

Florida DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION Connections

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Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail 15th Anniversary

Submitted by: Susan Dutil, Pinellas County Planning Dept.

The Pinellas Trail, celebrating its 15th Anniversary, has become a popular greenway corridor linking some of Pinellas County's most picturesque parks, scenic areas and bustling downtown cores. Trail spurs have been built at several locations to connect the Pinellas Trail with destinations like Honeymoon Island in Dunedin, a 77-acre nature park in Tarpon Springs, St. Petersburg College, and Clearwater Beach along the newly opened Memorial Causeway Bridge. Along the trail, outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy deep glades of ancient live oaks trailing Spanish moss, quiet waterways and tidal streams with all varieties of land and water birds. The trail provides a safe transportation route for users in a busy, highly urbanized environment. Nine overpasses allow trail users to travel above traffic at busy intersections.

The trail began as a vision in 1983. A man whose son was killed while riding his bike helped form the Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization's Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC). The BAC, in conjunction with the Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee, wanted a safe place for people to enjoy bicycle riding, strolling or jogging. Pinellas County had a separate problem - what to do

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Dunedin Post Office



with a 34-mile corridor of abandoned CSX railroad right-of-way. Creating a multi-use trail on the railroad right-of-way addressed both issues.

Voters in Pinellas County demonstrated support for improving Pinellas County amenities in 1989 when they first voted to establish the Penny for Pinellas, a 1% local option sales tax to fund infrastructure improvements. Penny funds were used in construction and expansions of the Pinellas Trail. The Penny was overwhelmingly approved by voters in 1997 for another decade.

Palm Harbor Section



In 1990 the first five-mile section of the Pinellas Trail opened, connecting Taylor Park in Largo to Seminole Park in Seminole. The trail became immensely popular, boasting an average of 90,000 users each month, far exceeding expectations. With the passage of the first Penny for Pinellas one-cent local option sales tax, plans were put into motion to connect the county, from north to south, with a continuous trail.

Several studies and surveys by Pinellas County and consultants conclude that users enjoy the safety and convenience of the trail as they travel to school, work, shops, restaurants and other destinations. Approximately two-thirds of those on the trail use it as a transportation corridor.

From its first five-mile section, built in 1990, the Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail has grown to a 34-mile long multi-modal trail, connecting communities and businesses from Tarpon Springs to South St. Petersburg.

Trail amenities include bike racks and refreshment stops along the way provided by the Pinellas Trails, Inc., a not-for-profit citizen's group. The Pinellas County Security Task Force, as well as county park rangers and volunteers, regularly patrol the trail.

The Guide to the Pinellas Trail, a convenient, pocket-size flip-style map, details rest stops, service stations, restaurants, pay phones, bike shops, park areas and other amenities along the trail. The free guide is available at the trail office, area libraries, other locations around Pinellas County, and on the Internet. An on-line overview map and detailed maps of each trail segment is available at: pinellascounty.org/trailgd/default.htm. There is also a link to the trail on OGT's website, FloridaGreenwaysAndTrails.com

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Florida Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Recreation Management Workshop

The National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council in cooperation with the Florida Division of Forestry, Florida Department of Environmental Protection - Office of Greenways & Trails, Lee County Parks and Recreation, and USDA Forest Service will conduct an Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Management Workshop at the Hilton-Ocala, Ocala, Florida on May 1-4, 2006.

The purpose of the workshop is to conduct an educational forum on off-highway vehicle recreation management. Florida's local, county, state and federal land management decision makers, recreation planners, resource specialists and leadership representatives from OHV recreation and other stakeholder communities should attend.

