



Florida National Scenic Trail Coalition

Meeting Summary

6 June 2012

Mission San Luis, Tallahassee, Florida

Mission of Coalition

The USFS and its partners work to complete, protect, maintain, and promote the FNST as a distinct Florida recreational asset and to ensure an optimum, nationally significant recreation experience.

Purpose of Meeting

The purpose of this meeting is to present the printed Strategic Plan to the Coalition, hear land manager reports, introduce the Trail Class Matrix, and to review proposed projects on the FNST.

Participants

Adam Straubinger – FDEP, Division of Recreation and Parks
Bill Cleckley – Northwest Florida Water Management District
Bob DeGross – Big Cypress National Preserve
Carlos Schomaker – Florida Trail Association
James Burnett – US Fish & Wildlife
Jerrie Lindsey – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Jim Wood – Office of Greenways and Trails
John Waldron – Florida Outdoor Recreation Coalition
Keith Bettcher – Florida Division of Forestry
Sheli Derato – Plum Creek Timber Company
Susan Jeheber-Matthews – US Forest Service
Tom Heffernan – Eglin Air Force Base

Overview of Meeting

Strategic Plan

The printed version of the FNST 5-Year Strategic Plan has been distributed. It represents the completed first task of the FNST Coalition. Since land manager information and mileage tend to

change frequently, Coalition members were encouraged to utilize the PDF version online at the official FNST website, <http://www.fs.usda.gov/fnst>, for the most current version of the Plan.

The USFS staff is already using the Strategic Plan to focus their work with partners toward achieving the Plan's four goals. Many Coalition members expressed that they would provide a link to the FNST website and Trail information on their respective websites.

The next series of tasks for the Coalition is to assist in implementing the Strategic Plan. Toward that end, the Coalition reviewed progress toward meeting year one deliverables and created a list of year two deliverables (See spreadsheet). The Coalition expressed interest in making promotion of the FNST a priority as well as increasing communication between volunteers, land managers, and the USFS. It was agreed that the USFS/land manager agreements are valuable tools through which more explicit protocols can be incorporated regarding volunteer involvement and communication between all stakeholders.

Trail Standards

The Forest Service staff shared drafts (dated 4/11/2012) of the FNST design parameters and the USFS Trail Class Matrix, which provided the foundation for the class descriptions on page 13 of the Strategic Plan. Forest Service staff is preparing training on this Trail Class Matrix and will subsequently be sharing it with FNST land managers and volunteers.

Certificates of Appreciation

Megan Eno and Guy Duffner were formally recognized for their contributions toward the FNST 5-Year Strategic Plan completion and the launching of the official FNST website.

Land Manager Reports

- Tom Heffernan – Eglin Air Force Base: Currently working with the FS to renew the license/permit allowing the FNST to cross Eglin AFB. Eglin is also renewing their Natural Resource Management Plan and will incorporate the FNST 5-Year Strategic Plan as an appendix to the Management Plan; also in the process of increasing the length of Trail at Eglin AFB and adding a new trailhead for public access.
- James Burnett – St Marks National Wildlife Refuge: A temporary re-route was put in place at Spring Creek due to infrastructure issues and are working with USFS to replace this infrastructure; also in the process of transferring 600 acres administered by St Marks to USFS; FNST has helped the Refuge to attract funding and support; the Refuge will publicize the Trail at SMNWR more as the heaviest use portion gets the least recognition in this area.
- Jim Wood – Office of Greenways and Trails: OGT is completing a priority trail map which will include the FNST as part of updating the Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan this year. OGT will be hosting six public meetings around the State in September and partnering with the USFS who will be presenting a designated route for the FNST and SCORP who will present its latest plan.
- Jerrie Lindsey – Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission: USFS participated in FWC land management planning processes this year; the FNST is delineated on maps but would it be

helpful to have these maps updated and linked to the website for further inclusion in similar planning processes.

