



Coalition Members in attendance:

Kelly Russell	Forest Supervisor, US Forest Service
Shawn Thomas	FNST Administrator, US Forest Service
Beth Jackson	Environmental Program Supervisor, Orange County
Dale Allen	Executive Director, Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation
Daniel Brockhaus	Public Lands Specialist, Osceola County
Dan Fisk	Project Leader, North Florida Refuge Complex
David Waldrop	President, Florida Trail Association
Jerrie Lindsey	Director, Office of Public Access and Wildlife Viewing Services, Florida Fish and Wildlife
Jim Duby	Greenways and Natural Lands Program Manager, Seminole County
Justin Davis	Outdoor Recreation Manager, Eglin Air Force Base
Kotryna Klizentyte	(for Taylor Stein) PhD Student, School of Forest Resources and Conservation, University of Florida
Lorna Radcliff	Recreation Coordinator, Florida Forest Service
Melody Cox	Director of Administration, Taylor County
Robert Mindick	Public Lands Manager, Osceola County

Guests:

Anne Glick	Section Leader, Florida Fish and Wildlife
Anthony Tridente	GIS Technician, US Forest Service
Austin Tezak	Gateway Community Intern, Florida Trail Association
Cassidy Kearney	Graduate Student Intern, US Forest Service
Christopher Spori	Southern Region Director for Recreation, Wilderness, Heritage, and Partnership/Volunteer
Jeff Glenn	North Florida Trail Program Manager, Florida Trail Association
Jenna Taylor	Central & Southern Trail Program Manager, Florida Trail Association
Kelly Wiener	Trail Program Director, Florida Trail Association
Rob Gump	Deputy Forest Supervisor, US Forest Service
Taylor Henley	Research Technician, School of Forest Resources and Conservation, University of Florida
Tom Daniel	Vice President of Trails, Florida Trail Association
Van Tran	Community Outreach Manager, Florida Trail Association

Next Meeting Information:

Date: Tentative place holder for January 7 – 8, 2021

Location: Option I: Steinhatchee, Florida *depending on reroute status* / Option II: FTA Office, Gainesville

Meeting Summary:

FT Coalition meetings are a gathering of land managers and partners to discuss progress towards the four goals of the 5-Year Strategic Plan. This document is meant to act as a summary of presentation and discussion items. For additional meeting materials, including presentations and a copy of the Strategic Plan, please visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/fnst/home>.



COALITION ROLE, MISSION, & VISION STATEMENTS

Role of the Coalition

The role of the coalition was briefly discussed, aligned with the 2018 Strategic Plan document. The coalition sets goals, works as a cooperative body of partners, and aims to achieve the mission of the FT.

Mission Statement

“The Florida National Scenic Trail meets as a coalition body to inform better decisions and attract greater resources to advance, protect and connect people to the Florida Trail.”

“Connecting Florida’s Public Lands” FT Strategic Plan Accomplishment Report 2018 - 2023

GOAL 1: PROMOTE CONNECTIONS

Major Performance Measure- Increase number and diversity of Florida Trail recreationists by 15% over 5 years.

- Kiosk templates have been created for the state, local, and gateway community areas. We encourage this resource as a way to brand the FT consistently across the state
 - We will provide panels or template (in needed format) if requested; reach out to your local FTA Regional Trail Manager for assistance.
 - FS/FTA will route FWC requests through Jerrie’s office
 - Two standard sizes 33”x33” & 48”x36”. Exchange maps, images, symbols, graphics, and text
 - Custom sizes – Email FTA Regional Manager, Philip and/or Shawn with requests for approval
- FTA staff member Van Tran introduced Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) principles
 - Looking for representatives interested in leading round table groups to promote JEDI
 - Partnership with PNTS; virtual workshops at conference in October highlighting basic principles
- Gateway Community passport program finding success. Additional Gateway Communities with a focus in the central and southern regions are being added
- COVID-19 Job Hazard Analysis needs volunteer review before resuming trail maintenance activities; FTA produced excellent [COVID-19 resource](#) This site will be updated with FAQs and guidance for volunteers.
- FT informational graphic completed and will appear in conjunction with meeting documents online
- Discussion of producing standardized language for land management plans as well as a discussion of producing a standard procedure for hosting events on the trail.
 - The idea of having a standardized language that allowed for unit-by-unit flexibility seemed to have the most support. County land managers brought up that county insurance requirements deter most event organizers and standardization may be difficult.
 - Unauthorized “guerilla races” and unauthorized usage of FT signage were brought up. Event advertising on social media has disconnected event organizers and land managers.
 - It was mentioned that if events are approved, land managers should make FTA staff and FS staff aware of events so that any use of FT signage can be approved.

GOAL 2: COMPLETE THE TRAIL

Major Performance Measure- Remove 30 miles of trail connectors and add 50 designatable miles of trail to close critical gaps within the Trail corridor.



