

Florida Greenways and Trails Council

Meeting Summary February 22, 2008 Tallahassee, Florida

Members Present

Ken Bryan, Chairman
Bob Ballard
Greg Chelius
Bob Crim
Mike Dannenhauer
Fred Gaske
Mike Grella
Deno Hicks
Susan Kennedy

Linda King
Phil Laurien
Jerrie Lindsey
Susan Matthews
Ken Reecy
Dan Simmons, Vice-Chairman
Kathryn Starkey
John Waldron

Alternates Present: Bill Howell (for Bob Ballard), Malisa McCreedy (for Bill Thomas), Charlie Houder (for Heidi McCree), Howard Pardue (for Kent Wimmer)

Members Absent: Jeff Gove, Heidi McCree, Bill Thomas, Kent Wimmer

Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) Staff: Jena Brooks, Cindy Radford, Tammy Salmon, Heather Pence, Matt Klein, Marsha Connell, Robin Turner, Rick Halvorsen, Miles Shiver, John Norman, Gerard Greco

Others present: George Edwards, Katie Flanagan, Jason Garner

Chairman Ken Bryan called the meeting to order

INTRODUCTIONS

Tammy Salmon announced new members in attendance for their first meeting. Phil Laurien was selected as the Regional Planning Council representative on the Council and was present for his first meeting. Mr. Laurien had been represented by Tara McCue at the December meeting. Newly appointed council member Mike Dannenhauer from Ft. Myers was in attendance as well. Mr. Dannenhauer is a Governor's appointee. Susan Matthews is the new acting director for the USDA Forest Service in Florida and has replaced Marsha Kearney on the Council. Ms. Salmon also introduced alternate members and announced on behalf of Vice-Chairman Dan Simmons that he will not seek reappointment to the Council.

AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus

MEETING SUMMARY FOR DECEMBER 2007

MOTION: Ken Reecy moved to approve the summary
SECOND: Mike Grella
VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

CHAIR REPORT

Chairman Ken Bryan distributed a proclamation by Governor Crist designating March as Bicycle Month. The proclamation will be on the OGT website. He reminded everyone about Bike Florida to be held March 30 through April 4, 2008. This year it will be called "Trail Link" and will link four rail trails together. Chairman Bryan also announced Pro Bike Pro Walk Florida will be in October, 2008.

FUTURE MEETING DATES were set for June 5-6 with Orlando as the probable location. The following meeting date was set for September 18-19 in Tallahassee.

OGT REPORT

ACQUISITION CYCLE AND WORKPLAN

Cindy Radford began by reminding the council members that the acquisition cycle opened February 18, 2008 for new projects and will close on April 17, 2008. A copy of the workplan was provided in members' packets that included a summary of project status. Ms. Radford stated there is \$2 million in funds available through June. There are about \$20 million in projects that OGT is trying to acquire and another \$22 million that are at a standstill, for a total of approximately \$42 million worth of projects.

Greg Chelius asked for clarification of the numbers in the workplan which showed that OGT has to tightly watch spending with \$4.5 million coming in July for the next fiscal year not being enough to cover all the projects in the pipeline. He sees this as giving validity to increasing Florida Forever, demonstrating need first while looking to increase funding.

Ken Bryan asked about upcoming potential projects that may be submitted to the Council, particularly the GRU (Gainesville Regional Utilities) corridor that would link Alachua to Lake Butler. Robin Turner, OGT regional coordinator, replied this is a possibility that is being worked through. Ken Bryan provided background to the council on this potential project.

Kathryn Starkey announced efforts to connect the Starkey Trail with the Pinellas Trail have made progress. Pinellas County and Pasco County met and are moving this link to first priority for their region. Pinellas County believes they have the funding for their part. Ms. Starkey is hopeful the connection can happen quickly. This will connect two

large trails, enabling users to go from southern Pinellas County to Citrus County, at which point trail users could take the Cross Florida Greenway, and then the Palatka trail.

Phil Laurien asked if when acquiring a rail corridor, is it always with the presumption that the rails are going away forever or is it possible that the rails will be retained with trails.

