

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Office of Greenways & Trails

Working to establish a statewide system of greenways and trails for recreation, conservation and alternative transportation purposes.



Cross Florida Greenway, Photo by John Moran

The Office of Greenways & Trails (OGT), a division within the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), provides statewide leadership and coordination to establish, expand and promote Florida's Statewide System of Greenways and Trails.

Originally established in 1993 to manage the Cross Florida Greenway in north-central Florida, OGT's programs have expanded to include management of State greenways and trails, land acquisition funding, trail development funding, formal designation of lands and waterways, planning assistance and public information. Our activities are governed by the Florida Greenways and Trails Act (Chapter 260, Florida Statutes).

State Greenways and Trails

OGT is responsible for managing the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway, eight state trails and other lands as key components of the greenways and trails system.

Greenways and Trails Land Acquisition Program

The Office of Greenways & Trails Land Acquisition Program is a component of the State of Florida's *Florida Forever* program. At \$300 million annually, *Florida Forever* is America's preeminent state-level conservation land acquisition program. OGT's annual allocation is 1.5% of Florida Forever funding (\$4.5 million). Proposals for property acquisition originate with local entities and are brought before OGT for evaluation. No local matching funds are required. Any appropriate project may be considered, regardless of estimated property value. Title to property acquired through this program is retained by the State of Florida; the property is subleased to the local managing entity for trail development, operation and maintenance.

Funding to Develop Trails and Trail Facilities

OGT administers the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), a federally funded competitive grant program providing financial assistance to approved local entities. RTP provides reimbursement for the development and maintenance of recreational trails and related facilities, both non-motorized and motorized. Maximum award amounts are announced annually. A local match is required.

Designation of Lands and Waterways

OGT administers a program for formally designating public and private lands and waterways as part of the Statewide System of Greenways and Trails. The Designation Program helps to ensure an inclusive and interconnected system of greenways and trails; encourages voluntary partnerships in conservation, development and management of system components; provides recognition for individual components of the system and those partners involved; and raises public awareness of the conservation and recreation benefits of the Greenways and Trails System. Private landowners who agree to allow public access to their designated properties are provided liability protection by the State through a voluntary designation agreement.

Planning and Technical Assistance

OGT provides planning and technical assistance to local governments, developers, state and federal agencies, private landowners, and other interested citizens/advocates regarding the acquisition, establishment and management of greenways and trails projects. This assistance is provided by regional staff assigned along geographic lines.

Developing the Vision for the Statewide System of Greenways and Trails

Through close collaboration with local governments and trails advocates, OGT plans and refines the visioning maps that collectively comprise the Statewide System of Greenways and Trails. These maps display preferred routes for future trails and greenways, known as 'opportunity corridors.' These visioning maps include multi-use trails, hiking trails and paddling (canoe-kayak) trails. On behalf of OGT, the University of Florida's GeoPlan Center maintains a website (www.floridatrailnetwork.com) service where local planners can view the alignment of each opportunity corridor in detail and also upload the latest data for their own existing local trail networks.

Public Information

OGT provides information to educate and inform Florida's residents and visitors about the benefits of greenways and trails through special events, press releases, specialized media outlets and both print and online resource materials.

To view the latest issue of the OGT Connection E-newsletter or register to receive it, please visit FloridaGreenwaysAndTrails.com.



The Office of Greenways & Trails has partnered with Visit Florida and other organizations to create the Florida Bicycle, Hiking, Paddling and Equestrian Trails Guides. To download these brochures and other information about greenways and trails throughout Florida, visit our trail guide at www.FloridaGreenwaysAndTrails.com.



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Office of Greenways & Trails



Withlacoochee Bay Trail

John Moran

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Office of Greenways & Trails works to establish a connected network of greenways and trails throughout Florida. Florida received American Trails' inaugural award as "Best Trails State in America," recognizing the efforts of DEP's Office of Greenways & Trails (OGT) and its many partners for their coordinated efforts to establish Florida's statewide system of trails. Properties managed include:

1. Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway



Land Bridge over I-75

Photo by Sky Storms (352) 361-3608

The Cross Florida Greenway stretches from the St. Johns River to the Gulf of Mexico. This 110-mile corridor encompasses a variety of natural habitats and offers an array of trails and recreation areas. (Cross Florida Region: Putnam, Marion, Citrus, Levy counties)

Hiking, biking and equestrian trails, visitor centers, boat ramps, campgrounds, picnic shelters and Florida's natural beauty make the Cross Florida Greenway an excellent playground for all ages.

On the east end of the greenway, in Palatka, Rodman Recreation Area and the Senator George Kirkpatrick Dam offer places to camp, fish, watch wildlife and picnic.