- Decision Memo has been approved by the Regional Forester authorizing the Big Bend Reroute. The reroute is estimated to add an additional 100 miles to the trail
 - FS will coordinate public announcements in a timely manner and coordinate with applicable agencies.
 - Major Coalition initiative over the past four years – congratulations everyone!
- FTA Board of Directors signed the land agreements negotiated by the Greenways and Trails Foundation, FS, and FTA to facilitate Orange & Osceola Reroute
 - FS has map copies available upon request
 - Opening of reroute tentatively planned for end of year 2020/early 2021: FTA and FS need to discuss details and coordination together with land managers
- Spring Creek NRDA Project funding awarded: 1.2 million dollars for construction of boardwalk, bridges within St. Mark's NWR
 - Project close about 5 miles of roadwalk and will highlight an incredibly scenic and dynamic area
 - Phase II will reconnect FT to historic Port Leon

GOAL 3: SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

Major Performance Measure- 100% of the Florida Trail is managed to standard annually to provide maximum potential for recreation, conservation and enjoyment.

- Florida Forest Service unable to commit to Devil's Creek Bridge at WSF as planned for fall 2020 to eliminate dangerous high-water wading
 - FS budgeted funding for FY20 but agreement was not able to be executed this year
 - FFS will work through internal process to keep on radar
- FS working to update website content
- GIS Technician working to complete Regional Atlas and to produce additional public-facing products, such as flora and fauna found on FT story map in coordination with FNAI
- Discussed desire to identify additional actionable items at a future meeting
- See kiosk panel discussion in Goal 1

GOAL 4: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Major Performance Measure- The Florida Trail Partnerships Program maintains high performing relationships that proactively contribute to Trail development, maintenance or promotion of the Florida Trail.

- Potential partnership with MetroPlan Orlando as they work to update their long-term plans. A letter is in the process of being drafted in order to be included, with a deadline of fall 2020. Proposed pedestrian bridge over 528 discussed
 - additional funding and strong coalition support will be needed
- Partnership/agreement with the Florida Department of Transportation nearly finalized
 - FDOT agrees to install and maintain trail signage along state roads with parking features associated/Phase I
 - FDOT may be willing to upgrade parking facilities when associated with road projects
 - Suggested FTA send a letter of appreciation to FDOT team for incorporating FT in FDOT traffic and design manual
 - On-going discussion to identify crossings, way-finding and trailheads between FT and FDOT

FNAI PARTNERSHIP & STORY MAP



FTA and FS pursuing a story map via a partnership with FNAI that translates relevant data into trail experiences across the state, providing users with spatial information of habitats, scenic vistas, attractions, and more. This map will be produced using ArcGIS Online, so it will be easily shareable in an online format by users or partners alike. This project requests feedback from coalition members and other interested parties for any features that should be highlighted on the trail. FS will be reaching out as applicable.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

An excerpt of the Emergency Response Plan (ERP) was attached to the Meeting Agenda over e-mail for review before the meeting. The updated ERP serves as a better guide with points of contact and trailhead GPS coordinates listed. A link to this document will be presented in conjunction with the Meeting Agenda and Meeting Summary on the [FT website](#).

FLORIDA TRAIL GATEWAY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

A new intern is on board, supported by a multi-agency funded federal grant. The Gateway Community Intern will facilitate the designation of Gateway Communities emphasizing areas within Central and Southern Florida. Eleven communities are currently designated, and over 100 business partnerships have been established. Additional stamps have been created for the gateway communities Passport Program which are hosted for hikers in local community businesses. A grant from REI has been awarded to add new kiosks within Gateway Communities to help hikers and locals learn more about the trail and the surrounding community.

FLORIDA TRAIL VISITOR USE OVERVIEW

The total estimated annual visits for 2019-2020 are 370,556, which was approximately 1,000 visitors less than the previous year. This was expected due to the coronavirus pandemic causing trail closures throughout the state. The highest use area remains Lake Okeechobee. Split Oak Forest has grown considerably in usage, doubling its visitor counts (especially in March, May, and June). It was discussed that this may be due to the pandemic or to the recent media coverage of the trailhead due to controversy regarding road construction covered by the local news stations. Visitor surveys have been postponed due to social distancing recommendations caused by COVID-19 but it is hoped that they will resume soon.

Seven new trail counters were purchased with REI funding and have been deployed throughout the state. FTA and FS has agreed to manage counters at Gulf Islands National Sea Shore, St. Mark's Wildlife Refuge, Kissimmee Prairie Preserve, Triple N Ranch, Seminole State Forest, and Withlacoochee State Forest. Data collection will occur once a month and will be uploaded to a website all counter managers have access to.

COALITION MEMBER UPDATES

Orange County – Beth Jackson | Osceola County – Robert Mindick | Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation – Dale Allen

Beth Jackson and Robert Mindick have been asked to be part of an environmental advisory group that reports to the Central Florida Expressway Authority board of commissioners. They have invited Dale Allen and Shawn Thomas to present on the FT crossing at the first advisory meeting. Dale has begun work on a PowerPoint that covers changes in Florida over the last 60 years and the significance of the wildlife corridor within this area.