Ken Bryan (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Florida Director) answered. All the rail corridors the state has acquired through OGT's program have been abandoned. With the deed restrictions on the bonds, it would probably preclude retaining the rails for usage, at least during the time in which the bond would apply. But, there are some corridors that have been acquired that have been "railbanked" and that means the potential for reuse is still available. Sarasota to Venice corridor is railbanked, some around Leesburg, and a new potential project of Trenton to Newberry that would be a railbanked project. He added that DEP doesn't feel comfortable in exercising railbanking because there is a conflict between what the federal government requires through the Surface Transportation Board regarding sovereign immunity and what the state feels they can submit. So, currently, under the OGT acquisition program, there aren't any rails that could be potentially reused. He has discussed with Bob Ballard pursuing a legislative solution and would like to further discuss it with Greg Chelius (Trust for Public Land, state director) to narrowly define a solution with the attorney general's agreement.

Phil Laurien responded that his reason for asking is that in Central Florida they have done significant scenario modeling for the year 2050. Realizing that given the current development patterns of sprawl, they are going to need alternative transportation corridors and it would seem a loss if reinstating to light rail could not be done.

Ken Bryan offered that on the list now is a rail with trail project that will allow co-use of a trail and will be managed by OGT. The trail is along I-95 and SR 207 near St. Augustine.

Jena Brooks, OGT Director agreed with Mr. Laurien that it makes sense to co-locate the two. She said OGT is working with utility companies to do the same. Part of the problem encountered is the public preference for pristine, visually and aesthetically pleasing corridors. OGT is working to help the public understand that sometimes to get these corridors, we don't always get the perfect scenario but we get a trail we wouldn't have gotten otherwise. There is an outreach education component involved and OGT is trying to do the same thing with utilities. She asked Jason Garner, acquisition agent with the Division of State Lands, to further address railbanking.

Jason Garner said the standard railbanking language that the Surface Transportation Board uses has a reverter clause in it that says if the property is ever required for railroad purposes again, title would revert back to the railroad. This is the reason the state prefers to buy in fee. However, when buying in fee, there are problems with outsider reverter clauses and encumbrances that wouldn't be included under railbanking. It's a

complicated acquisition but worth it because a unique assembled corridor is obtained that wouldn't otherwise be acquired.

Ken Bryan said he wishes a better job of preserving those rail corridors had been done. The country has gone from 300,000 miles to 140,000 miles of rail corridor. He added that Bob Crim with FDOT can speak to how expensive it is to create new corridors.

Mr. Bryan continued by saying that the way Florida Forever is currently structured, only passive recreational use on the trails is allowed. So, for the duration of the bond period, possibly upwards of 30 years, those restrictions will likely remain in place.

Phil Laurien hopes that some day we'll have trail with transit projects.

OPPORTUNITY MAPS

Heather Pence with OGT presented a timeline for updating the Opportunity Maps. She announced plans to continue with the same system used in the 2004 process but with some updates that will hopefully improve the process. Submissions from trail planners, trail developers and others involved with planning trails will be accepted from March 10 through May 2, 2008. Following that, two drafts will be compiled for the Council's review at the June 5-6, 2008 meeting. Once approved, there will be a four week public comment period with public workshops conducted in Marianna, Jacksonville, Orlando, West Palm Beach and Sarasota. After public comment has been incorporated, the prioritization process will begin. OGT would like to have the final prioritized maps for the Council's approval at the September meeting. The Council will be informed via email communication throughout the process and members are invited to attend the public workshop in their area.

Ms. Pence explained that the public workshops will serve for more than just receiving input on the Opportunity Map update. Information on the acquisition process, the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation, the existing trails database, public outreach, designations, and other programs and services offered by OGT will be provided. The workshops will function like an OGT Open House and educational opportunity.

Ms. Pence noted that there are three maps: the multi-use, the paddling, and the hiking trail map. The hiking map will conform to the Florida National Scenic Trail Planning Corridor which is a product of the Florida Trail Association in partnership with the USDA Forest Service.

Howard Pardue (Florida Trail Assn) said the Preferred Routing Study should be finished this year and becomes the document that is referred to by statute and therefore gets incorporated into the map plans discussed by the Council.

Jena Brooks, OGT director, said that sometimes the people get upset when they see the Opportunity Maps and corridors going through their property. Regional coordinators

have explained to people that the map does not impact their property. OGT is a willing seller program and does not use eminent domain claims.

