

## Florida National Scenic Trail Coalition

Summary of the December 8, 2014 Coalition Meeting held in Tallahassee, FL

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### **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.*

### **Participants**

Robert Mindick, Osceola County  
Chuck Goodheart, FL Outdoor Recreation  
Coalition  
Bob DeGross, Big Cypress National Park  
Taylor Stein, University of Florida  
Carlos Schomaker, FLTrail Association  
Jerrie Linsey, FL Fish and Wildlife  
Conservation Commission

Doug Alderson, Office of Greenways and Trails  
Carlos Schomaker, Florida Trail Association  
Mike Herrin, US Forest Service  
Shawn Thomas, US Forest Service  
Shelli Bischoff, Conservation Impact, facilitator

### **Next Meeting**

**Monday June 9, 2014**

#### *Preliminary Agenda Items*

- Gap analysis – Three priority areas
- User surveys – report and implications
- 2014-15 projects

### **Summary**

This document is meant to act as a summary of presentation and discussion items. For additional meeting materials, including presentations, visit [www.fs.usda.gov/fnst](http://www.fs.usda.gov/fnst). The focus of the December 8<sup>th</sup> meeting was to complete an assessment of the FNST Coalition structure and 5-Year Strategic Plan, provide recommendations, and receive updates from Land Managers regarding on-going FNST related activities.

### **FNST Coalition Assessment**

Shelli Bischoff, Conservation Impact consultant to the US Forest Service, interviewed Coalition members and partners to provide feedback on the current Coalition structure, 5-Year Strategic Plan, and partner perception of both efforts.

- Coalition members unanimously agreed the group to be useful, informative and productive
- Agree to continue bi-annual meeting format and 5-year strategic plan
- Emphasis on land manager representation, not a stakeholders group
- Proposed one annual centrally located meeting or virtual options for travelling partners
- Proposed changing name from “FNST Coalition” to “FNST Partners Group”
- Recommend increasing FNST and partner model presentations around the state, and at regional and national level dialogues particularly for the USFS. The excellent work of Coalition members and staff dedicated to the Strategic Plan is unique and deserves recognition.

### **Coalition Member Updates**

*Osceola County* – Bob Mindick, Public Lands Manager

The County is leading the effort to coordinate with multiple local county and private units to determine the feasibility of a safer, albeit disconnected route for an existing 30 mile road walk through the Deseret Ranch property. While this property is currently undergoing sector planning, trail development will not be feasible within this plan for several decades making a clear need for current alternative routes. Several transportation corridor plan updates within the county also make it an appropriate time to be identifying a current route for the Florida National Scenic Trail. This work is part of a larger effort by the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation to explore alternatives in the 3 Priority Gap Areas of the FNST as identified in the Statewide Greenways and Trails Plan.

*Office of Greenways and Trails* – Doug Alderson

The Office of Greenways and Trails priority maps which accompany the Statewide Greenways and Trails Plan will be updated in 2015. The USFS, FNST program will join OGT in their statewide open houses in the month of September. Important reminder to the audience that identifying Priority Gap areas will provide added benefit to proposed state land acquisition packages.

*Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission* – Jerrie Lindsey

FWC is working to implement priority projects identified in the 2013 FNST Assessments on FWC lands including trail and campsite enhancements on the Tosohatchee WMA. Upcoming management plan updates include the Aucilla WMA, need to be aware that there is increasing pressure for ATV use on this unit as the bordering Water Management District units have allowed for ATV use on their Right of Ways. Staff met with USFS and FTA to discuss consistent volunteer engagement across units and will continue to strive for consistency through agreements and on the ground work. Recommend regular unit level meetings with volunteers and FTA staff.

*Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation – Dale Allen*

The Foundation has been working under an agreement with the US Forest Service to explore community supported alternatives to our three largest gap areas on the FNST. The Foundation is happy to make presentations to county commissions and local governments as appropriate for FNST development in the 3 Priority Gap Areas for the FNST including the Panhandle, Big Bend, and Osceola/Orange County gaps. Many local governments are excited to have access to these wide reaching resources and can be strong advocates for our trails. Regional Planning councils should also be engaged. The Foundation has focused its efforts for impact, namely multi-use and bike trails but are working to expand the dialogue to other uses including water trails.

