



Florida National Scenic Trail Coalition

Data Development Workshop

27 January 2011

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 the Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST) Data Development Workshop is for knowledgeable representatives of FNST land management agencies and other resource experts to identify the natural resource characteristics for each trail segment that are the context for visitors' recreational experiences. The group will also develop standards for infrastructure in each natural resource category that are consistent with and appropriately enhance the recreational experience.

The goals of the workshop are to compile a current data set of natural, cultural, and recreational resources; discuss trail infrastructure; locate interpretive resources; and identify information gaps. Additionally, suggestions for a set of recommended standards for trail and infrastructure development appropriate to the natural resources of the trail and the visitor experience in that setting are welcome. The data sets and standards will provide participants a better understanding of the trail as a national resource and the network of resource experts associated with the trail throughout the state.

Participants

Workshop participants included trail land management agency representatives with personal knowledge of trail resources and/or condition, as well as state experts in natural and cultural resources in the trail corridor and social aspects of trail utilization.

- Carmen Sanders, Southwest Florida Water Management District
- Cathy Briggs, Apalachicola National Forest
- Colby Sanders, Apalachicola National Forest

- Colleen Kruk, Southwest Florida Water Management District
- Dale Allen, Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation
- Dave Prichard, Eglin Air Force Base
- Edwin McCook, Suwannee River Water Management District
- Heather Pence, Office of Greenways and Trails
- Jim Schmid, FNST, National Forests in Florida
- John Waldron, Florida Division of Forestry
- Judd Goodlin, Florida Trail Association
- Kent Wimmer, Florida Trail Association
- Megan Eno, FNST, National Forests in Florida
- Mickey Thomason, Office of Greenways and Trails
- Richard Noyes, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Stephes Demetropolis, Florida Division of Forestry
- Steve Carpenter, Florida Division of Forestry
- Susan Jeheber-Matthews, National Forests in Florida
- Tyler MacMillan, North West Florida Water Management District
- Zach Wetzels, Florida Park Service

Overview of Workshop

Introduction

The Florida National Scenic Trail Data Development Workshop, hosted by the Florida National Scenic Trail program of the National Forests in Florida, was held on January 27, 2011, at Mission San Luis, Tallahassee, Florida. Representatives of all land management agencies and organizations with a segment of FNST on their property were invited to participate and 11 organizations attended the workshop.

Methods

The focus of the workshop was to develop a natural resource basis for providing a consistent, quality experience for recreationists on the trail. The same system will provide a consistent, trail-wide framework for evaluating and prioritizing trail development and management projects, allocating resources to projects, and engaging funders to invest in this unique national resource.

Prior to the workshop, all land management agencies and organizations with a segment of the Florida National Scenic Trail on their property were asked to submit updated information about the location, condition, infrastructure, vegetation, and management plans of the trail, as well as interpretation opportunities (Appendix I, Form #1). Approximately 50% of the agencies had responded at the time of the workshop and others promised data as soon as their schedules permitted. The FNST program and Florida Trail Association (FTA) staff incorporated the data into

the GIS system maintained by FTA and developed individual maps of large segments of the trail that were used as breakout group discussion areas in the workshop.

Participants worked in small groups to first classify the natural resources of segments of the trail corridor, from natural to highly modified (Appendix I, Form #2), and then to develop standards for managing a consistent experience for recreationists within each of the five classes (Appendix I, Form #3). Participants briefly reported to the full group on the results from their small groups and then discussed other concerns and issues about trail management, information sharing, funding acquisitions, and other topics. Worksheets from the small groups were submitted to the FNST program for incorporation into the database and maps. A map of the trail classified by natural resource condition and trail class management recommendations will be presented to the FNST Coalition at its next meeting.

Outcomes

The workshop achieved both its information development and professional networking goals. Participants enthusiastically classified the natural resources of the trail corridor, calling colleagues on their cell phones to get information about segments for which they didn't have adequate personal knowledge. They also thoughtfully developed experience standards, debating different perspectives in the small group discussions. Many participants knew each other from previous professional meetings and collaborations, but it was clear that many had not previously worked together or discussed their work on the Florida National Scenic Trail. The workshop clearly initiated a new chapter in their professional interaction and potential future collaborations.

The natural resource context of 33 trail segments was classified by participants, of which 24% were classified as Class 1 (natural, un-manipulated landscape), 30% as Class 2, 27% as Class 3, 6% as Class 4, and 12% as Class 5 (heavily manipulated urban or rural landscapes). Due to lack of representation from discussion areas 1, 7, and 8, the natural resource context for the far northwestern (1) and southern (7 & 8) areas of the trail were not included but will be developed later. The total number of miles in each class will be calculated when the classified segments are mapped in the FTA geographic information system.

