



## Minimum Standards & Guidelines for the Florida National Scenic Trail

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These standards and guidelines, derived from the FNST specific National Trail System Act legislation (1983), the FNST Advisory Council meeting minutes, and the FNST Comprehensive Plan (1986), are meant to serve as criteria for trail certification, use, and management of the Florida National Scenic Trail.

At a minimum, segments should meet these standards prior to certification.

### Responsibilities of Land Managing Authorities:

- **Funding:** Each managing authority is responsible for obtaining funding for its activities related to the Trail. Funding may be obtained through government appropriations, government or foundation grants, donations, organization dues, fund raising campaigns and events, or other sources. Land managers may seek general cost-share agreements with the US Forest Service for maintenance of the FNST on their lands up to \$400 per mile, and special projects.
- **Marking the Trail:** The National Trails System Act requires the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a uniform marker with a distinctive symbol for the Florida National Scenic Trail (16 U.S.C. 1246 (c)). The USDA Forest Service will provide the markers to managing authorities and shall require such managing authorities to erect and maintain them.
- **User Protection and Law Enforcement:** The managing authority responsible for a given trail segment should provide or arrange for regular patrol of the Trail as part of their unit law enforcement plan. As a minimum, the appropriate local law enforcement agencies should be informed about the trail, its access points and national designation.
- **Cultural Resources Identification:** A cultural resource investigation will be required within all areas affected by the proposed Trail at the management / design narrative plan stage. An inventory will suggest where the trail may be located to minimize cultural resource impacts. All cultural resource activity on the National Scenic Trail will be conducted in accordance with the procedures of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (36 CFR 800), the Florida State Historic Preservation Office and the USDA Forest Service.
- **Land Acquisition Protection Encouraged:** State and local management authorities are encouraged to purchase lands or accept land donations for the Florida National Scenic Trail.
- **Interpretation:** Since a primary purpose of a National Scenic Trail is to provide for the enjoyment of the scenic, historic, natural, and cultural qualities of the areas through which the Trail passes, managing authorities should plan and provide for the interpretation of such features.
- **Trail Information and Publicity:** The USDA Forest Service will prepare, print, and distribute a general brochure about the trail, and make trail location information available to the public on-line and in a variety of digital formats. The Florida Trail Association will prepare various detailed trail maps, and guidebooks for sale to the public. Individual managing authorities are encouraged to provide detailed maps, brochures, and guides to their trails and should cooperate with the USDA Forest Service in preparing such informative materials. All trail publications should include educational

information emphasizing respect for public and private property, safe and careful use of the trail and interpretation of natural and cultural features as well as the following websites:

- For Trail Information visit : [www.fs.usda.gov/FNST](http://www.fs.usda.gov/FNST)
- For Volunteer Opportunities visit: [www.FloridaTrail.org](http://www.FloridaTrail.org)

- **Trail Regulations:** Section 7(i) of the National Trails Act gives legal authority to the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to issue regulations to protect and manage segments of the trail. State authorities may issue Trail regulations or request regulations from the Secretary of Agriculture.

## General Trail Standards

- A. The use of motorized vehicles by the general public along any national scenic trail shall be prohibited.
- B. Reasonable effort shall be made to provide sufficient access opportunities to the trail, and to the extent practicable, efforts shall be made to avoid activities incompatible with the purposes for which the trail was established.
- C. National scenic trails may contain campsites, shelters, and related public-use facilities. Other uses along the trail, including but not limited to forestry, farming, grazing of livestock, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, may be permitted.
- D. The Trail should be commensurate with its national significance in location, design, construction, and maintenance while reflecting the type and volume of traffic planned, and limited by the standards established for areas created through legislative action (National Parks, National Forests, State Parks, National Wildlife Refuges) through which it passes.
- E. The management of the trail must be consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and higher order plans including sanitation, safety, handicapped accessibility, cultural resources, the Endangered Species Act, water quality and planning.
- F. The Trail should focus on the physical and cultural environments which make it unique from a national perspective: Subtropical climate, fauna and flora, cultural resources, and water-based environments (estuarine habitat, ocean beaches, natural lakes, rivers, natural limestone sinks and springs, wetlands).
- G. The Trail should be permanent in nature, but this does not mean the trail cannot be rerouted or relocated.
- H. Through interpretation, the Trail should emphasize the diversity of land uses and historical values and resource management objectives, ranging from preservation to industrial use.
- I. All trail segments must be generally located within the general FNST corridor as defined in the comprehensive plan.
- J. The trail must be open and available for public use.

