like the one used on this project.

For more information on the Land Bridge, please contact Mariano Berrios, Department of Transportation at (850) 922-7221 or the Office of Greenways and Trails at (850) 488-3701. 🌿

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not receive compensation for their service, but will be reimbursed for travel expenses as provided in Section 112.061, Florida Statutes.

For more information on the new council, please contact Marsha Rickman, Office of Greenways and Trails, 2600 Blair Stone Road MS 795, Tallahassee, FL 32399-2400, (850) 488-3701 or email marsha.rickman@dep.state.fl.us. 🌿



"...by restoring nature, we restore our future."

— Statement by
DEP Secretary
David B. Struhs
on the
Submission to
Congress of the
Plan to Restore
the Florida
Everglades,
July 1, 1999



“A River Runs Through It”


by Laura DeLise, Education and Outreach Director Hillsborough River Greenways Task Force

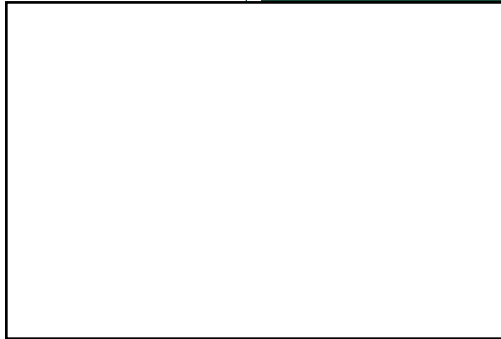
The Third Annual “A River Runs Through It” was held May 1st in Tampa, Florida. This celebration of the Hillsborough River has become an annual event sponsored by the Hillsborough River Greenways Task Force, a local non-profit, public-private partnership in Tampa whose mission is to protect the Upper Hillsborough River Greenway and all its associated wetlands and uplands. The event drew a crowd of over 300 people on an unusually cold and windy day in Tampa.

One of the goals of the event was to allow the citizens living within the Hillsborough River Watershed to experience the importance of the river. “It proved to be an

opportunity for the general public to get out on the river and show them what the Task Force is working towards; the protection of all that is associated with the Hillsborough River” said Laura DeLise, Education and Outreach Director. Visitors were able to take

30 minute canoe rides on the river, collect macroinvertebrates on the shore of the river and learn to listen for frog calls as well as visit numerous booths which explained how citizen involvement in the protection of the river is a must. Numerous alligators, turtles, wading birds and Rosette Spoonbills were spotted on the river that day.

For more information on the Hillsborough River Greenways Task Force and its many programs, please contact Laura DeLise at (813) 744-6100, ext. 479. 



Canoeing on the Hillsborough River during “A River Runs Through It.”


News, Notes & Events



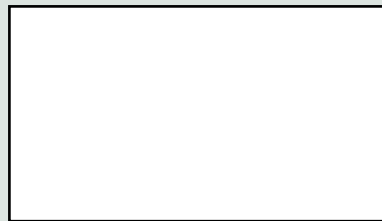
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“Share the Road” concept and license plate. The remaining funds will be divided equally between Bike Florida, Inc. and the Florida Bicycle Association to be used for bicycle education, awareness, training, and the promotion of safe bicycling.

Wildflower License Plate (House Bill 1909). This legislation provides for a Florida Wildflower license plate. The funds received from the sale of these tags will be distributed to Keep Florida Beautiful, Inc. to be used to establish native Florida wildflower research, education, and grant programs. The Department of Environmental Protection will serve on the Wildflower Advisory Council, which will develop research contracts, educational programs, and wildflower planting grants for Florida native wildflowers, plants and grasses. Grants will be available to municipal, county, and community-based groups.

Skateboarding and Inline Skating (House Bill 0019). This bill provides that no governmental entity or public employee shall be liable for any damage or injury to a person who voluntarily participates in skateboarding, inline skating, or free style bicycling which takes place in an area designated for such activity. The limitation on liability does not apply to an independent concessionaire even if under governmental contract. 

- The Ocklawaha Trailhead Visitors Center in Silver Springs officially opened June 26
- Construction on I-75 Land Bridge begins July 26
- 5th Annual Rails to Trails Bike Ride, October 3, Iverness, FL
- Jacksonville-Baldwin Rail Trail will officially open October 9



The Ecosystem Management Team of the Year Award winners are (l-r) Suzanne Walker, Marsha Rickman, Rick Halvorsen, Samantha Browne (not pictured: Robin Young, Kent Wimmer, Jim Wolfe)



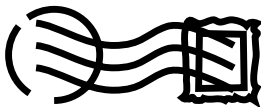
DEP Secretary David B. Struhs and Debbie Parish, Director for the Office of Greenways and Trails (background) express their appreciation to Tom and Peggy Cavanaugh for their generosity in donating time and funds to the Ocklawaha Visitors Center.

Postcards from the Road

Submitted by
Mick Graves




Road the Blackwater Heritage Trail last weekend. I was prepared for the worst "off-road" biking sometimes means getting off the bike and portaging. I took a hybrid bike; my 15-year-old son took his mountain bike. I needn't have worried. The trail is smooth asphalt, and nowhere is it less than slick. Many bike paths are dustpans for road debris, but someone had cleared the deadfall and pebbles from this trail. Riders on road bikes so light it takes sixteen of them to weigh a pound raced along the trail that is so well maintained it's like riding in a velodrome. July in Florida is always hot, but a steady breeze kept us



cool and bug-free. My son and I were hoping to splash into the Blackwater River at some point along the 8.5-mile trail, but the trail doesn't cross the river. Maybe next trip I'll ride my mountain bike and do a little off-off-road biking...Mick

Y2K, from p. 3

To check and facilitate Y2K compliance in the regulated community, DEP has developed a Plan for Year 2000 Preparedness. While recognizing efforts that have taken place in various program areas, the Plan is a department-wide, multi-media approach to Y2K compliance in the regulated community. Industry sectors that need assistance to prepare for the Year 2000 will be identified and supported. In conjunction with Team Florida 2000, statewide public workshops and meetings are being scheduled and hotline numbers established. For more information about the DEP's Plan for Year 2000 Preparedness, contact Mimi Drew at 850-487-1855 (SC 278-1855) and for information about DEP Y2K compliance, contact David Schrader at 850-487-1841 (SC 278-1841). 



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