- Bill Cleckley – NW FL Water Management District: Current focus is on putting up bridges, looking to trail designation, and trail connections. FTA has a vital role in supporting the FNST in these endeavors.
- John Waldron – Florida Outdoor Recreation Coalition: While FLORC is not a land management agency it will help to promote and connect people to the FNST by engaging user groups across the state. FLORC will be hosting a summit September 22nd and 23rd in Sanford, FL.
- Bob DeGross – Big Cypress National Preserve: Currently pursuing implementation of the new management plan and working on identifying route of the FNST at Big Cypress and areas of eligible and proposed wilderness on the FNST. Staff at Big Cypress National Preserve wants to convene a meeting to get public input for the routing; there is potential for cost share of an outdoor recreation planner to assist with FNST management in the southern most region of the Trail.
- Susan Jeheber-Matthews – US Forest Service: Completed a trail, maintenance, and routing assessment of the Ocala National Forest and looks forward to working with other partners to accomplish similar assessments on their portion of the FNST.
- Adam Straubinger – Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks: Will send FNST Plan to FDEP park planners and will be included in the 2013 SCORP.
- Sheli Derato – Plum Creek Timber Company: Plum Creek Timber sponsored a wildlife corridor expedition on the FNST and there is an article in publication about this trip. Plum Creek plans to add a link from their website to the new FNST Strategic Plan.
- Carlos Schomaker – Florida Trail Association: Prime movers as a statewide volunteer organization to work with partners on the FNST. FTA is working to recruit and train more volunteers as part of their primary mission and to build a stronger organization.
- Keith Bettcher – Florida Division of Forestry: FDOF is the second to the largest administrator of FNST land and the staff recognizes the importance of its role; FFS has approved to dedicate a portion of one staff member's time to perform FNST assessments on state forest lands.

FNST Projects and Prioritization

An initial call for projects from land managers generated 11 projects. The original project call deadline has been extended until July 15. The USFS will make the final decision about how to allocate resources to support the projects but is also seeking criteria to help frame the decision-making process. The Coalition offered suggestions on how to enhance project solicitation and get more information from land managers. Suggestions included forwarding longer term projects (not just shovel ready); determining how each project relates to the Strategic Plan, creating a weighting system to prioritize criteria, and determining whether or not the portion of trail containing the project has been assessed to standards.

Coalition suggestions:

- Roll over projects that don't get approved or funded
- Base prioritization on how the trail assessment and project will help to bring the trail to standard
- Standardize the process for all types of projects (e.g. do FTA projects still go through land managers?)
- Include longer term, more complicated, and/or higher cost projects

- Categorize priorities or projects by those that need significant investment of funds or time vs. those that don't
- The first step has to be an assessment and then a master list of projects can be created
- Consider using fire resistant structures on the FNST

Suggested criteria for project prioritization:

- Safety
- Contribution towards completion of the FNST
- Land manager approval and participation
- Cost share and leverage
- Part of an overall planning effort
- Magnitude of the gap – what the gap is, how it is assessed, and would the project help to bring this section of the trail to standard for its resource class?
- Level of use in the project area
- Weight relative to the goals of the 5-Year Strategic Plan

Florida Outdoor Recreation Coalition (FLORC) Summit

John Waldron shared a proposed agenda for the FNST portion of the Sept 22- 23, 2012 FLORC Summit. Coalition members probed about the audience and purpose of the meeting. The intent is to engage multiple user groups, celebrate the FNST, and increase awareness of it. There was a suggestion to consider engaging land management leadership.

FNST Coalition Interests Moving Forward

The Coalition members see their task as checking in on the strategic direction and having open dialogue on how to share and attract resources for the FNST. Coalition members are interested in being updated with examples of how Strategic Plan goals have been met.

Route Designation

The designated FNST route (within the 20-mile planning corridor originally published in the FNST Comprehensive Plan) has never been published in the Federal Register. Staff is working to remedy this. Public meetings (in conjunction with OGT during September) will seek input on route designation.

General Comments and Questions from Meeting Guests

- Why were equestrians specifically included in the design parameters and distinctly singled out?
- How were the role and composition of advisory groups determined?-A: The Coalition created subcommittees of members of the coalitions and invited guests with specific expertise relative to the topic to join the discussions.
- How do we bring other user groups besides FTA to the table?
- Regarding inventory of cultural and natural resources, we should note that other groups may have on the ground information
- There was concern about the trail not being open at Avon Air Park and the need to keep it open
- FTA is the storefront operation for disseminating information about the trail to the public and takes in hundreds of calls. FTA needs more resources to answer questions and provide accurate information.

