

Office of Greenways & Trails
CONNECTIONS
 DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Uniting Florida with Greenways and Trails

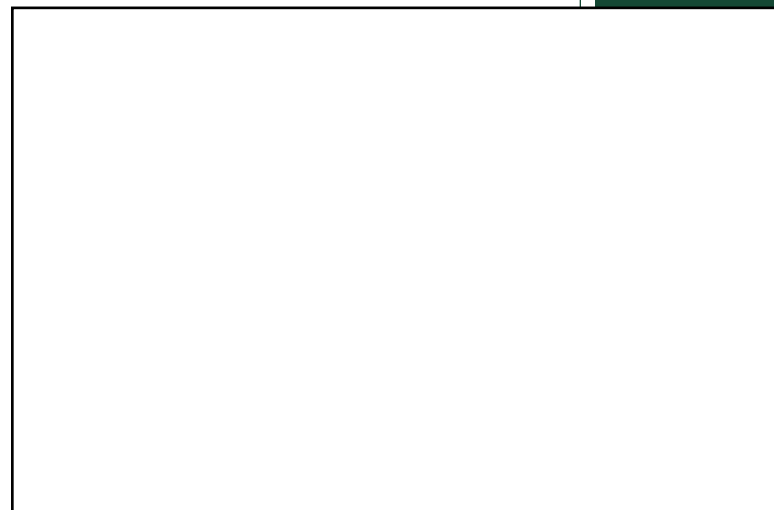
by April Reynolds, Planner

Florida is rich with diversity. A ride from Pensacola to Miami will take you through a variety of ecosystems, from the Longleaf Pine forests of North Florida to the Everglades of South Florida. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has been working on a plan that will allow residents and visitors to experience this unique diversity while preserving our native ecosystem.

The DEP, in conjunction with the six regional task forces, the Florida Greenways Coordinating Council, the Florida Recreational Trails Council, and all interested parties, recently completed the challenging task of developing a five-year implementation plan for a statewide system of greenways and trails. The plan, "Connecting Florida's Communities with Greenway and Trails", lays the foundation for linking conservation lands, communities, parks and cultural and historic sites together to form this statewide system. This summer we are a step closer to our goal with the opening of the Jacksonville-Baldwin Rail Trail, the Ocklawaha Trailhead Visitor Center, and Marshall Swamp Trail.

The Jacksonville-Baldwin Rail Trail is a fourteen mile trail that strolls through the rural communities of Duval County. The corridor passes by a dairy farm, a chicken farm, silviculture lands, and open pastures. Most of the trail is lined with various pine and hardwood trees, as it traverses both upland and wetland areas.

A meandering equestrian trail has recently been developed through this area. DEP's Office of Greenways and Trails' staff, along with inmates from the county's correctional facility, recently worked on creating a blazed trail that wanders along side the paved, multi-use trail. This trail is easily accessible, yet a break away from the crowds of the city. We anticipate the trail opening mid-summer.



Another grand opening will be held in June for the Ocklawaha Trailhead Visitors Center in Silver Springs. This visitors center, which is located across the street from Silver Springs State Park, was built and donated by Silver Run Properties, Inc. Marion County will be working with the U.S. Forest Service in maintaining

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Students from Whitehouse Elementary in Jacksonville document the progress of the Jacksonville-Baldwin Rail Trail.





Dear Friends of OGT,

The Office of Greenways and Trails has undergone a number of changes recently. With the retirement of Fred Ayer, Debbie Parrish has been named Acting Director. Robin Young is on maternity leave after giving birth to a healthy baby girl and Governor Jeb Bush appointed David Struhs as Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection.

As most of you know, a statewide blueprint for greenways and trails has been designed which we refer to as Phase I. After hard work and sacrifice by most of you, Phase II, which will make or break the program, is ready to begin. But not without your help!

In the coming months, OGT will be embarking on a statewide public awareness tour using a multimedia approach with the theme and purpose of "Connecting Florida's Communities Through Greenways and Trails." By promoting responsible use through the creation of recreational and educational opportunities, we are encouraging preservation and management. We hope to encourage planning of greenways and trails at the local level by illustrating possible economic benefits to local communities.

Currently, our office receives an average of 50-100 request for information each week. This public outreach effort will enable us to connect with them through greenways and trails as a valuable, natural, recreational resource.

I look forward to seeing all of you as the Greenways and Trails Connection rolls through your town. Please feel free to contact me personally if there is anything I can do to further your efforts. Together, we can make a statewide system of greenways and trails a reality.

