



FROGG

Friends of the River of Grass Greenway



Volume II Issue 3

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Spring 2017



FROGG President Patty Huff with Collier County dignitaries at the Annual Everglades Seafood Festival Opening on Saturday, February 11

Collier MPO Re-allocates Grant Funding and Rescinds 2008 Resolution of Support

Despite the recommendation by all three MPO Advisory Committees (Pathways, Technical and Citizens), Collier Metropolitan Planning Organization Board voted to rescind its support of the River of Grass Greenway at its February meeting and to re-allocate the funds granted for a FDOT Project, Design & Environmental (PD&E) study of the 16-mile stretch between Marco Island to Everglades City (known as ROGG West). Several options for the use of these funds have been sent to the Advisory Committees, one recommended by Commissioner Bill McDaniel: to conduct a PD&E to improve the bridges on US41 east to enhance bicycle/pedestrian safety and sheet flow within the Everglades, based on studies contained in the ROGG Feasibility Study and Master Plan. Approximately \$500,000 had already been spent on wetland studies for ROGG West. The MPO Board will consider the projects at a future meeting.



FROGG made Presentations to the following organizations this past quarter:

East Naples Kiwanis Club

Alligator Amblers Chapter of the Florida Trails Association

Lunch & Learn Program at the Everglades Wonder Gardens in Estero

“Ends of the Earth” Event (run / cycle from Ft Myers to Key West) during their visit to Everglades City



Everglades Bike Ride

A record number of cyclists pre-registered for the 10th Annual Everglades Bike Ride on April 2. This has always been a popular event in south Florida, but this year is exceptional. We thank all participants! We especially appreciate the support of our local community and our friends from Marco Island and Naples. Naples Pathways Coalition provided the route signs and was among the many bicycle clubs throughout Florida who publicized our ride. We wish to extend our gratitude to the City of Everglades City staff, the Sheriff's Department, Captain Jack's for parking facilities, Fakahatchee Strand Preserve, Smallwood Store, Triad Seafood for catering the event, and *The Mullet Rapper* for their generous donation.

Additional support was provided by Skip Riffle with Bikes for Tykes of Naples for free bike repairs and assisting in the 15-mile SAG support team; Amy Ashby and Maureen Bonness for the off-road segment; and Matt Walthour of Island Bikes following the 62-mile route; as well as our local sports physician Dr. John Martin. This event could not happen without the wonderful volunteers who help year after year: HC and Jane Rackley, Linda Williams, Gerianne Freiburger, Marlene Sassaman, Jane Cheffy, Steve & Patty Huff, Maureen Bonness, Joe Bonness, Steve & Linda Koerny, Dino Barone, Cathrine Hatch, Dayna & Andrew Fendrick and Tara Saathoff-Wells.

Friends of the River of Grass Greenway: Dedicated to providing a safe corridor across the Tamiami Trail with the focus on environmental education and stewardship.

News Along the Tamiami Trail

West End - Site visit with FDOT from Naples to Everglades City

At the request of FROGG, the Florida Department of Transportation staff made a site visit on March 22 along the Tamiami Trail from east Naples (SR951) to Everglades City (SR29). FDOT Traffic Specialist Troy Norwood and David Agacinski, Bicycle & Pedestrian Coordinator, drove along the corridor to see firsthand the many safety issues. They were able to observe the road improvements that FDOT has made over the past year with the 3-mile widening of US41 starting at Collier Boulevard in east Naples. This upgrade, completed in January 2016, included adding a designated bike lane and separated multi-use pathways. Continuing east, the 2-mile gap between Greenway and 6L Farm Roads is the “missing link” scheduled to be constructed when the road section is widened to 4 lanes in the future. Recently completed this year is the much needed 2.5-mile multi-use pathway between 6L Farm Road and San Marco Blvd (CR92). As reported in our Winter issue and just beyond Collier Seminole State Park, FDOT installed the “Share the Road” sign to alert motorists that cyclists (and pedestrians) may be on the road, especially around the narrow bridges.

There are still many raised pavement markers (RPMs) within the shoulders approaching the bridges between CR92 (Marco Island east entrance) and Port of the Islands. These markings were placed there by FDOT as a safety measure to notify motorists of upcoming narrow bridges. The “cycle friendly” (audible/vibratory markings) alternatives will replace the RPMs during any resurfacing project; however, this may be a long time in the future.