*Big Cypress National Preserve – Bob DeGross*

Maintenance of the FNST has been coordinated through regular meetings with Florida Trail Association staff and volunteers, pre-season meetings are especially helpful. The Back Country Access plan currently under draft will include the proposed re-route of the FNST north of I-75 to connect to Water Management District lands and bypass the Seminole Reservation which is not certified FNST due to a lack of public access. Plan draft will likely be ready in June. Initial public scoping led to the additional component of a wilderness eligibility assessment. BCNP has been coordinating with the FNST Long Distance Hiking Committee for their January event. NPS will begin an environmental assessment for proposed oil and gas exploration in the preserve.

*University of Florida - Taylor Stein*

While the USFS studies have focused in recent years on use numbers and the types of users, a recent student project focused on the perception of conflict on the FNST related to mixed-use and generally found that there existed little conflict, as well as little perception of conflict between different recreation users on the FNST. For units that have user counts completed the University can provide summaries and reports as needed. UF has also been working with the new FTA Regional Representative who has guest lectured and provided students with extra credit trail related opportunities.

*Florida Trail Association – Carlos Shomaker*

The FTA has hired two Regional Representatives who are responsible for coordinating volunteer trail maintenance and stewardship activities on the FNST in the southern and central portions of the state. In time the FTA hopes to bring on a Panhandle and Western Corridor representative. Land Managers have been exceedingly positive about the new coordination structure. The FTA

is working on an organizational 5-year strategic plan and is looking to hire a development director. The Board is working more closely with individual chapters related to communication and standards. With the Wild film release, we may see increased interest in the National Scenic Trail. Reminder to Land Managers that they can receive monthly volunteer reports from the FTA on-line reporting system.

## **Mid-Year Plan Review & Innovative Actions by Strategic Plan Goal**

### **Goal 1: Complete the Trail**

- Successfully updated FNST Trail & Major Trail Infrastructure Inventory. Yet to begin resource based inventories: natural, cultural, historical
- Approximately 65 miles of trail is currently under planning or development towards the goal of 100 new miles.

### **Goal 3: Partnerships**

- Certification
  - New certification agreement in the form of an MOU with FWC in next fiscal year based on updated inventory and assessments
  - Likely to see more county level agreements such as Osceola & Orange County
  - Water management districts are the next group to address – infrastructure needs emphasized as a priority
- Coordinating volunteer activities
  - What are the issues surrounding volunteers and coordination between agencies?
    - Liability
    - Training standards
    - Use/maintenance of equipment (esp. chainsaws)
    - Consistency of reporting volunteer hours
  - Sponsored volunteer agreement of the USFS
    - Does this align with other agencies' volunteer agreements?
    - Who provides what type of liability?
      - USFS provides workers comp and liability not covered by the sponsor or the underlying land manager
  - Checklist of relationship characteristics between FS and land managers?
    - As part of certification agreements

### **Goal 4: Promotion**

- FWC has been using the FNST 101 presentation as part of staff meetings to assist with educating colleagues about the FNST. What efforts are others making?
- What else should we be doing?
  - Update the 101 presentation with current maps, etc. and make available on FS website
  - Set of photos (typical of different areas?)—FS smug mug photo site to come online soon for easy access

- Photo space on FNST website—expand access to these types of tools for land managers
- For gateway communities—something (fact sheet?) to show the benefits of the trail running through these communities (i.e. health, economic, etc.)

### **Other Topics**

Who will be the Coalition facilitator moving forward and where will meetings be held?

- Group recommends rotating location (atleast once annually)
- Forest Service staff as facilitator, or rotate with members
- Tie in meetings in locations other than Tallahassee with other events (i.e. an OGT meeting) to increase attendance