Sincerely,

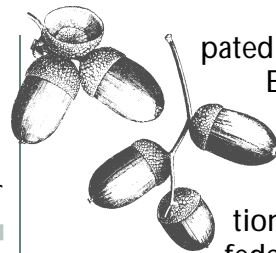
Jack Maynard
Director, Public Outreach and
Technical Support
Office of Greenways and Trails

Seed Grant Program

by Mark Lippert, Planner

In 1995, the Florida Legislature created the Florida Greenways Coordinating Council (Council), and designated the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as the lead state agency to create a statewide system of greenways and trails. The Council was created to promote greenways and trails initiatives throughout the state with technical support, leadership, education, advocacy, and other service-oriented efforts. In order to promote and facilitate greenways and trails initiatives in Florida, the Council and DEP created the Florida Greenways and Trails Seed Grant Program. Funding, in the amount of \$60,000, for this grant program was generously provided through the Florida Department of Community Affairs.

Under the policies adopted by the Council and DEP, grants of up to \$5,000 can be given to projects that stimulate or support greenways and trails initiatives. A match of cash, in-kind services, or donated materials equaling or exceeding the amount requested is required. Criteria for selection included: relative significance of the greenway and/or trail that is affected by the project, appropriateness, the grantee's administrative capability, education potential or demonstration value of the project, and anti-

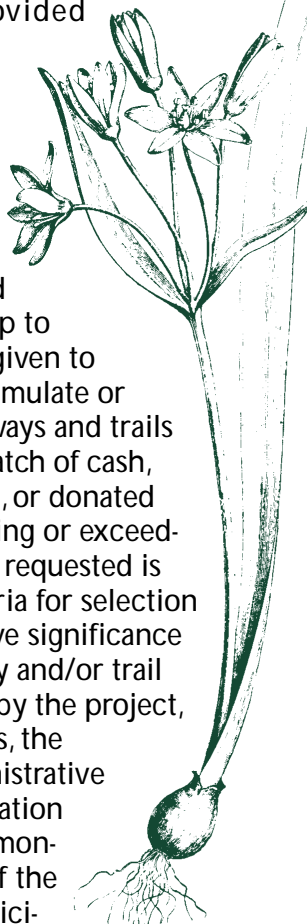


ipated economic benefits. Eligible applicants were limited to registered non-profit organizations and agencies of federal, state, regional, and local governments in Florida.

During the first two weeks of March 1999, Seed Grant Evaluation Committees, composed of members of the Regional Greenways Task Force for each DEP district, held meetings to recommend funding for grant applications in their respective districts.

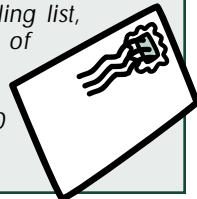
Applications submitted numbered as few as 4 (in the South district) to as many as 20 (in the Northeast) for a statewide total of 77. Each Committee could recommend a total of \$10,000 in grant funds, but no more than \$5,000 per project. With over \$340,000 in requested funds and only \$60,000 available, one can be both encouraged by the response and saddened that so many worthy projects will not be funded.

Projects recommended for funding covered all aspects of the greenways and trails vision. Examples include the design and installation of interpretive displays; construction of campsites and scenic boardwalks; development of trail brochures and other promotional materials; surveying, mapping, and planning for a new trail; and trail enhancement for ADA accessibility. ☺



Mailing List Update

Recently, reminder cards were sent to all OGT Connections subscribers regarding your preference for remaining on our current mailing list. Chapter 283.55 F.S. dictates that all non-respondents automatically be removed from the mailing list as of April 30, 1999. If you did not return your card, but wish to remain on the mailing list, please contact the Office of Greenways and Trails, 2600 Blairstone Road, MS 795, Tallahassee, FL 32399-2400 or call (850) 488-3701.



Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway Tree Planting

by Mickey Thomason, Maintenance
and Construction Supervisor
Inglis Lock Complex, Office of
Greenways and Trails

Recently, students at two area high schools assisted the Office of Greenways and Trails in planting cypress and longleaf pine trees on the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway (CFG). Lake Weir High School agriculture students spent several afternoons on the greenway. Dunnellon High School students participated in field trips to the greenway for their Environmental Education and Biology classes.

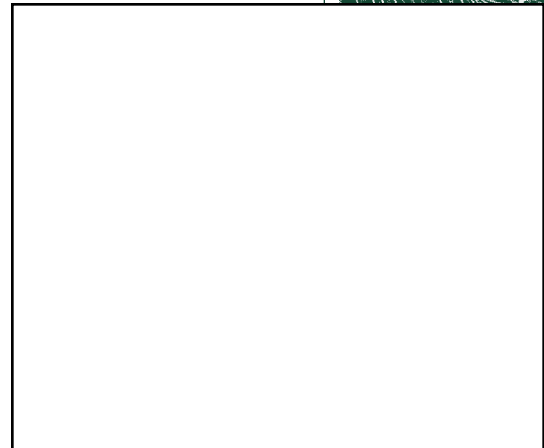
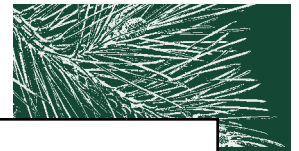
The CFG is located on the old Cross Florida Barge Canal, formerly the Cross Florida Ship Canal, a depression-era work project whose funding was discontinued in 1936. During the building of the canal, large tracts of land were excavated. Over the past sixty years, these once barren

lands have revegetated into some of the more spectacular areas of the greenway. Some areas have even transformed into wetlands.