## **Specific Trail Standards**

### **A. Trail Routing**

1. The trail may be located within a road right-of-way if sufficient width is available for safety. Generally, the Trail should not be located on roads or on the shoulder of roads open to motorized use by the general public.
2. When appropriate, the Trail may provide views and sounds of man's activities such as harvesting timber and crops, livestock ranching, and fishing without conflicting with these activities.
3. The Trail should provide for all weather and all season passage where possible.
4. Man-made features such as roads and power transmission lines should be crossed at angles that will minimize prolonged visual contact.
5. River, highway and railroad crossings should be safe. Bridges and underpasses should be safe for trail users and crossings should have adequate visibility.
6. The Trail should be located near geological, archaeological or historical sites.
7. Sensitive sites and critical wildlife habitat should be avoided.
8. The Trail should be routed to pass within one-fourth mile of potable water and campsites when practical and possible.
9. The trail route should take advantage of opportunities to provide drinking water, showers, clothes washing facilities, and other services needed by users.
10. Abrupt Changes in trail direction which may confuse the user should be avoided.
11. The Trail should be located near archaeological sites where recommended by the landowner and State Historic Preservation Officer. Sensitive archaeological sites should be avoided.

### **B. Resource Protection**

1. Public and private land management agencies are encouraged to buy land (acquisition) for the Trail.
2. The managing authority should monitor trail lands to insure that they are not abused or threatened. If negative impacts occur, steps should be initiated to protect resources.
3. Other tools that are encouraged for resource protection include easements, cooperative agreements, assistance, and registration.

### **C. Trail Use**

1. Motorized use by the general public along the national scenic trail is prohibited by Section 7(c) of the National Trails System Act (16. U.S.C. 1246(c)).
2. The following motorized uses are permitted on the Trail unless prohibited by specific local regulations or other components of the management plan: emergency situations, official resource management functions, adjacent landowners to enable reasonable access, private landowners to cross their lands, and users of established roads or off-road vehicle trails which cross to Trail.
3. The managing authority responsible for the segment of Trail should consider uses permitted on adjacent segments.
4. On the Florida National Scenic Trail hiking shall be allowed throughout, with other uses optional at the land owner's discretion. Uses other than hiking should be permitted if the activity will not cause degradation of the tread way and surrounding environment, and the activity can be safely accommodated.
5. The passage of the Florida National Scenic Trail through any land open to hunting should not in any way close hunting nor should the Trail be closed to use during hunting seasons, unless otherwise specified by the land management authority. Managing authorities for public lands

and the Trail segments should post notices at trail entrances notifying hikers of any applicable regulations or special warnings.

#### D. Trail Management

1. The Trail requires three kinds of maintenance: regular, long-term maintenance; major erosion and overuse repairs; and emergency, short-term maintenance. Each land management agency and private landowner is responsible for the proper maintenance of the trail. In order to carry out this responsibility, these agencies and owners are encouraged to enter into formal cost-share agreements with the U.S. Forest Service, and to engage volunteers through organizations such as the Florida Trail Association.
2. The condition of the trail corridor and treadway, bridges, and related support facilities should be monitored and inspected on a regular basis. Needed maintenance and minor repairs should be performed in a timely manner before serious deterioration or injury occurs. The U.S. Forest Service can provide assistance in inspection and maintenance upon request.
3. Routine maintenance, such as emptying trash bins, toilet cleaning, and litter pickup, should be performed by the responsible managing authority.
4. *Trail Relocation Standards:*
  - a. Major relocation is defined as changing the location of a section of trail that is longer than one-quarter mile or as changing the location of a section of trail to a location more than one-quarter mile away from its existing location. Major relocation will be made upon the approval of the USDA Forest Service.
  - b. Minor relocations are those that involve a shorter than a one-quarter mile long section or those that move the trail less than one-quarter mile from its existing location. Minor relocations or rerouting may be done by the local manager or landowner without the permission of the Forest Service. The local manager or landowner should notify the Forest Service that a change is to be made and request assistance, if necessary, in relocating the trail. After relocation, the segment will be GPSed and forwarded to the Forest Service at [FNST@fs.fed.us](mailto:FNST@fs.fed.us)
5. *Tread Standards:*
  - a. Clearing and maintenance of the trail should be conducted in accordance with the Trail Class Matrix and Design Parameters (*refer to page 6*).
  - b. The Trail should be cleared approximately four feet wide and cleared high enough to permit passage of a hiker and his pack. The actual tread should be at least 18 inches wide. Vary the clearance width to avoid a “tunnel effect”.
  - c. Avoid leaving stubs in the tread that trip hikers and remove cut brush and logs to minimize view-shed impacts
6. *Trail Blaze and Sign Standards:*
  - a. Trail Blazes
    - a. Blazes should be painted approximately five and one-half feet to six feet off the ground.
    - b. The FNST shall be marked with a two-inch wide and six-inch long painted orange blaze. Blazes should be frequent enough to assure the user is on the route, but not so frequent that more than two blazes may be seen in a given direction from any one location. The formula for one gallon of Florida Trail **orange** blaze paint is:  
**80-139 (OSHA Orange) plus R-Y; T-Y; M-40; F-8; B-1**
  3. Side Trails to water, campsites, and observation points shall be blazed with light blue paint. The formula for one gallon of Florida Trail **blue** blaze paint

is:

**80-34 plus D-Y, E-3Y**

4. Double blazes indicate a change in direction or that the Trail is departing the obvious path, where the top blaze indicates the direction of the turn.

b. The Uniform FNST Marker

1. The uniform 12 inch marker shall be used to identify the location of the FNST to the motoring public. The markers should be placed so that they can be readily seen from a moving vehicle approaching from either direction.
2. Below the marker should be the words FNST Parking or FNST Crossing.
3. The official marker will be incorporated into trailhead and information signs.
4. The three and one-half inch marker shall be used to identify the FNST to common access junctions: intersections with other trails, and where needed as a reassurance sign if other land use activities or game trails make the trail location uncertain to the traveler.

c. Directional, Informational, Interpretive, and Regulatory Signs

1. These signs should be placed along the trail, on side trails, at trailheads, etc., to meet the needs of the user, management, or to add to the enjoyment of the user by pointing out or interpreting resources and land uses.
2. The designation as a National Scenic Trail mandates the maintenance of a high standard of signing. Managing agencies should give high priority to timely repair and/or replacement of missing or damaged markers and signs

7. *User Facilities*

a. Campsites

1. Select a reasonably level and clear wooded site. Avoid placing a site near dead or dying trees or where subject to seasonal flooding. A campsite should be located near a suitable water supply, if possible.
2. Campsites should be large enough to accommodate six to eight small tents.
3. Camping must be available no more than one hiking day (8 to 10 miles) apart.
4. Campsites should be remote (one mile) from highways, public recreated areas, and residences.

b. Trailheads

1. Off-road parking should be planned and accommodated whenever possible at all popular points of departure.
2. Major trailheads (normally located near primary highways) should include: kiosks with local unit information and a parking facility (five-vehicle minimum). Additional facilities to consider include potable water, toilets, and trash can.
3. Minor trailheads should include kiosk or bulletin board, information signs, and vehicle parking for a minimum of three to five vehicles.

Table 1: National Trail Class Matrix, USDA, U.S. Forest Service

Trail Attributes	Trail Class 1 Minimally Developed	Trail Class 2 Moderately Developed	Trail Class 3 Developed	Trail Class 4 Highly Developed	Trail Class 5 Fully Developed
<b>Constructed Features &amp; Trail Elements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structures minimal to non-existent</li> <li>Drainage typically accomplished without structures</li> <li>Natural fords</li> <li>Typically no bridges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structures of limited size, scale, and quantity; typically constructed of native materials</li> <li>Structures adequate to protect trail infrastructure and resources</li> <li>Natural fords</li> <li>Bridges as needed for resource protection and appropriate access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structures may be common and substantial; constructed of imported or native materials</li> <li>Natural or constructed fords</li> <li>Bridges as needed for resource protection and appropriate access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structures frequent and substantial; typically constructed of imported materials</li> <li>Constructed or natural fords</li> <li>Bridges as needed for resource protection and user convenience</li> <li>Trailside amenities may be present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structures frequent or continuous; typically constructed of imported materials</li> <li>May include bridges, boardwalks, curbs, handrails, trailside amenities, and similar features</li> </ul>
<b>Signs<sup>2</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Route identification signing limited to junctions</li> <li>Route markers present when trail location is not evident</li> <li>Regulatory and resource protection signing infrequent</li> <li>Destination signing, unless required, generally not present</li> <li>Information and interpretive signing generally not present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Route identification signing limited to junctions</li> <li>Route markers present when trail location is not evident</li> <li>Regulatory and resource protection signing infrequent</li> <li>Destination signing typically infrequent outside of wilderness; generally not present in wilderness</li> <li>Information and interpretive signing not common</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Route identification signing at junctions and as needed for user reassurance</li> <li>Route markers as needed for user reassurance</li> <li>Regulatory and resource protection signing may be common</li> <li>Destination signing likely outside of wilderness; generally not present in wilderness</li> <li>Information and interpretive signs may be present outside of wilderness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Route identification signing at junctions and as needed for user reassurance</li> <li>Route markers as needed for user reassurance</li> <li>Regulatory and resource protection signing common</li> <li>Destination signing common outside of wilderness; generally not present in wilderness</li> <li>Information and interpretive signs may be common outside of wilderness</li> <li>Accessibility information likely displayed at trailhead</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Route identification signing at junctions and for user reassurance</li> <li>Route markers as needed for user reassurance</li> <li>Regulatory and resource protection signing common</li> <li>Destination signing common</li> <li>Information and interpretive signs common</li> <li>Accessibility information likely displayed at trailhead</li> </ul>
<b>Typical Recreation Environments &amp; Experience<sup>3</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural, unmodified</li> <li>ROS: Typically Primitive to Roaded Natural</li> <li>WROS: Typically Primitive to Semi-Primitive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural, essentially unmodified</li> <li>ROS: Typically Primitive to Roaded Natural Typically</li> <li>WROS: Typically Primitive to Semi-Primitive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural, primarily unmodified</li> <li>ROS: Typically Primitive to Roaded Natural</li> <li>WROS: Typically Semi-Primitive to Transition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be modified</li> <li>ROS: Typically Semi-Primitive to Rural Roaded Natural to Rural setting</li> <li>WROS: Typically Portal or Transition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be highly modified</li> <li>Commonly associated with visitor centers or high-use recreation sites</li> <li>ROS: Typically Roaded Natural to Urban</li> <li>Generally not present in Wilderness</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> For National Quality Standards for Trails, Potential Appropriateness of Trail Classes for Managed Uses, Design Parameters, and other related guidance, refer to FSM 2353, FSH 2309.18, and other applicable agency references.