Workshop Objectives

- Review Florida sales of off-highway motorcycles and ATVs, rider demographics and safety training programs
- Review general and Florida specific needs and desires of OHV and other recreation publics
- Review current county, state and federal laws, policies, regulations and planning efforts and their impact on OHV management and development in Florida
- Expand partnership development between the OHV recreation public, communities and land management agencies
- Improve the development, planning, design, construction, maintenance and management of OHV trail areas, facilities and systems to:
 - o Better meet local, county, state and federal requirements
 - o Reduce liability
 - o Minimize impacts and improve conservation of natural and cultural resources
 - o Reduce conflict between recreational, community and environmental interest groups
 - o Better meet the needs and desires of the OHV and other recreation public.

The workshop will consist of classroom instruction and field exercises. In addition, optional Tread Lightly! Master Tread Trainer, ATV Safety Institute, ATV Rider Course certification classes and the Motorcycle Safety Foundation Dirt Bike School will be offered on May 1, 2006.

For further information regarding the workshop, contact: Chris Reed, 352-489-5267 or reedj1@doacs.state.fl.us, or contact Jack Terrell, 863-984-9294 or jackterrell@tampabay.rr.com.

Registration packets will be available in February. Registration is required and limited to 100.

The National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council is a non-profit educational foundation. For information regarding NOHVCC and its workshop program, visit nohvcc.org.



FGTC Meeting Highlights

In May, the Florida Greenways and Trails Council approved the designations of four trails for inclusion in the Florida Greenways and Trails System:

- The Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve, Florida National Scenic Trail Segment**—Pasco, Sumter, Lake and Polk Counties
- The Starkey Wilderness Preserve**—Pasco County
- Lower Hillsborough Flood Detention Area and Wilderness Park**—Hillsborough County
- The Fairlane Farms Multi-purpose Trail**—Palm Beach County.

The next FGTC meeting, set for November 16, will feature an overview of the Atlanta Beltline Project and presentations on Off Highway Vehicle Safety and Recreation.

For more information about the Florida Greenways and Trails Council or Florida Greenways and Trails System designation: www.FloridaGreenwaysAndTrails.com or 850-245-2052.



OGT Needs Your Trail Data

The Office of Greenways & Trails (OGT) recently launched a new website to update and collect Existing Trails and Trailhead data for any trails statewide. This website, developed jointly with the University of Florida GeoPlanCenter, can be accessed at <http://ogt.geoplan.ufl.edu>.

OGT is asking local governments and other entities involved in trail maintenance and development to log onto the website to verify, correct and/or submit new Existing Trails and Trailhead data.

The website will serve as a centralized place for the exchange of the most recent trails information. Website users can view existing trails maps, download the latest existing trails and trailheads data

as GIS layers, and submit existing trails data. The 2004 Trail Network Opportunity Maps can also be viewed and downloaded as GIS layers from the website.

For more information, please contact: Heather Pence, 850-245-2052, heather.pence@dep.state.fl.us



Santos Trail Update

Located in Ocala, Santos offers over 30 miles of trails with three levels of difficulty available to accommodate beginners to experts. The Santos trailhead draws riders from all over the state and country to experience what many call the best mountain bike trails in Florida.

The Office of Greenways & Trails has partnered with the Ocala Mountain Bike Association (OMBA) and the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) to improve the Santos trail system based on recommendations from IMBA's 2004 trail assessment. These recommendations and printable maps are available at omba.org.

This study was commissioned to improve safety, navigability, and sustainability of the Santos mountain bike trail system. If you have questions or comments on this project, please contact the Office of Greenways & Trails at (352) 236-7143. We appreciate your cooperation and patience as we work to make Santos an even better place to ride.



No compass? No problem. Equestrian Trail Signage on the Cross Florida Greenway

The Cross Florida Greenway offers the equestrian community some of the best horse and wagon trails in Florida. With the installation of a unified signage system, navigating the trails has become even easier.

Volunteers are working to install white carsonite posts and decals--provided by OGT--from the Santos Trailhead on SR 441 to the Pruitt Trailhead on SR 484.

“We’re putting up signs so people don’t get lost” explains Wayne Vaught, who is leading the volunteer effort. Bob Wiltse and Shelley Scott-Jones, along with members of the Marion County Horseman’s Association, have assisted with the project.