While cypress trees provide habitat for wood duck and other bird species, longleaf pine trees on upland sandhill sites assist in the revegetation of these areas.

Despite the conditions (wet and muddy for cypress, hot and shadeless for longleaf pine), more than 3,000 trees were planted. Quite an accomplishment!

Restoration efforts such as these have helped to make the greenway what it is today. The Office of Greenways and Trails would like to extend their appreciation to the teachers and students who participated in this endeavor. We could not have done it without you. ☺



Lynn Nobles, a teacher at Lake Weir High School, assists a student planting a longleaf pine tree.

Greenways and Trails Lands Acquisition Program Update

by Marsha Messersmith,
Planner III

The Greenways and Trails Land Acquisition Program is funded by bonds issued from the sale of documentary stamps authorized under the Preservation 2000 Act (P2000). The provisions of this act will soon terminate, and there are enough projects on the current acquisition list to expend the remaining funds.

Efforts are currently underway to create a successor program to P2000. Fortunately, the proposals we have seen so far include a continuation of the

greenways and trails program at its current funding level. The Office of Greenways and Trails has elected to postpone the upcoming acquisition cycle. The timing of the next application cycle will be determined after the 1999 legislative session.

There are, however, other programs under Preservation 2000 which can fund greenways and trails projects. For example, the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) was created to help local governments implement conservation, recreation and open space, and coastal management elements of the local comprehensive plans. FCT will accept applications for the current cycle through June 2, 1999. For more information, contact Grant Gelhardt at Florida Communities Trust, 2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard, Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100; 850/922-2207. ☺



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Around Suwannee County

by Trisha Radulovich,
Public Information Specialist

Looking for an unusual way to welcome Spring? The Branford Trail will be one of the sites featured in an extravaganza of biking and cycling fun in Live Oak, Florida, this spring.

The Suwannee Bicycle Festival is taking place April 29-May 2, 1999 and

will be offering fun-filled rides for bikers of all levels to enjoy the spectacular beauty of the Suwannee region.

One ride, known as the Pack and Paddle, allows bikers begin their journey at the Branford trailhead located in the heart of downtown Branford. After a leisurely 4.4 mile ride, the bike trail ends at Little River Springs. The river flows right to town so canoes will be available for bikers who want to paddle back to town via the river. Little River is a nice place to take a swim and leisurely bike back to town as well.

There are many different rides to choose from, with varied lengths from 8-100 miles. Picnic rides, swim rides, brunch rides, historic rambles, ice cream socials, and something called the hydroponics hop to make sure everyone has great time. There are 8 off road rides available in the area as well.

The Suwannee Bicycle Festival is sponsored by The Suwannee Bicycle Association and the Suwannee Chamber of Commerce. All proceeds from the event will go to promote environmental education and appreciation of the Suwannee

Region and also will help fund trail development projects and bicycle facilities (permanently marked routes, etc.). For more information, call 904-454-3304 or e-mail kriscycl@citrus.infi.net.

Suwannee Trail Coalition

After seeing the success of the Branford Trail Greenway, a grass-roots organization known as the Suwannee Trail Coalition had their first meeting last February. The purpose of the newly formed organization is to connect other rail trails in the area, from Live Oak-Jasper-White Springs and Lake City. The Suwannee Trail Coalition hopes to bring all groups in their community into action so that their dream can become a reality. Their philosophy uses the idea of partnerships and community involvement, ideas which are outlined in our publication, *Connecting Florida's Communities with Greenways and Trails*, a five year implementation plan for a statewide system of greenways and trails. For more information about this group, check out their web site, www.suwanneetrail.com They can be reached at 904-362-1818 or 904-963-2221.

A Vision for the Future

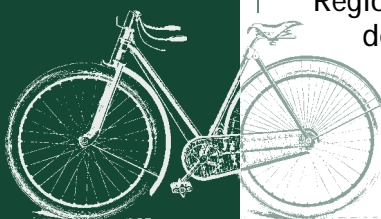
Connecting downtown Branford and two regional parks was a dream envisioned to create local recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. In an effort to recapture the town's river heritage, the Branford trail is now a reality creating a hub of outdoor recreation that has the potential to greatly expand tourism in the Suwannee River Valley. The Suwannee River Management Plan, Greenways 2000, has been in the works since 1995. The Branford Trail is just the beginning. Future plans will include 400 miles of recreational trails that will connect to 100,000 acres of public conservation land. In addition, 300 miles of river frontage along the Santa Fe, Suwannee and tributaries of the Withla-coochee are also included, with over 200 miles of off-road trails on public land. For more information on Greenways 2000, call the Suwannee River Water Management District at 904-362-1001 or check out their web site below. ☺

www.srwmd.state.fl.us



Quote from
Governor Jeb
Bush
State of the State
address
March 2, 1999 —

"And while we preserve our natural resources, we also need to begin the process of connecting our urban cores and our rural areas to the rest of the state and not leave them behind."