Discussion ensued about a particular landowner who was unfamiliar with the greenways and trails program. Marsha Connell, OGT Regional Coordinator, briefed the council about her discussion with this individual on how trails near someone's property can actually enhance the value of the property. That individual may now be a future participant in the program and is interested in the Developer's Forum. Several staff members of OGT have spoken with this landowner and will facilitate connecting him with St. Joe to discuss trail development.

Heather Pence clarified that anyone on the map may apply to the program. The ranking of high, medium or low has no bearing on eligibility.

Ken Bryan said he thought there might be an effort this time to identify high and medium connections. Since there is limited money available, connections deemed to be important high or medium connections should drive the creation of the statewide system instead of being patchworked together. Mr. Bryan would like to see OGT and the Council look again at focusing on the high and medium priorities so that when the last Florida Forever replacement program is over, at least the backbone of the system will be complete.

Susan Kennedy asked who the trail planners are that have the input in the beginning of the process. Heather Pence replied OGT has contact lists put together by the three regional coordinators and the recreational trails program mailing lists, and everyone OGT has contact with in each county. Marsha Connell added that the contacts in each county differ greatly and with the public workshops, input is taken from anybody.

Ms. Kennedy also asked how the prioritization process works. Heather Pence responded that it is part subjective and part objective. The subjective part is received from a panel of experts from various parts of the state. The objective part involves GIS analysis where the corridors are run against various layers, such as existing trails, distance to schools, proximity to water, ecological areas, etc. The Century Commission Lands Process may also be utilized.

Phil Laurien then asked if it was based on the plan that was originally put together by the University of Florida and Ms. Pence responded it is basically the same process with the layers being updated.

Susan Matthews commented that her agency has just completed the designation process for their off-highway vehicle trail system on the Apalachicola, Osceola, and Ocala national forests. She asked if OGT would like those reflected on the multi-use map as existing systems that potentially other projects could tie into. Ms. Pence replied that this was discussed previously and decided that OHV would eventually have its own map so the decision was made not to include them on the multi-use map; however, she would like to have the data nonetheless. Perhaps at the next update cycle there will be enough

trails to warrant an independent OHV map. Ms. Matthews said she would get the data to OGT.

Jerrie Lindsey echoed the sentiment of having OHV incorporated in the multi-use or having a separate map, given the level of demand and need. If the Council could show leadership in that regard and identify some of those, even if the acquisition program doesn't provide the funds for the acquisition, that identifying them would be very helpful to focus some planning attention.

Jena Brooks agreed and would like to create that data. She asked if John Waldron could tell the Council what the nexus would be between this Council and the OHV council. John answered that right now, it is spotty around the state and they are trying to build a system. He said the U.S. Forest Service has helped by doing their own identifications and that the state is looking to do the same with motorcycle areas, but it is very spread out. Without any continuity, it is more like a base map at this point with trails that don't lead to anything. He added there is a new webpage, FloridaOHV.org, where people can get information on grants, acquisitions and information about the program.

Susan Kennedy raised a question about how to distinguish between the multi-use and hiking maps since the multi-use map includes hiking opportunities. Heather Pence said the multi-use map is thought of more for paved trails versus the Florida National Scenic Trail being known as a footpath with its own separate map.

The discussion turned to DRIs. Greg Chelius asked if OGT could do an overlay of the DRIs being applied for so that in working with the developers and regulators, there could be a possibility of working together to establish trails where the DRIs are located. He said the Department of Community Affairs has the data. It could be an opportunity without having to buy the property and may provide an amenity to the developer by putting a trail in the DRI. Kathryn Starkey added that as DCA works through the review of the DRIs, one of their checklists could be 'is the DRI touching or near a regional trail system'.

Ken Reecy made note to pass this request along internally at DCA.

Malisa McCreedy (alternate for Bill Thomas) said that within the City of Orlando they already have some DRIs that incorporate trails and asked if OGT would like that information as well. Heather Pence replied that OGT would like all existing trails information and reiterated that the existing trails database may be accessed at anytime throughout the year. She encouraged all local government to upload their existing trails data.

Ken Bryan asked that that message be conveyed at the upcoming public workshops.