<sup>2</sup> For standards and guidelines for the use of signs and posters along trails, refer to the Sign and Poster Guidelines for the Forest Service (EM-7100-15).

<sup>3</sup> The Trail Class Matrix shows the combinations of Trail Class and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) or Wilderness Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (WROS) settings that commonly occur, although trails in all Trail Classes may and do occur in all settings. For guidance on the application of the ROS and WROS, refer to FSM 2310 and 2353 and FSH 2309.18.

Table 2. Pedestrian Design Parameters by Trail Class  
 USDA, Forest Service modified for the FNST

Design Parameters are technical guidelines for the survey, design, construction, maintenance, and assessment of the FNST. Local deviations from any Design Parameter may be established based on trail-specific conditions, topography, or other factors, provided that the deviations are consistent with the general intent of the applicable Trail Class and National Scenic Trail experience.

Designed Use FNST		Trail Class 1	Trail Class 2	Trail Class 3	Trail Class 4	Trail Class 5
Design Tread Width	Wilderness (Single Lane)	0" – 12"	6" – 18"	12" – 24" Exception: may be 36" – 48" at steep side slopes	18" – 24" Exception: may be 36" – 48" at steep side slopes	Not applicable
	Non-Wilderness (Single Lane)	6" – 12"	12" – 24"	18" – 36"	24" – 60"	36" – 72"
	Non-Wilderness (Double Lane)	36" – 48"	36" – 48"	36" – 60"	48" – 72"	72" – 120"
	Structures (Minimum Width)	18"	18"	36"	48"	60"
Design Surface	Type	Native, ungraded May be continuously rough	Native, limited grading May be continuously rough	Native with some onsite borrow or imported material where needed for stabilization, occasional grading Intermittently rough	Native with improved sections of borrow or imported material, routine grading Stable, with minor roughness	Likely imported material, routine grading Uniform, firm, and stable
	Protrusions	≤ 24" Likely common and continuous	≤ 6" May be common and continuous	≤ 3" May be common, not continuous	≤ 3" Uncommon, not continuous	No protrusions
	Obstacles (Maximum Height)	24"	12"	10"	8"	No obstacles
Design Grade	Target Grade	5% – 20%	5% – 12%	3% – 10%	2% – 8%	2% – 5%
	Short Pitch Max	30%	25%	15%	10%	5% - 8%
	Maximum Pitch Density	20% – 30% of trail	10% – 30% of trail	10% – 20% of trail	5% – 10% of trail	0% – 5% of trail
Design Cross Slope	Target Cross Slope	Natural side slope	5% – 20%	5% – 10%	3% – 7%	2% – 3%
	Maximum Cross Slope	Natural side slope	20%	10%	8%	5%
Design Clearing	Height	6'	6' – 8'	8'	8' – 10'	8' – 10'
	Width	≥ 24" Some vegetation may encroach into clearing area	24" – 48" Some light vegetation may encroach into clearing area	36" – 60"	48" – 72"	72" – 96"
	Shoulder Clearance	3" – 6"	6" – 12"	12" – 18"	12" – 18"	12" – 24"
Design Turn	Radius	2' – 3'	3' – 6'	4' – 8'	8' – 10'	8' – 12'