Attachment 1

2014 Program of Work

FNST 5 Year Strategic Plan : Year 3

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	2014 Deliverables (Year 3)	Status / Needs
<p>Define the route of a complete FNST based on current on-the-ground conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete an inventory of the trail corridor including: scenic, cultural, ecological, and recreation resources</li> <li>○ Complete a matrix of high priority gap areas, emphasizing scenic values</li> <li>○ Update FNST Routing Plan</li> <li>○ Coordinate routing plan with long range planning of other agencies/ partners</li> <li>○ Engage stakeholders in review of final plan</li> <li>○ Finalize 2014 Routing Plan</li> <li>○ Ensure all FNST is formally certified under current agreements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete trail corridor inventory</li> <li>○ Assess high priority gap areas</li> <li>○ Draft updated routing plan</li> <li>○ Begin replacing Certification Agreements with MOU’s following assessments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Status:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ On-going inventory of resources</li> <li>○ Partner with OGT/FGTF for update of Routing Plan</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ <b>Needs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Data for trail corridor inventory</li> <li>○ Land manager priority acquisition areas</li> <li>○ Commitment from managers for inclusion in long range acquisition and management plans</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p>Prioritize trail segments to fill gaps (ongoing and iterative process)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify critical public and private land holder gaps</li> <li>○ Agree to criteria for prioritization based on current conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prioritize segments for addition to trail based on updated routing plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Status:</b> June 2014 Meeting – prioritization of gaps based on current information</li> </ul>
<p>Negotiate easements or formal agreements as options for trail completion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify and systematically contact landowners of important segments</li> <li>○ Sign certifying MOU's, easements or license agreements where appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete list of trail segments that could be designated/ developed through easements or formal agreements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Status:</b> pending routing plan update</li> </ul>
<p>Acquire segments as necessary for trail completion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continue acquisition as appropriate</li> <li>○ Pursue both federal and state acquisition funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify acquisition funding opportunities</li> <li>○ NEPA for proposed Plum Creek Transfer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Status:</b> Continue focus on Suwannee River for easement acquisition</li> <li>○ <b>Need:</b> identify properties for LWCF 2016 Proposal</li> </ul>
<p>Transfer FNST parcels to best appropriate land management agency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continue to work on legislation for transfer of parcels</li> <li>○ Continue to identify (based on routing map) parcels that are more appropriate as non-USFS parcels</li> <li>○ Work with partners for transfer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Publish atlas of current FNST parcels</li> <li>○ Complete transfer with St. Marks NWR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Status:</b> St. Marks transfer out for final signature</li> <li>○ <b>Need:</b> Identify next priority transfer</li> </ul>
<p>Enhance partnerships w/ NGOs for protection of trail corridor to protect integrity of scenic, ecological cultural values of the landscape</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify areas that need additional protection or are at risk (seasonal closures, development etc).</li> <li>○ Identify partners for long term corridor protection</li> <li>○ Work together to ensure permanent protection and landowners objectives met</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Updated routing study will identify key parcels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Status:</b> pending routing plan update</li> </ul>

*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	2014 Deliverables	Status / Needs
Build and maintain accurate data base of trail by land owner, tread type and trail class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Set up and maintain central GIS database</li> <li>● GPS current corridor and up-date FNST database</li> <li>○ Identify information gaps and needs on a regular basis</li> <li>● Use data to set priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify information needs/gaps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Status:</b> FNST data on-line and smart phone accessible through ArcGIS on-line <a href="http://www.arcgis.com/explorer">www.arcgis.com/explorer</a></li> <li>○ <b>Need:</b> Coalition review of current data, recommendations</li> </ul>
Develop, manage, and evaluate the trail to standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Define standards by Trail Class</li> <li>○ Train volunteers and land managers in trail development, maintenance and management</li> <li>● Set priorities for trail and infrastructure projects</li> <li>● Complete priority projects to standard</li> <li>○ Continue ongoing maintenance to standards</li> <li>○ Include management to standards in partnership agreements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continue trail condition/infrastructure assessments</li> <li>○ 2014 Request for Projects</li> <li>○ Incorporate trail standards into agreements developed in 2014</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Need:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Utilize Volunteer Capacity Study to identify volunteer and land manager training needs</li> <li>○ 2014 RFP input</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Create and produce signs, electronic media, print materials, etc. for visual identity, education, and trail standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Design visual identity and create graphic/ design standards</li> <li>○ Design and develop trail materials to standards</li> <li>○ Place and maintain trail signs, interpretive exhibits, way finding etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Northern &amp; Southern Terminus Improvements</li> <li>○ Sample Kiosks/ Sign development</li> <li>○ Signage emphasis in 2014 RFP</li> <li>○ Update to FNST Brochure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Status:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Southern Terminus improvement active</li> <li>○ Brochure update under UF agreement, Coalition review at June 2014 Meeting</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ <b>Need:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ FWC Agreement modification to include graphic support for 2014 RFP work</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