Howard Pardue asked whether the regional planning councils or the DCA would be the better source of DRI information. Phil Laurien replied that he thinks the RPCs would be. The East-Central Florida Regional Planning Council (ECFRPC) has a DRI tool on their

website where you can track the progress of any DRI in their six counties area. They have this information before DCA. He added that not all the RPCs may have this ability.

Ken Reecy said he would find out about coordinating between DCA and the RPCs. Susan Kennedy commented that to get in early in the process, one would need to be with the regional planning councils. Phil Laurien agreed. Howard Pardue asked if Mr. Laurien could raise this issue at the next FRCA meeting and find out where everybody is in having that data available.

Greg Chelius asked if the OGT regional coordinators could attend RPC meetings to find out what is being submitted, from both a development standpoint and a transportation standpoint, so that OGT and the Council may have an opportunity to be involved at the beginning.

Bill Howell complimented Phil Laurien and the East-Central Florida Regional Planning Council for their “visioning” project. ECFRPC has created an Opportunity Map for their region with various overlays that include DRIs and trails. Phil Laurien explained how they are the first council in Florida to adopt a regional greenprint to keep ecosystems intact as development pressures increase by using conservation design. ECFRPC is working with many conservation organizations.

Malisa McCreedy with the City of Orlando mentioned Transportation Impact Fee credits are available for developers. If the developer goes above the basic requirements, they receive a 30% reduction in impact fees. She said developers are building trails and deeding the land.

Kathryn Starkey said the comprehensive plan for her county includes a stipulation for new subdivisions and developments to connect to a trail. She asked if other counties could be asked to consider including an emphasis on trails and trail connectivity in their comp plan revisions. Ken Reecy said one of the things in the FCT competitive scoring is a criterion for trail development and trail plans. Local governments applying for FCT funding that have this element in their comp plans have a better chance of being funded. The scoring criteria act as an incentive.

Deno Hicks added that Community Development Districts should also be considered and made aware of grants and how they can tie into our priority trails program, since more and more trails are the amenity of choice.

Howard Pardue summarized by saying it can't all be done through acquisition. Planning and growth management methodologies have to be used. Comp plans, DRIs, CDDs and Rural Land Stewardship programs need to all be factored into OGT's and the Council's consideration. Ken Reecy said that new language is being considered for the Rural Land Stewardship program and he has discussed with Secretary Pelham and Robert Pennock, who is drafting the revision, the importance of including trails as part of that process.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Bob Ballard, DEP Deputy Secretary, informed the Council that a Florida Forever successor program was not in the Governor's budget for this coming year and therefore, was not in the agency's budget request. Mr. Ballard stated the concern is, because this is such a tight budgetary year, that if a successor program were to be requested this year, it wouldn't get the money it deserves. He added that P2000 bonds won't be paid off until 2013 and then Florida Forever bonds will need to be paid off. He said the Governor is aware of how popular Florida Forever is and the Governor is excited about a new program but now is not the right time to be able to get the best program that is wanted by all.

Howard Pardue referred members to the Nature Conservancy's newsletter that includes an article on Florida Forever. He asked about talks that were occurring within the legislature to consolidate all land management entities. Bob Ballard listed several options that were being discussed and said all land managers were meeting after the Council meeting to discuss efficiencies, what is working and what is not. Parties involved are State Parks, Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA), OGT, FWCC, Division of Historical Resources, and Division of Forestry. In addition, Representative Will Kendrick would be present. Mr. Pardue said he did not feel like there was any overlap or duplication of efforts among the land management groups but that perhaps opportunities for improvement would be the outcome. On behalf of the Florida Trail Association, he stated they would be glad to be a part of any discussions on the subject.

Returning to discussion on Florida Forever, Bob Ballard stated the \$300 million per year for Florida Forever is expected through the ninth and tenth year of the program which ends in 2010. This doesn't include money for the water management districts, Florida Communities Trust, state lands, or for land management. This amount is in the Governor's budget.

Greg Chelius mentioned there is also a legislative discussion about the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWCC) trust fund for Gopher Tortoise habitat that totals about \$43 million dollars. This money is supposed to be used for land acquisition and there is talk of moving it into general revenue.