EAST End - Update on the Tamiami Trail Bridge Project

The contractor continues work along SW 8th Street/Tamiami Trail from east of Osceola Camp to west of the Airboat Association of Florida. Widening operations are underway along the north side of Tamiami Trail west of Everglades Safari Park. Preliminary bridge work is being performed on the south side of the roadway east of Everglades Safari Park. One eastbound and one westbound lane remains open, however intermittent lane closure are used throughout the day. Flaggers are used to direct traffic and temporarily stop one direction of traffic at a time throughout the day to maintain flow. This project is scheduled through December 2018.

For current updates and more information, visit website <http://www.fdotmiamidade.com/current-projects/south-miami-dade/sr-90us-41sw-8-sttamiami-tr-from-e-of-osceola-camp-to-w-of-the-airboat-association-of-florida-1.html> or contact Heather M. Leslie, HML Public Outreach at Heather@HMLPublicOutreach.com (305) 905-5876.

Status of wildfires in Big Cypress National Preserve as of March 28, 2017

The 26,371 acre Parliament Fire is 75% contained. The 25 acre Little Cypress Fire, located north of Interstate 75, is 40% contained. The eight acre Hotline Fire, located in a remote and isolated area of the preserve, is 80% contained. These wildfires mark an early start to wildfire season in the Big Cypress area. With the likelihood of fire growth diminished, fire crews are strengthening containment lines and suppressing lingering hot spots. Fire crews on the ground have been working with single engine air tankers to drop water and aid in suppression efforts on all three fires. To date no injuries have been reported despite the fact that over a hundred personnel were involved in the fire suppression effort. Fire operational impacts have been minimal. Many trails and campgrounds continue to be closed. For update information, visit www.nps.gov/bicy/planyourvisit/fires-2017.htm.

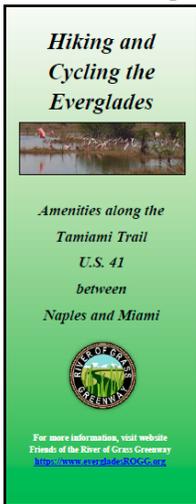
On average, Florida experiences the second highest number of wildfires in the nation. Communities and individuals alike can help reduce the incidence and magnitude of wildfires. For more information about fire activity in the preserve, please visit www.nps.gov/bicy/planyourvisit/fires-2017.htm.

A seven acre wildfire burning in the preserve is urging caution for hikers on the Florida Trail. On the afternoon of March 24 the Hotline Wildfire was discovered. It is the result of a lightning strike. The fire is burning one mile west of the Florida Trail near Oak Hill Campground within Big Cypress National Preserve. The Florida Trail remains open but hikers are cautioned to enter at your own risk. Changing weather conditions may cause increases in fire activity and result in closure of the trail at any time.

For questions contact the Fire Duty Officer: (239) 719-0241

Revised Map / Brochure for Amenities along the Tamiami Trail

FROGG has revised its highly popular Map/Brochure for the Tamiami Trail designed for those wishing to hike or cycle on US41. This new map is intended for



those traveling west to east. The previous map listed the location of the facilities from Krome Ave to SR92 (road to Marco Island). Since the majority of the cycling clubs are biking from Ft. Myers to Key West and

the long-distance cyclists are traveling from northwest Florida along the coastal towns of Florida, then it seemed more suitable to have the legends on the map reflect the west to east route.

After the initial brochure was published, FROGG received comments that the safety issues along the Tamiami Trail should be discussed in more detail; thus, the new brochure addresses specific safety conditions in a full column.

If you have any comments regarding the new map (available online or by requesting via email info@evergladesrogg.org).

We appreciate your input to continue improving information and format with updates to this brochure. Brochures are also available at the Naples, Marco and Everglades Area Chambers of Commerce and various businesses on US41.



The State of Florida, residents and visitors are joining together to drive down bicycle and pedestrian fatalities on our roads. Florida currently ranks highest in the nation for bicyclist fatalities.

The Florida Bicycle Association has spent many years working with our state agencies, local counties, municipalities and law enforcement to educate and promote safety, lifestyle and tourism as it pertains to bicycles. Urge our policy makers to adopt "Vision Zero Florida" to raise awareness and complement the current "Driving Down Fatalities" campaign of our own FDOT.

Sign the petition today at <http://floridabicycle.org/vision-zero-florida/>

Everglades Bike Tours

This year we complete our 10th annual bike ride in the Everglades. It's been a lot of fun, but also a lot of work to organize. We were so happy to have a record year for pre-registrations which is an indication on how many people, young and old, enjoy an "Everglades" experience on the seat of a bicycle.

In exchange for not offering this wonderful event just once a year, we will coordinate monthly bike tours (beginning in September) alternating between on and off-road rides. There are many opportunities to see and learn about our unique ecosystem both along the Tamiami Trail and within the various state and national parks and preserves in this area. If you are interested in receiving more information about these rides, please email: info@evergladesrogg.org.