National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA)

The National Park Service recently celebrated the grand opening of a field office on Florida's Gulf Coast. Located within the Manatee County Cultural Alliance, the office will assist both the state and local governments as well as other organizations with plans for developing greenways, hiking and biking trails and other conservation projects. Under the RTCA program, Park Service officials help local partners organize workshops, prepare project visions and plan for long-term protection of special local resources. For more information, contact Jaime Doubek-Racine, NPS Outdoor Recreation Planner at (941) 723-9831.

National Trails Day

Don't forget to mark your calendars for June 5, 1999, National Trails Day. Events planned for Florida include a 12K walk on the Blackwater Heritage State Trail and a 10K walk in the Withlacoochee River Park. For more information, contact the American Hiking Society at (301) 565-6704.

Trail Extension

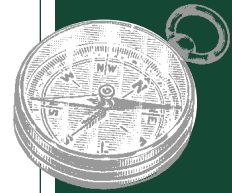
Blackwater Heritage State Trail is undergoing an extension, courtesy of Whiting Naval Air Base. An additional 2.5 miles of paved trail will soon be open.

This extension increases the total length of the trail from 7.1 miles to 9.6 miles. In addition to the extension, plans are underway to establish a trailside park, complete with bench seats and picnic tables, at the Whiting Junction Trailhead.

Office Changes

The Office of Greenways and Trails has said goodbye to two old friends and welcomes a new one. Kent Wimmer, former Greenways Liaison has taken a position with Florida National Scenic Trails. Amanda MacKee, former Public Information Specialist, has moved to the Department of Agriculture. Leslie Palmer will be taking over Amanda's responsibilities. Leslie's background includes campaigning for a recent constitutional revision and working for the Senate Committee for Energy and Natural Resources in Washington, D.C. Leslie is originally from Jacksonville, Florida. ☺

News, Notes & Events



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and managing this property. The next stage of development is to create a trail from the Visitors Center to the Ocklawaha River.

The Marshal Swamp Trail, also in Marion County, is located on the old Cross Florida Barge Canal land. This earthen surface trail meanders through 2.75 miles of typical Florida hardwood swamp forests and ends in an upland area where picnic shelters, restrooms, and a parking area can be found. Marshall Swamp's grand opening is also planned for this summer.

These trail openings are just the beginning of an interconnected greenway and trail system that is planned to occur throughout the state of Florida. Greenways and trails enhance the ecological, cultural, and economic resources in local communities. With the support of local

governments, public and private organizations, individual citizens, and landowners, this integrated system of greenways and trails is becoming a reality. ☺

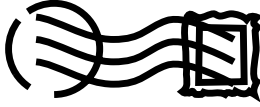
Silver Run Visitors Center nears completion.

Postcards from the Road

Submitted by
Trisha Radulovich

A Bikers Story –

Rode the Santos Trails in Ocala again this weekend. The terrain can be very steep and tricky with rocks and roots. My buddy and I came to this incredible incline that was very steep. I guess we made it up about 10 feet or so and began pushing our bike to the top (as usual). We reach the top (gasping for air) and find a guy and his biking family just hanging out. I make reference to the hill and the fact it cannot be climbed by bikers. He laughs and says his wife makes the hill all the time. He then directs her to the bottom and she proceeds to climb up like a mountain goat (tires spinning beneath her). Amazed I congratulate her. He then says that this is no big deal and directs a 12-year-old girl in their group to climb the hill. She smiles, heads to the bottom, and blasts up the hill like it is flat. Ashamed I slink away and wish them a good day. Of course I am obsessed with the climb now. Ain't no 12 year old gonna whip me on a hill.



We came back today. Teeth gritting and legs revved to the max, I hit the hill. A little out of control at the roots, wheels spinning alas after two tries, I made it. Tried it two more agonizing times, to show it wasn't a fluke. To say the hill is steep doesn't even do it justice, but for now I have avenged the shame bestowed upon me by a child.

... H

March 27, 1999 marked the opening of Fred Ayer Field in the Rotary Sportsplex of Marion County. Fred Ayer, retired Director of the Office of Greenways and Trails, was in attendance to throw out the first pitch. The Rotary Sportsplex is located on the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway. The dedication is in honor of Fred's lifelong commitment to greenways and trails.

OGT staff at the dedication in September.



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