Bob Ballard explained the funding formula for managed lands. Land is categorized according to degree of usage. High intensity is classified as 3X while low intensity might be a ½ X or a 1X. Over half of the Park Service land doesn't receive funding for land management. Conversely, other land managers receive more. The amount of money each entity receives can be misleading since some of the land was acquired before P2000 and therefore is not included in the funding formula, which makes the land that does receive funding appear to be receiving more than in actuality, since the money has to be spread out to cover the land not included. Jena Brooks added that less than 30% of OGT land is funded. Because the Cross Florida Greenway was donated by the federal government and was not a part of the initial program, it receives no CARL money. Ms Brooks said OGT receives funding for 23,000 acres at the 3X level; however, 83,000 acres are actually covered with that money so it equates to a much lower funding level of

1X. Mr. Ballard added that the current land management discussion might be time to discuss the funding arrangement. He would like to see all lands included in the discussion.

Council members were advised to be watching the House Committee on Natural Resources to follow the events and to view the OPPAGA and House recommendation report online.

Greg Chelius mentioned the prospect of the Tax Revision Commission placing a constitutional amendment on the ballot that would set a percentage of the doc stamps to go to Florida Forever, thus fluctuating with the real estate market. The idea originated around 1990 when P2000 was approved. The annual allotment of \$300 million equated to 60% of the doc stamps at that time. Today, \$300 million equates to approximately 8%. Mr. Chelius has heard rumors of 35% being discussed for such an initiative. That would bring the annual allotment to around \$600 million. Bob Ballard stated that Secretary Sole thinks a constitutional amendment would tie the hands of the legislature and therefore would not be a good idea.

ST. JOHNS RIVER TO THE SEA LOOP

OGT Regional Coordinator Matt Klein gave a presentation on a new initiative that Herb Hiller is working on. An effort to link several existing and planned trails in the Brevard, Volusia, Putnam, Flagler and St. Johns area into one seamless interconnected 230 mile loop is underway. Elected officials from the five counties and a representative from Congressman Mica's office attended a recent meeting organized by Mr. Hiller. Two promotional opportunities were discussed: first, a bike ride around the time of Thanksgiving 2008 and secondly, promoting the connection along with the 500th anniversary of Ponce de Leon's landing in Florida which will take place in 2013 and draw a lot of attention to the area. Greg Chelius asked if the Council members could receive a map of the proposed route. Mr. Klein indicated he would provide one.

Jena Brooks complimented the work of all the regional coordinators saying they do a good job of facilitating and supporting local communities. She asked the Council members to please let the coordinators know if there is anything OGT could help with in their localities.

ST. MARKS AND BLACKWATER HERITAGE TRAIL PRESENTATION

Rick Halvorsen, OGT regional trail manager, gave a slide show presentation on the St. Marks Trail and the Blackwater Heritage Trail. Miles Stivers, St. Marks Trail manager, John Norman, St. Marks Trail ranger and Gerard Greco, Blackwater Heritage State Trail manager were present to answer questions.

Photos included Hurricane Ivan damage and an example of the strength of the structures DEP builds to withstand storms. Some FEMA funds were received; however, most of the money came from OGT. Repairs typically include roads, landscape, signs and clean-up.

The Council was shown a photo of a parcel at the Blackwater Heritage Trail that they approved on the acquisition list a few years ago.

Discussion over the paving and widening of the St. Marks Trail included the \$5 million specific appropriation Senator Dockery arranged. Questions were asked about changing to a 12 foot width. Some places on this trail will remain at 8 foot widths because the type of trail it is and the ecosystem it passes through would not permit or require a wider path. Retention ponds, swales and drainage issues were discussed. Phil Laurien asked about using porous pavements on trails. Rick Halvorsen replied that pervious pavement is not conducive to skating and it must be vacuumed because it gets clogged. Also, injuries are worse on this type of surface. He added that if a break-through were to come with this type of surface it would be considered but not at this time.

Jena Brooks said OGT goes to trade shows like the American Trails annual symposium where new developments in trails are displayed. OGT attends workshops on new technology and is constantly gathering new information. She offered that if Council members hear of a solution that is affordable, easily maintained and has long-term life to please pass the information along.

