



FROGG

Friends of the River of Grass Greenway



Volume II Issue 4

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Summer 2017



Patty Huff, representing the Florida Bicycle Association, presented Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation President Mark Llewellyn with FBA's "Supporting Agency" Award for 2016 at their quarterly board meeting

FROGG recently attended the following meetings:

Gulf Coast Regional Trail Summit in Sarasota

Collier County MPO Advisory Committees: Pathways, Technical and Citizens in Naples

FDOT District One Safe Routes to School in Ft Myers

Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation Board Meeting in Cape Coral

FROGG announces Monthly Bike Rides through the Everglades

The Friends of the River of Grass Greenway has developed new brochures highlighting various bicycling opportunities throughout the Everglades area. These include:

On-Road Tours

Ave Maria / Immokalee, Big Cypress National Preserve, Chokoloskee, Marco Island, Port of the Islands

On / Off Road Tours

Fakahatchee Strand, Loop Road, Shark Valley

Off Road

Bear Island and Fire Prairie Trail in the Big Cypress

In response to the request of participants at this year's 10th Annual Everglades Bike Ride expressing their interest for more rides, cycle tours have been developed with excursions that may be taken individually, in groups or with scheduled monthly guided tours. These tours will replace the annual organized bike event and there will be no charge; however, participants will need to supply their own snacks/water.



The first outing this year is highlighted on *page 4*; it will be a 15 to 20-mile ride along the Tamiami Trail through the Big Cypress National Preserve. We will meet at 9:00 am at McLeod Park in Everglades City on **Sunday, September 10**.

There are so 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. For those unfamiliar with the Everglades, it is important that cyclists be informed about seasonal situations that may affect safety: there are afternoon thunder storms in the summer and there is more traffic in the winter along US41 (Tamiami Trail) which is just a 2-lane highway with high speed traffic. However, the benefits are that it traverses a unique wilderness with zero cross-roads, hills, or chasing dogs; conversely, in the more remote and off-road areas, there are limited amenities, including drinking water. Be alert and be prepared!

All cycle tours (including maps) will soon be available on our website www.evergladesrogg.org; just click on "Events".

If you are interested in receiving more information via email about these rides, please email: info@evergladesrogg.org.

FROGG is committed to establishing the safe use by the general public of US41 across the Everglades between Naples and Miami, focusing on safety and environmental education and stewardship for those hiking, walking, and cycling through south Florida and the Everglades.

News Along the Tamiami Trail

WEST End - Naples to Everglades City

FROGG Board President Patty Huff met with Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District One Secretary L K Nandam and members of his staff in April to discuss the safety issues along US41 in Collier County between Naples to Everglades City. This was a follow-up meeting after the March 22 site visit along the same section of the Tamiami Trail with FDOT representatives. 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. FDOT stated that they would get back with us on the scope of the widening along US 41 and also look into what can be done regarding the signing/markings along US 41.

EAST End - Update on the Tamiami Trail conditions and the Bridge Project

When FDOT District Six repaved the area east and west of the Miccosukee Village, they reinstalled the raised pavement markers (RPMs) in the shoulders. According to the FDOT “The project’s main objective was to extend the service life of the existing asphalt pavement and safety-related features along the corridor. The design provides a balance between pavement improvements and safety enhancements for all modes of transportation along the project limits. The existing paved shoulders are not designated bike lanes. Because of the existing width constraints on the bridge structures within the project limits, a rural narrow bridge treatment was applied to both approaches in order to comply with FDOT Design Standard, Index 17359.”

Raised pavement markers are considered a hazard to cyclists and in other Florida districts cycle friendly alternatives have been implemented, including audible/vibratory markings; these are not within the shoulders but on the white edge line. FROGG will continue to work with District Six to try and improve safety conditions for both pedestrians and bicyclists.