- There is a desire for the subcommittees to track their meeting minutes (more detailed than bullet points) and make them public
- Concern was expressed about the trail not being able to sustain multiple uses
- Thanks were given to the Coalition for opening the door to broader discussions
- There is a need to stagger the transition to coalition membership so each member agency doesn't have to start all over when their new representative attends the coalition meetings.
- Documents should be distributed ahead of time so members have time to review them and have better informed discussions
- What is the trail route and how wide is it? - A: This answer will become clearer following route designation assessments and public meetings as well as publication in the Federal Register.
- FTA is working with USFS to open lines of communication but one issue is that people are scared about losing things they have loved for decades. Need to make sure the public process allows for adequate public input. To do so, do we need separate meetings for FNST routing?
- How did we come up with goal of 100 miles for completion?
- What are the public expectations for the public hearings for routing? Will it be an open conversation or will it be discussion of proposals? - A: Both, the USFS will come with proposals but will also accept recommendations
- What about overlap between OGT and USFS and formal notification for public meetings? - A: OGT is going as broad as possible with formal state notification.
- What will future processes be? - A: For the USFS it will be notification in the Federal Register of a decision. USFS will review the responses from public input (from 6 state meetings) and determine if additional scoping is needed. The OGT public meetings are about state greenways and trails and include the FNST because it is a key piece of the state trail system
- If there will be other user groups at the public meetings, will FTA people be able to speak? - A: There won't be formal hearings and there will be an opportunity for everyone to leave comments as well as provide comments online.

Next FNST Coalition Meeting – January 23, 2013

Preliminary Agenda Topics

- Statewide volunteer capacity
- Land managers and USFS report on progress towards goals
- Project planning process and system
- Working session: Planning year 3 – 5 objectives and deliverables
- Trail standards part 1: How to apply trail standards throughout the system
- Trail standards part 2: Visual identity and branding
- Public relations planning and implementation
- Route publication in the Federal Register

Florida National Scenic Trail

Strategies and Objectives: 2nd Year Deliverable

June 6, 2012

Note: June 6, 2012 amendments are in *italics*, added Year 2 deliverable; DRAFT based on input from June 6, 2012 FNST Coalition meeting

Goal: Complete the Trail: Add 100 new scenic and designated miles of FNST towards completion of a high quality trail

Strategies: 3-5 Years	Objectives: 1-2 Years	Deliverable: Year 1	Deliverable: Year 2
Define routing of a complete scenic trail, based on current and accurate data that defines actual on the ground conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete an evaluation and assessment of trail corridor (to include assessment of scenic, cultural, ecological resources) <i>add recreation usage</i> Assess trail sections to scenic values and complete matrix of high priority areas Approve plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Coordinate routing plan with long range planning of other agencies/partners ➤ Engage stakeholders in review of routing plan ➤ Finalize routing plan ➤ Coalition to formally adopt 2012 routing plan Formally designate all FNST miles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State of the Trail report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Will be completed September 2012 Updated and approved routing plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated and approved routing plan Values assessment – inventory from land managers or projects- update baseline and identify gaps
Prioritize trail segments to fill gaps (ongoing and iterative process)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify critical gaps and ownership situation Agree to criteria for prioritization including scenic values and feasibility of inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize segments for addition to trail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize segments for addition to trail
Negotiate easements and/or formal agreements as options for trail completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and systematically contact landowners of important segments Educate on easement and define potential Create easement agreements Create formal agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify segments that could be designated/developed through easements or formal agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify segments that could be designated/developed through easements or formal agreements
Acquire segments as necessary for trail completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue acquisition as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquisition of key segments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquisition of key segments
Transfer outlying parcels for more appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work on legislation for transfer of parcels Continue to identify (based on routing map) parcels that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More appropriate ownership of all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More appropriate ownership of all

management	are more appropriate as non-USFS parcels • Work with partners for transfer	parcels	parcels
Enhance partnerships with NGOs for long term protection of trail corridor to protect integrity of scenic, ecological, and cultural values of the surrounding landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas that need additional protection or are at risk ➤ <i>Need to identify seasonal closures, i.e. for hunting</i> Identify partners Work together to ensure permanent protection and landowners objectives met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify parcels/areas that require protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part of route designation process – will identify these parcels

Standards: 100% of existing designated FNST meets recreational, informational, and interpretive trail standards within its resource classification category of 1- 5