In reference to injuries on trails, Howard Pardue raised concerns over long distance trails having asphalt surface and an increase in injuries, particularly at Lake Okeechobee on the Florida National Scenic Trail. Rick Halvorsen responded that there is a 3-foot wide at-shoulder grass area for hikers to walk on but that most people are not using it. Mr. Pardue indicated he was not aware of it and thanked Mr. Halvorsen for sharing that information.

Rick Halvorsen gave an update on the boundless playground that will soon be opened at the St. Marks Trail. The Felburn Foundation donated the funds for this playground and the one at the Ocala Baseline Trailhead. He mentioned that the program "Florida Road Trip" did a segment on different places to visit in the state and the St. Marks Trail was included. He also gave an overview of where a new trailhead will be with a boardwalk that will go over a wetlands area. The project design and resurfacing of the trail are currently under contract.

FLORIDA GREENWAYS AND TRAILS FOUNDATION

Chair Bryan introduced George Edwards. Mr. Edwards is the secretary of the foundation and informed the council members that the foundation is now a membership organization. An endowment has been established. The foundation received grants from the Felburn Foundation for the boundless playgrounds. He encouraged council members to join the foundation. Marsha Connell serves as staff to the foundation and asked the council for assistance and guidance in moving the membership and endowment fund forward. Jena Brooks offered that OGT would send foundation meeting notices to the council members and reiterated Ms. Connell's remarks.

DESIGNATIONS

Two designation agreements were presented for the Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad State Trail. One is for public lands and the other is a private landowner agreement with Pelican Property. This is only the second private landowner agreement OGT has done.

Public Lands Designation Agreement

MOTION: Howard Pardue motioned to approve the designation agreement

SECOND: Greg Chelius seconded the motion.

VOTE: Unanimous

Private Landowner Designation Agreement

MOTION: Kathryn Starkey motioned to approve the designation agreement

SECOND: Deno Hicks seconded the motion

VOTE: Unanimous

NEW BUSINESS

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Tammy Salmon explained that Ken Bryan was approaching the end of his fourth term, the maximum number of consecutive terms permitted under statute. Chair Bryan expressed interest in remaining chair until a change was made by the appointing body. Vice-Chair Dan Simmons opened the floor for nominations.

Nominations for Chair

MOTION: Mike Grella nominated Ken Bryan for Chair

SECOND: Kathryn Starkey seconded the nomination

Greg Chelius asked if there were others who would like to be nominated for Chair. Dan Simmons asked if there was any further discussion. Seeing none, he asked for a motion to close nominations.

MOTION to close: Bob Ballard

SECOND: Kathryn Starkey

VOTE: motion carries

The Vice-Chair opened the floor for nominations of a new vice-chair.

Ken Bryan interjected that he feels the council leadership should be driven by the private sector membership.

Nominations for Vice-Chair

MOTION: Bob Ballard nominated Linda King

SECOND: Jerrie Lindsey seconded the nomination

Vice-Chair Simmons asked if there were any other nominations.

MOTION to close: Howard Pardue moved the nominations be closed.

SECOND: Deno Hicks

VOTE: motion carries

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Charlie Houser announced upcoming facilities openings on the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail, a grand opening of Lafayette Blue Springs new cabins on March 1, the new Adams River Camp on the Wilderness Trail, a private group's wagon ride from the Okeefanokee River to the town of Suwannee that will take three weeks to complete; and lastly, a groundbreaking for an equestrian park. Mr. Houser offered if anyone would like more information to please contact him.

Bob Ballard announced Deborah Poppell as the new director for the Division of State Lands. She will need to be confirmed by the Cabinet.

Ken Reecy announced the Florida Communities Trust 2008 grant cycle has opened. It opens February 22 and will close on May 7, 2008.

Jerrie Lindsey announced the federal government does a study every five years on the economic impact of hunting, fishing and wildlife associated recreation around the country. Her office did a state report on the wildlife viewing section. A presentation of the data, demographics and economic information about wildlife viewing will be held at the FWCC office. Anyone interested in doing eco-tourism efforts is invited to attend.

Howard Pardue announced the Florida Hiking Festival will occur in conjunction with the Florida Trail Association's annual meeting. The event will take place March 28-30 in White Springs.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Ken Bryan adjourned the meeting at 11:55 a.m.