*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	2014 Deliverable	Status / Needs
Continue to work with Coalition to refine and agree to current partnership model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to build and strengthen relationship between USFS and all land management agency partners</li> <li>• Develop and refine Coalition membership based on strategic plan priorities and on-the-ground conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 meetings per year with full Coalition engagement;</li> <li>• Review of coalition purpose and operations;</li> <li>• Successfully transition and fill vacancies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ County seat transition from Seminole to Osceola County</li> </ul>
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"> <li>○ Develop schedule of updates for land management plans around the state</li> <li>○ Educate partners about the FNST and how their segment connects to a larger statewide resource</li> <li>○ Align FNST with local, county and statewide resource planning efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continue to increase to 5 or more plans a year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify plan updates occurring in 2014 in addition to :               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ BCNP Backcountry Access</li> <li>○ DOT Bike/Ped Safety Plan</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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"> <li>○ Update and revise partnership agreement format to ensure more practical and realistic document for management and monitoring</li> <li>○ Define, with partners, including FTA, management plans for respective segments</li> <li>○ Create customized agreements with land management partners based on individualized partner capacity and trail needs</li> <li>○ Include mechanisms for better coordination for trail management to ensure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Create MOU Certification Agreement Template</li> <li>○ Sign MOU with FWC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Status:</b> MOU Certification Agreement renewal active with FWC and FFS</li> <li>○ <b>Need:</b> identify 2 new partners for trail assessment and agreement renewal in 2014</li> </ul>

<p>Increase volunteer capacity to develop and maintain FNST that is highly coordinated with partnership agreements plans and FNST standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Define volunteer opportunities, needs, and identify gaps</li> <li>○ Coordinate volunteer activities from a centralized point based on management plans and agreements</li> <li>○ Build FTA capacity to recruit, mobilize, and retain trail volunteers throughout the state</li> <li>○ Build relationships with other trail volunteer groups around the state, with focus on youth groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Statewide Volunteer Capacity Study : Survey Results and Workgroup Findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Status:</b> Statewide Volunteer Capacity Study workshop scheduled Dec 12<sup>th</sup></li> <li>○ <b>Need:</b> FNST Coalition review of Workshop outcomes</li> </ul>
<p>Manage projects and allocate financial and human resources in a coordinated and systematic effort based on agreements and standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Establish system to define and prioritize projects to include full partner/ coalition involvement</li> <li>○ Allocate resources based on deliberate decisions and priorities</li> <li>○ Fully utilize partner participation as defined by agreements (above)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ FNST Coalition Review of 2014 RFP's</li> </ul>	

*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	2014 Deliverable	Status / Needs
Official route of the FNST published to help people understand how to access the trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Publish trail route from start to finish (see completion goal)</li> <li>○ Collaborate with local partners to promote access to the FNST</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increase access to FNST map by updating on-line and paper resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Status:</b> Current route of the FSNT available on-line</li> <li>○ <b>Need:</b> Source of current paper maps available for consumers</li> </ul>
Create and define FNST brand, branding standards, and communication protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Naming protocols (i.e. appropriate acronym)</li> <li>○ Create branding/ graphics standards and communications protocols (how FNST is described)</li> <li>○ Monitor for consistency</li> <li>○ Include in all agreements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Include public relations and communication protocols in new MOU Certification Agreements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Status:</b> New communication protocols available in Public Relations Plan and Prezi/Powerpoint for public presentations</li> <li>○ <b>Need:</b> Engage FDOT in statewide sign planning and trailhead standards</li> </ul>
Create message, maps, materials, and merchandise; distribute through variety of media and to a variety of constituency groups that represent diverse recreational users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Define diverse constituency groups and “gate keepers”</li> <li>○ Create materials for public consumption – hard copy and electronic</li> <li>○ Train and engage constituency groups in promotion and outreach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continue to update FNST Map App through ArcGIS</li> <li>○ Create FNST specific app</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Need:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Define needs for FNST app (access, reporting, use...)</li> <li>○ Source for FNST maps and merchandise</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Implement public relations campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Define publics and target markets (both current and potential)</li> <li>○ Define outreach strategies, including four major statewide outdoor/ trail days or events</li> <li>○ Implement and update</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continue distribution of PR plan components through on-line media (Prezi, powerpoint)</li> <li>○ Create calendar of trail days/major events in 2014</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Need:</b> Development of 2014 Trail Days Calendar</li> </ul>