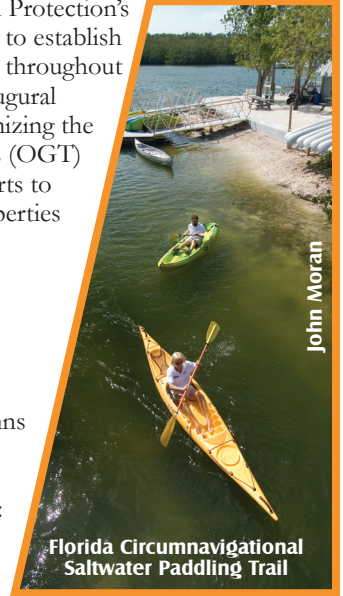
In Central Florida, near Ocala, the Land Bridge over I-75 is a favorite destination for hikers, bikers and equestrians.

Landscaped with native vegetation, the Land Bridge connects trails on the east and west sides of the interstate. The Santos area includes an equestrian-friendly campground and a mountain biking trail system that has been designated an "Epic Ride" by the International Mountain Biking Association. A barrier-free Boundless Playground® enables all children—including those with physical, developmental, cognitive and sensory disabilities—to actively and safely play with their peers without disabilities.

On the west end of the greenway, near Inglis, the Withlacoochee Bay Trail extends five miles west from the Felburn Park Trailhead to the Gulf of Mexico. The paved trail provides numerous opportunities to observe wildlife, picnic or fish along the route.

The Office of Greenways & Trails is also responsible for coordinating the Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail, Florida's longest and most ambitious sea kayaking trail. Beginning at Big Lagoon State Park near Pensacola, the paddling trail extends 1,500 miles around the Florida peninsula and Keys to Fort Clinch State Park near the Georgia border.

Multiple trailheads along each state trail provide access points. For trail maps, directions and descriptions, visit the Office of Greenways & Trails' website.



Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail

John Moran



Boundless Playground®

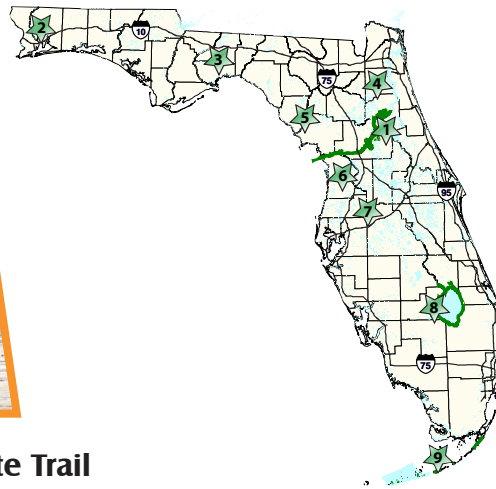


John Moran

Santos

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2. Blackwater Heritage State Trail

The Blackwater Heritage State Trail, the westernmost rail-trail in the state, extends eight miles from Milton to Whiting Field Naval Air Station. The trail passes through pine woods, a cypress/bay swamp and an area of white-topped pitcher plants. Several wooden bridges cross quiet creeks along the trail. An equestrian trail parallels a segment of the paved trail. (West Panhandle Region: Santa Rosa County)

3. Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad State Trail

The Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad State Trail runs 16 miles from Florida's capital city to the coastal town of St. Marks. The paved trail provides an excellent workout for bicyclists, walkers and skaters and features a barrier-free Boundless Playground®. The trail also offers opportunities for horseback riding on the adjacent unpaved trail and access to the Munson Hills Off-Road Trail in the Apalachicola National Forest. (East Panhandle Region: Leon, Wakulla counties)



4. Palatka-Lake Butler State Trail—In Development

The 47-mile Palatka-Lake Butler State Trail is being constructed in phases along the former Norfolk-Southern Railroad right-of-way. When completed, this 12'-wide, paved, multi-use recreational trail will traverse Putnam, Union, Clay and Bradford counties. The 5.2-mile Clay County segment of the trail opened in 2008 and the trailhead is located at Twin Lake Park in Keystone Heights. (Cross Florida Region: Putnam, Union, Clay, Bradford counties)

5. Nature Coast State Trail

The 32-mile long Nature Coast State Trail connects Cross City, Trenton, Fanning Springs and Chiefland. Among the trail's highlights is an historic train trestle crossing the Suwannee River. Trail users can take advantage of the cooling springs at nearby Fanning Springs State Park or watch for wildlife at Andrews Wildlife Management Area. (Cross Florida Region: Dixie, Levy, Gilchrist counties)