The Florida Bicycle Association supports statutory provisions to ensure the safety and rights of bicyclists. To achieve this goal, we ask Florida's legislators to consider:

1) Expand the current Move Over law to include vulnerable road users which will replace the current 3-foot passing law for bicyclists, deemed unenforceable by numerous law enforcement agencies. This may also be an opportunity to clarify double-yellow line crossing to pass bicyclists, pedestrians and others.

2) Create Vulnerable Road User legislation that is enforceable regardless of leaving the scene of the crash.

3) Make texting while driving a primary offense for all drivers.

4) Clean up statutory language with regards to definitions of sidewalks, crosswalks, lane position of bicyclists and other matters.

5) Continue to support FDOT's SUNTrail and Complete Streets.

Contact your House Representative and Senator and ask:

To _____

The Florida Bicycle Association is asking for your help to save lives. We know there is a public safety concern with regards to traffic fatalities and it is our hope that the current Move Over law for emergency vehicles [FS 316.126(b)] WOULD be expanded to include vulnerable road users – we feel PEOPLE need to be part of this important law, including first responders and service employees. The inclusion of bicyclists would replace the current 3-foot Passing law [FS 316.083] with a clear, enforceable law. We appreciate your consideration and are willing to work with you as a bill sponsor to improve this law. Please contact legcom@fbamembership.org if interested. Thank you for your time,

(Your signature)

Hiking along the Fakahatchee Boardwalk

by Patty Huff

As we continue our articles on off-road trails in the Everglades (west to east), this issue spotlights the most popular hike along the Tamiami Trail – the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk in the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, just 3 miles east of Port of the Islands Resort. Not only is it an easy hike through the cypress trees to the pond at the end of a pleasant walk, it is full of wild-life and botanical diversity. Along the way, the eagle's nest has always been the highlight for visitors to this cypress dome. This is a bird-watcher's paradise with red-bellied and pileated woodpeckers, catbirds, osprey, red-shouldered hawks, swallow-tailed kites, blue heron, egrets and woodstorks, many surrounding the pond full of alligators. Future plans include an expansion of the Boardwalk with a new parking are, an interpretative center, shell pathways and an elevated walkway. For more information visit the Friends of the Fakahatchee website: <http://orchidswamp.org/plan-your-visit/the-boardwalk>.



6th Annual Key West Bike Ride & Run

by Justin Hanneken



Ends of the Earth Cycling, a ministry of New Mission Systems International, hosted its 6th annual Key West Bike Ride & Run from March 18-23rd, 2017. This benefit ride raised funds and awareness for youth ministry in Kenya. Fifty-three cyclists, runners and support staff made the 5-day trek, stopping in Everglades City, Homestead, Key Largo and Marathon before arriving in Key West at the Southernmost Point on Wednesday afternoon. Serving as Ride Director, I want to take a moment and say a special thank-you to all of our host churches! I'd like to highlight four of our partners on this tour - Paradise Bicycles of Fort Myers, Johnson University (campuses in TN, FL and online), Nu Image Cleaners of Ft. Myers and Plastic Letters

& Signs of Fort Myers.

It was very nice to have Patty Huff come to our worship gathering on Saturday night at Everglades Community Church. She shared an update with our group regarding her work on the River of Grass Greenway. I have been all for the Greenway from the first time I heard about it two years ago. Crossing the Everglades on a 2-lane road has NEVER been an ideal situation for any cycling group. With cars passing at speeds upwards of 65 mph, it is extremely dangerous, especially when the bridges cause the shoulder to disappear. We surely appreciate the work that the Friends of the River of Grass Greenway has done to work on safety issues on US41.

There was a moment when we had made it through Naples, and we were traveling toward the turn for Marco Island. We saw the beautiful bike path that had been created on the right side of the road and dreamed, for a brief minute of what it might look like to see a similar path extend all the way to Miami. It would be the safest option for cyclists to cross our beautiful state. I am surely hopeful that it can be accomplished in my lifetime.

In closing, the KWBR2017 was a huge success. We give all the glory and thanks to GOD - who is truly the reason we ride. It is our hope that the \$46,000+ that was raised through this ride would go to promote and facilitate youth ministry in Kenya. We are always intentional to share stories with our cyclists of how the funds were used and we continue to host these tours for youth globally, in Jesus' Name. For more information about this ride, visit website www.endscycling.com.

Life is like a ten speed bicycle. Most of us have gears we never use. - Charles M. Schulz