The trail experience recommendations for the five natural resource classes of the trail corridor included consideration of the experience of the visitor on the trail versus the infrastructure that is necessary at access points to ensure safety and provide appropriate staging areas. The FNST program will compile the recommendations, edit them for consistency across the five classes, and present them to the FNST Coalition at its planning meeting. The standards will be used to evaluate how well trail segments meet those criteria and which areas require further development. Whether that evaluation will be conducted by the land management agencies or by a contracted third party remains to be determined.

Next Steps

- FNST program and FTA will organize the data collected in the workshop, incorporate them into the FNST data sets, and return them to participants for review.
- FNST program will explore the potential for 3rd party assessment of the trail to determine which segments do or do not meet standards.
- Participants should contact Megan with ideas for visitor survey locations for 2011.
- FNST program will follow up with agencies that did not submit data in order to complete the trail data sets.
- FNST program will develop maps of natural resource conditions for the trail corridor for the FNST Council planning session.

Closing Comments:

The group had a wide-ranging discussion of the Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST) from the perspective of different agencies, including: management and maintenance needs, resource needs, information management needs and opportunities, and acquisition or rerouting prospects. The following are notes from that discussion.

- How to indicate management property boundaries? Agencies can put signs at boundaries, but there are questions about putting up kiosks or other structures with concerns about fire management impacts.
- Where to store accessible GIS data so agencies aren't spending a lot of time and limited resources re-bundling data for every request? Use Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) site (maintained with University of Florida GeoPlan Center)? It currently has linear trail data but no trailhead data (would like to add it).
- Agencies are now standardizing kiosk design for their lands to better develop their individual brands. They are willing to host FNST information on their kiosks but do not want a separate FNST kiosk. FNST needs to work with agencies on standard design for their information that fits each agency's kiosk design.
- The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) has a large library of interpretive materials that others may use for kiosks or other educational purposes.
- Distinguish trail entrance (no parking) and trailhead (parking, kiosk, etc.) – they can be called primary vs. secondary trailheads, trail access vs. entrance, walk-in vs. parking provided.
- Parking areas must conform to management agency standards.
- Lack of signage and information about what the blazes mean is a problem on FNST.
- FNST is non-motorized and can be multi-use, but the trail isn't multi-use in many places and should remain that way.
- FNST is being used in ways not initially anticipated, mostly not as a through trail. Very few people hike long distances on the trail each year.
- Multi-use is now occurring on many rail trails and canal trails.

- Are National Scenic Trails intended to have multiple uses? The Appalachian Trail, by law, is only for walking, except equestrian use is allowed in Great Smoky Mountain National Park.
- On the FNST non-motorized, multi-use is allowed. Hardened surfaces are often designated as multiple use areas. Specific use is written into the certification agreements with the land management agencies.
- FNST trails will need to be certified as single or multi-use.
- Original certification agreements are 15-20 years old now, with recertification every 5 years or so.
- Agencies should have feedback from the public, which is then brought to the recertification process. However, public review isn't required for the certification documents.
- The trail is intended to be financially, environmentally, and socially sustainable. We must strive to achieve this.
- FNST does visitor counts and surveys every year at different locations and wants input for this year's monitoring locations.
- OGT and FFWCC do visitor counts which could be added to data set.
- FNST is developing a website that will have a land manager portal, as well as a public portal. What would you like to see on the land manager side? Public side?
- On the public aspect of the site:
 1. Provide links to agency websites
- On agency side, what will be useful?
 1. Signage plans and sign examples
 2. Standards
 3. Challenge cost share agreements, post agreements, and plans that may be hard to find in the agency offices.
 4. Coalition meeting minutes, plans, priorities, etc.
 5. Post questions to partners on forum.
 6. Can the website email the partners when new minutes are posted?
 7. Include 911 with access to the website that law enforcement agencies can use to find appropriate contacts for emergency response purposes.
 8. Update information for managing volunteer names, agency staff changes, etc.
- Standard signs should have the GPS coordinates.
- Connecting the gaps in the trail: each agency has its own interests. Can we coordinate that on the website? The land acquisition program is separate from the land management program.
- Some land acquisition funding is available every year via the Florida Trail Association (FTA).
- The major purpose of website is to maintain an updated map that everyone can access. Find a way to use Google Earth - see Ocala Mountain Bike Association for detailed and useful maps on the Google Earth platform.
- Maps: we need to have an app for iPhones.
- What maps should be free vs. paid for?
- People are willing to pay for high quality, value-added maps (waterproof and in color)

- FTA is not sophisticated in marketing, but maps are available at a few places.
- Link or post rules for management agency properties, which differ among agencies.
- OGT is in jeopardy. It may be moved to the Florida Division of Recreation and Parks. It's unknown how that will affect things. OGT has given tremendous support for FNST development.