6. Withlacoochee State Trail

The Withlacoochee State Trail, 46-miles long, runs through small towns, ranches and the Withlacoochee State Forest. Concrete mileage and whistle markers, the Lake Henderson Trestle and the Inverness Depot serve as reminders of Florida's railroad history. Springtime brings an abundance of wildflowers. An equestrian trail parallels portions of the paved trail. (Cross Florida and West Central Regions: Citrus, Hernando, Pasco counties)



7. General James A. Van Fleet State Trail

The General James A. Van Fleet State Trail runs through the Green Swamp, headwaters for some of Florida's most frequently canoed rivers—the Withlacoochee, Hillsborough and Peace. Landscapes include former citrus lands and cattle ranches. With only one curve in its 29.2 miles, distance bicyclists find the paved trail an excellent place to train. (West Central Region: Sumter, Lake, Polk counties)



8. Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail

Managed in partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers, the Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail, a segment of the Florida National Scenic Trail, circles the second largest freshwater lake in the contiguous United States. Located atop the Herbert Hoover Dike, the trail provides views ranging from scenic lakeside to agricultural landscapes. The area affords opportunities for viewing wildlife, particularly in fall and winter, when birds such as herons, egrets and a variety of wintering waterfowl are abundant. And of course, fishing opportunities are endless. (South Region: Okeechobee, Martin, Palm Beach, Hendry, Glades counties)

9. Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail

The Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail links Everglades National Park, Biscayne National Park, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, the Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge, Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge, Crocodile Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and ten state parks. The 106-mile trail parallels U.S. 1 from Key Largo to Key West. (South Region: Monroe County)



FLORIDA

BEST TRAILS STATE



IN AMERICA

INAUGURAL WINNER



~ Presented by American Trails ~



American Trails names Florida as America's Best Trails State!

The Best Trails State Award was presented to the State of Florida-Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Greenways & Trails on November 17th, 2008, during the National Trails Symposium in Little Rock, Arkansas. This first ever "Best Trails State Award" presented by American Trails recognized Florida's success in facilitating an outstanding statewide system of trails.

Following its legislative mandate, the Office of Greenways & Trails (OGT) has played a lead role in working to establish a statewide system of greenways and trails including master planning, legislation, funding and program implementation. OGT has entered into many forms of partnerships to accomplish the planning, acquisition, development and management required to bring greenways and trails projects to reality. For all that OGT and its partners have achieved in furthering the establishment and expansion of the state's trails network during the past two years, Florida has been honored as the inaugural recipient of this award.

American Trails is the only national, nonprofit organization working on behalf of all trail interests. Since 1988, American Trails has made it a part of its mission to promote cooperation among user groups and pursue a national infrastructure of trails and greenways that serves a full range of activities.



CELEBRATING FLORIDA AS AMERICA'S BEST TRAILS STATE

Trails are the trend ...

Prospective home buyers consider trails to be the most important amenity when choosing a place to live. (National Association of Homebuilders, 2008)

Studies indicate that closer proximity to greenways and conservation corridors increases property values. (National Recreation and Parks Association)

52% of Americans would like to bike more and 46% would bike to work if designated trails were available. (America Bikes; Trails and Greenways Clearing House; Bicycling/Moving America Forward, 2008)

Biking four miles round-trip to work instead of driving keeps 51 pounds of carbon monoxide out of the air each year. (Smart Trips; Bicycling/Moving America Forward, 2008)

An estimated \$76.6 billion could be saved on annual healthcare costs if Americans were more active. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Bicycling/Moving America Forward, 2008)

The most requested item by visitors to Florida's Official Welcome Centers is information about where to bicycle. (VISIT FLORIDA)

The number of Americans who ride bicycles is greater than all those who ski, golf and play tennis combined. (National Sporting Goods Association)

And Florida is a trendsetter...

Florida is home to more than 5,000 miles of state-owned trails and also features one of only eight congressionally designated national scenic trails. The Florida National Scenic Trail will ultimately extend 1,400 miles from the Gulf Islands National Seashore in the Panhandle to the Florida Keys.

More than four million visitors each year take advantage of the 800 miles of free, multi-use trails included in nine state-managed trails and the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway.

With nearly 26,000 river miles and at least 25,000 miles of streams and canals, Florida is a paradise for paddlers. Forty paddling trails have been designated into the Florida Greenways and Trails System including the 1,500-mile Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail which extends around Florida's entire peninsula.

Twenty-nine Florida trails have been named as National Recreation Trails. The DEP Office of Greenways & Trails is responsible for the acquisition and/or management of ten of these trails.

Stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to the St. Johns River is the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway. Here the State of Florida has preserved more than 83,000 acres of recreation and conservation lands that are home to an internationally recognized network of mountain biking and equestrian trails, as well as America's first land bridge which provides safe passage for trail users across I-75.