Strategies: 3-5 Years	Objectives: 1-2 Years	Deliverable: Year 1	Deliverable: Year 2
Build and maintain accurate database of trail miles by class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up and maintain central database and infrastructure Collect and track data Identify gaps and needs on a regular basis Use data to set priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed data platform and making accessible to public
Develop, manage to and evaluate standard at all times across entire trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define standards Train volunteers and land managers Set priorities Complete priority projects to standard Continue ongoing maintenance to standards Include management to standards in partnership agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25% of designated trail to standard (~ 250- 300 miles) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train to standard; Evaluate trail to standard; 25% of designated trail to standard (~ 250- 300 miles)
Create and produce signs, electronic media, print materials, etc. for visual identity, education, and trail standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design visual identity and create graphic/ design standards Design and develop trail materials to standards Place and maintain trail signs, interpretive exhibits, way finding, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual identity and materials to standard designed for entire trail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have visual defined so it can be implemented

Partnerships: Each of the FNST land managers (~50+) proactively contribute to trail development, maintenance, protection, and promotion of their segment as part of a larger whole

Strategies: 3-5 Years	Objectives: 1-2 Years	Deliverable: Year 1	Deliverable: Year 2
Continue to work with Coalition to refine and agree to partnership model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to build and strengthen relationship between USFS and all land management agency partners Develop and refine Coalition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective FNST Coalition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 meetings per year with full Coalition engagement Review of coalition purpose and operations Successfully transition and fill vacancies
Work with land management partners to include FNST standards in their management plans and to ensure better coordination of land management practices on a regular basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop schedule of updates for land management plans around the state Educate partners about FNST and standards of their segment and how each segment contributes to the whole Align FNST and land management plans and ensure better coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in 5 land management plan processes around the state to have input in updated plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to increase to 5 or more plans See trail standards incorporated in land management plans
Complete (and review on a regular basis) customized agreements between USFS and land management partners to define partner participation in FNST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update and revise partnership agreement format to ensure more practical and realistic document for management and monitoring With partners, (including FTA) define management plans for respective segments Create customized agreements with land manager partners based on individualized negotiation, partner capacity and trail needs Include mechanisms for better coordination of land management to ensure economies of scale and efficiencies (less duplication of efforts, e.g. fire management, seedlings) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customized agreements between USFS and land management/owner partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of the agreement template; and a few agreements as models

Increase volunteer capacity to develop and maintain FNST that is highly coordinated with partnership agreements, plans, and FNST standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define volunteer opportunities, needs, and identify gaps • Coordinate volunteer activities from a centralized point based on management plans and agreements (above) • Build FTA capacity to recruit, mobilize, and retain trail volunteers throughout the state • Build relationships with other trail volunteer groups around the state, with focus on youth groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify volunteer capacity or gaps around the state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final report of volunteer subcommittee (<i>note: agenda item for next coalition meeting</i>)
Manage projects and allocate financial and human resources in a coordinated and systematic effort based on agreements and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish system to define and prioritize projects to include full partner/coalition involvement • Allocate resources based on deliberate decisions and priorities • Fully utilize partner participation as defined by agreements (above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual coordinated priority project list <i>reviewed</i> by Coalition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority setting by Coalition
Establish more systematic, coordinated, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation to trail standards and as defined in partnership agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor to standard and agreement • Modify agreements as necessary • Share information among Coalition to create complete and coordinated approach and best practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define monitoring protocol and schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement monitoring protocol and schedule

Promotion: 100% of FNST recreationists know they are on the trail, know the significance of the trail, and know how their experience is part of the larger whole

Strategies: 3-5 Years	Objectives: 1-2 Years	Deliverable: Year 1	Deliverable: Year 2
FNST “officially” designated route to be publicized and promoted and help people understand how to access the trail, including the connector trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish trail route from start to finish (see completion goal) • Collaborate with local partners to promote the connections to the FNST 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated publications of FNST route/ corridor/ connectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal route designation (official route designation never published in federal register)
Create and define FNST brand, branding standards and communication protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naming protocols (i.e. appropriate acronym) • Create branding / graphics standards and communications protocols (how FNST is described) • Monitor for consistency • Include in all agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand standards and communications protocols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create committee to complete brand standards and communications protocols
Create message, maps, materials, merchandise distribute through variety of media and to diverse constituency groups that represent diverse recreational users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define diverse constituency groups and “gate keepers” • Create the materials – hard copy and electronic • Train and engage constituency groups in promotion and reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reprint the map (online and paper) (year 2 is the “app”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The map • Do the “app” – QR codes
Implement public relations campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define publics and target markets (both current and potential) • Define outreach strategies, including 4 major Statewide outdoor/ trail “days” / events • Implement and update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public relations plan (targeted outreach to market segments to regular users, occasional users, and tourists) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public relations plan