Orange County – Beth Jackson

Working with Jenna on preparing kiosk templates; trail closures did not occur during pandemic response. Working on constructing a parking area right of way after public response to Moss Park.

Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation – Dale Allen

Working on drafting a letter to MetroPlan Orlando, who are in the process of reviewing their long-term planning documents. Will focus on proposed pedestrian or multi-use bridge as well as a wildlife corridor over 528. Additional funding sources will be needed. Access across this corridor and to Hal Scott is critical to the Osceola/Orange County reroute of the FT.

North Florida – Dan Fisk

Still working on Hurricane Michael trail maintenance; got a lot done before pandemic hit. They were able to do some prescribed burns on the refuge in and around the FT. They are waiting on a design for the planned NRDA suspension bridge and are waiting on permitting before implementing Phase 1 and 2 of the planned improvements (bridge, boardwalk, and connection to Port Leon).

Florida Trail Association – David Waldrop

FTA staff will have new offices in December; FTA is working on reviewing language before opening the trail up to volunteers for maintenance activities. Deseret Ranch property agreements established.

Eglin Air Force Base – Justin Davis

Announced he is the new POC at Eglin for the FT, previously worked at FWC and replaced Chris Johansson. FDOT reached out to Justin regarding FT signage and improvements at parking area with gravel.

Florida Forest Service – Lorna Radcliff

Agreement concerns have been resolved, moving through process.

US Forest Service – Kelly Russell

Announcement of renovations of FS Supervisor Office in Tallahassee and the staff continuing to work remotely until mostly likely spring of 2021.

Osceola County – Dan Brockhaus

Acquired property to remove roadwalk; was able to work with an Eagle Scout to put in a kiosk and is now working on getting templates and panels up. Cost Share Agreement for trail infrastructure approved.

US Forest Service – FNST – Shawn Thomas

Received word that NRDA funding is ready to be transferred. Regional Forester signed decision memo, approving the Big Bend Reroute. Next steps are to publish a *Federal Register* notice and coordinate with the land managing agencies and others. Ongoing discussions with FDOT to develop a statewide agreement that will increase FT crossing and parking safety and help raise awareness and visibility to the public through the use of signage and way-finding.

VIRTUAL MEETING CHAT EXCERPT *full record available upon request*

from Kelly Russell to everyone:

Just FYI for everyone. Our Supervisor's Office in Tallahassee was scheduled for renovations which are likely to start in the next couple of months. Due to that we had already planned for folks to telework during that time, we just got a head start on it due to the pandemic. You should still be able to reach all of



our folks via phone or email though as they work from home. No telling how long construction will take - if we are likely we will be able to move back in by the spring.

from Shawn Thomas to everyone:

<https://www.floridatrail.org/gatewaycommunities/>

from Jerrie Lindsey to everyone:

Melody Cox. Steinhatchee should be a Gateway Community!

from David to everyone:

We plan on it, just were waiting on the official word of the route being official.

from Jerrie Lindsey to everyone:

Please keep FWC involved. We are excited about working on it with Melody.

from Shawn Thomas to everyone:

Absolutely and I can't wait to be able to come down to Steinhatchee

from Kelly Russell to everyone:

Maybe our next non-virtual meeting can be there!

from Jerrie Lindsey to everyone:

Great idea Kelly!

from Shawn Thomas to everyone:

Yes, great idea

from David to everyone:

I was going to invite everyone to meet in the new FTA offices that we will be moving into in October.

from Kelly Russell to everyone:

Nice

from Kelly Russell to everyone:

We may be meeting virtual in October though as well the way it is going.

from Kelly Russell to everyone:

Or December

from Jerrie Lindsey to everyone:

I'd also like to invite everyone who is interested to let me know if they would like to receive a new e-publication that our FWC office is producing. It is called Catch the Wild Tourist. it will be produced quarterly. We plan to offer useful info on wildlife viewing and other ecotourism topics.

[requests to be added to e-publication from: Kelly Russell, Anthony Tridente, David Waldrop, Daniel Brockhaus, Kotryna Klizentyte, and Beth Jackson]

from Jerrie Lindsey to everyone:

Will do

from Anthony Tridente to everyone [in reference to FNAI Story Map Highlight discussion]:

anthony.tridente@usda.gov

from Kelly Wiener to everyone:

Example of our current standard language "A federally-designated National Scenic Trail, the Florida Trail is administered by the USDA Forest Service Southern Region and managed to a set of agreed upon standards in cooperation with land management partners and stakeholders. The FNST was designated in Three Lakes WMA first in 1993 and resigned in 2006 and 2017 as part of an agreement between the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and National Forests in Florida. As prescribed by the agreement, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will collaborate with the FNST Administrator coordinate all programs and activities related to the trail."

from Kelly Russell to everyone:

Thanks everyone!

from Jerrie Lindsey to everyone:

Thanks Shawn and everyone. Thank you, Anne for hosting us.

from Rob Gump to everyone:

Excellent discussion... look forward the next meeting and seeing some of the trail!