Appendix I: Data Collection Forms

Form #1: (Pre-workshop) FNST Data Collection Form	8
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Form #3: Natural Resource Class Worksheet	14



FNST Data Collection Form

Instructions: Please complete this form to the best of your knowledge. If the Trail on your property does not fit neatly into a single Trail Management Class, or if you have different allowed uses on different parts of the Trail, please break the Trail in to sections, mark the boundaries for each section on the attached map, and then complete a Data Collection Form for each section.

We welcome any additional resource data you can provide which will help guide the strategic planning process such as:

Updates to Trail Location	Coordinates (.shp or .gpx) or hand drawn corrections to the provided maps
Updates to Trail Infrastructure	New Infrastructure (Photo and GPS location)
Existing Management Plans related to the FNST	Copies of management plans which refer to or provide directives for the FNST (.doc, .docx, .rtf, or .pdf)
Vegetative Community Base Layer	By trail corridor OR land management boundary (.shp)

Please send completed forms to Megan Eno, meno02@fs.fed.us, or by mail to 325 John Knox Rd., Suite F-100, Tallahassee, FL 32301 by **21 January, 2011**. A digital copy of this form is available on the CD including the trail data and maps. Any data that you would like to include in the form of maps, GIS data, photographs, or otherwise are certainly welcome. Thank you!

Land Manager: _____

Section Name (if using more than one form): _____

Contact Person: _____

Current Trail Management Class	
Desired Future Management Class	
Current Trail Maintenance and Operation Class	

<p>Desired Future Trail Maintenance and Operation Class</p>	
<p>Current Allowed Uses (Pedestrian, bicycle, equestrian, etc.)</p>	
<p>Interpretive Highlights</p>	

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Trail Segment Worksheet

Trail Discussion Area (1-8) _____

Participating Group Members:

Natural Resource Classifications:

Class One – Natural, unmodified setting, resource based experience, low to no human impact on the environment. Example, designated wilderness areas or preserves.

Class Two – Natural appearing environment, essentially unmodified setting with minimal site controls or landscape alterations. Example, typical forest or preserve.

Class Three - Semi-natural environment with visible human impacts or manipulated landscapes. Example, wildlife refuges managed for a specific habitat or purpose.

Class Four – Semi-natural environment which is culturally modified yet attractive, potentially rural or agricultural lands. Example, pasture and farm lands or county parks.

Class Five- Highly modified, potentially urban environments where vegetation is planted and maintained. Example, historic rail trails or trails that traverse communities.

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Trail Segment Worksheet

Trail Discussion Area (1-8) _____

Segment Letter (A, B, C....)_____

Natural Resource Classification (1-5)_____

**** Please mark your map accordingly with segment boundaries and Natural Resource Classification**

Describe the major natural resource:

Describe any minor natural resources, if any:

Additional interpretative features: natural or historic/cultural (indicate if existing or potential):

If the segment is a connector/road walk, are there nearby public lands or opportunities for private partnerships for trail development to eliminate the connector? If yes, please describe.

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Natural Resource Class Worksheet

Natural Resource Classification (1-5) _____

Participating Group Members

Please define what the appropriate level of infrastructure for the following categories will be to support the related natural resource base and recreation experience.

Trail Tread and Traffic Flow:

Example: Is the trail tread often indistinct, or continuous, of a natural surface or paved?

Does the traffic flow only allow for one-way traffic, or is it wide enough for two-lane, two-direction travel?

Trail Infrastructure:

Example: Bridges and boardwalks are complex, primitive or non-existent? Placed as necessary for resource protection only or also user experience?

Access:

Example: Trailheads, parking areas and kiosks, simple and low traffic or complex and high traffic area?

Signs:

Example: FNST signs at road intersections, directional signs at trail/road intersections, regulation and resource protection signs, destination and informational or interpretive signs that are appropriate for this user experience.

List an example, or examples, of an area where all of these conditions are met (only if applicable).