All equestrian trails will be marked at intersections. Confidence markers will be added periodically between intersections. Trails will

be numbered for easy navigation.

Wagon trails will also be indicated.

Additionally, arrows pointing to the nearest trailhead and decals indicating eastbound and westbound direction of travel will be installed.

If you would like to join the group of dedicated volunteers who maintain the Cross Florida Greenway equestrian trails, or learn more about equestrian trails on the Greenway, please call OGT’s Ocala office at 352-236-7143.



Nine State Parks Certified as Part of Florida National Scenic Trail

To celebrate National Trails Day, representatives from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Office of Greenways & Trails and Florida State Parks joined the U.S. Forest Service, Florida Trail Association and local White Springs community leaders for a ceremonial signing at the Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park’s Nature and Heritage Tourism Center to add nine state parks to the Florida National Scenic Trail.

The ‘National Scenic Trail Ceremonial Agreement’ officially certifies Blackwater River State Park, Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, Suwannee River State Park, Big Shoals State Park, Olustee Battlefield State Park, Gold Head Branch State Park, Lower Wekiwa River Preserve State Park, William Beardall Tosohatchee State Reserve and Jonathan Dickinson State Park as part of the Florida National Scenic Trail.

For information on the Florida National Scenic Trail visit florida-trail.org.



**Greenways
and Trails
Month on
State Trails**

Oct. 1 - 7th

Annual Dr. Fenner
McConnell - Matt
Wantz Blackwater
Heritage State Trail
Century Ride

Oct. 2 - 11th Annual

Rails to Trails
Bike Ride on the
Withlacochee State
Trail

Oct. 29 - Ribbon

Cutting for the
Southern Extention
of the Blackwater
Heritage State Trail

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Withlacochee State Trail

Celebrate

Florida Greenways & Trails Month in October Put Your Body in Motion

In October, join OGT and counties throughout the state in celebration of Florida Greenways and Trails Month.

Over four thousand miles of trails cross Florida's diverse landscape through urban and rural areas. In addition to ecological, economic, and cultural benefits, greenways and trails also provide a variety of settings where people of all ages and abilities can enjoy the physical activity necessary for good health.

Thousands of miles of blueways—springs, lakes, rivers, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Atlantic Ocean—provide another realm of opportunity to put your body in motion.

For a sampling of the many places, the many ways to enjoy Florida's natural resources, sunshine, and fresh air, visit FloridaGreenwaysAndTrails.com or call 877-822-5208 for a schedule of events.



RAILS TO TRAILS BIKE RIDE

The 11th annual Rails to Trails of the Withlacochee Bike Ride will be held on Sunday, October 2, 2005. Participants can ride from one mile to 100 miles.

Registration/packet pick-up is from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. at the main trailhead at North Apopka Avenue in Inverness, Florida. A continental breakfast and a light lunch will be served at the main trailhead. Six SAG stops are provided along the trail.

Managed by the Office of Greenways & Trails, the 46-mile long Withlacochee State Trail runs through Citrus, Hernando, and Pasco counties. Concrete mileage and whistle markers, the Lake Henderson Trestle, and the Inverness Depot serve as reminders of Florida's railroad history.

The Rails to Trails of the Withlacochee Citizen Support Organization (CSO) members work year round to maintain the trail. All monies earned from the annual bike ride, their only fund-raising event, are used for trail improvements. Previous rides have funded a pavilion, canopies, a 1930s caboose, benches, and covered picnic tables along the trail.

Download an application for the ride at www.railstotrailsonline.com, e-mail harnage@atlantic.net, or call 352-527-3263 for more information.



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Filling out your interest and affiliation helps us determine other information notices that might interest you. To remain on OGT's mailing list, cut out this page, complete information, fold in half with the Office of Greenways & Trails' address on the outside, tape closed and mail. You can also email information to Mary.L.Spivey@dep.state.fl.us or fax to 850-245-2082. Thank you!

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