BRIDGE PROJECT: The following is the latest information regarding the bridge construction east of the Miccosukee Village on the Tamiami Trail: beginning June 13 the project contractor will prepare to place traffic on a newly widened section of the roadway from Everglades Safari Park to east of Osceola Camp; only one travel lane will be open on this section of Tamiami Trail. Once the switch is complete, one eastbound and one westbound lane will be open on the north side of this section of roadway. Allow extra time to reach your destination. PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS SCHEDULE MAY CHANGE DUE TO WEATHER OR UNEXPECTED CONDITIONS.

Additional information is available on the Florida Department of Transportation’s website: <http://www.fdotmiamidade.com>. You may also contact Construction Public Information Specialist Heather M. Leslie at 305-905-5876 or email her at Heather@hmlpublicoutreach.com. Drivers/cyclists are encouraged to call 511 before they travel, or log onto www.fl511.com to get real-time traffic and lane closure information.

FROGG Logo on Exhibit at the Museum of the Everglades



The Museum of the Everglades, one of the five Collier County Museums, will be recognizing the art of Jürg (George) Furrer from Switzerland. Jürg designed our ‘frog’ mascot and was a frequent visitor to this area. Sadly, Jürg passed away in May of 2014, but he left us a legacy with his design of the frog on the bike. He was a great supporter of our idea for a non-motorized pathway separated from traffic along US41. He understood the importance of educating more visitors about the wonders of our area and advocated for the environment and stewardship. Our FROGG logo will be included in the exhibit and will be on display in the Pauline Reeves Gallery at the Museum of the Everglades at 105 West Broadway in Everglades City during the months of September and October. An opening reception will be held on **Saturday, September 9**, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Please join us in the Everglades to remember Jürg and his love of our history and natural environment.



Action Alert for ROGG

If you believe ROGG should remain on the Florida Greenways and Trails System (FGTS) Opportunity and Priorities map, call (850) 245-2939 or email: Christine.Small@dep.state.fl.us on or before **June 30, 2017**.

The Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) is updating the FGTS Plan, and the Opportunity and Priority Maps and they are seeking your input!

The FGTS Plan establishes the vision for implementing a connected statewide system of greenways and trails for recreation, conservation, alternative transportation, healthy lifestyles, a vibrant economy and a high quality of life. The updated FGTS Plan and maps will guide implementation of the connected statewide trail system from 2018 through 2022.

Due to expressed opposition by the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, the Collier County MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) and the Miami-Dade TPO (Transportation Planning Organization) rescinded their earlier support for the River of Grass Greenway project.

The idea for the River of Grass Greenway from Naples to Miami was originally encouraged by entities throughout south Florida.

FROGG's purpose has always been to focus on safety and environmental education and stewardship for those hiking, walking, or cycling through south Florida and the Everglades. We will continue to work with the FDOT to improve the road conditions for this route so that pedestrians and cyclists who currently utilize US41 to travel from Naples to Miami will be safe.



*Celebrating 20 years
thanks to our members*

The Florida Bicycle Association supports statutory provisions to ensure the safety and rights of bicyclists.

To achieve this goal, FBA asks Florida's legislators to consider the following:

1. Expand the current **Move Over** law to include vulnerable road users.

a. This consideration will replace the current 3-foot passing law for bicyclists, deemed unenforceable by numerous law enforcement agencies.

b. This may also be an opportunity to clarify double-yellow line crossing to pass bicyclists, pedestrians and other vulnerable road users.

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 related matters.

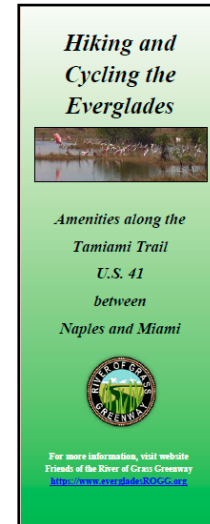
5. Continue to support FDOT's SUNTrail and Complete Streets initiatives.

Support safe cycling! Visit FBA's website online to learn more about the Florida Bicycle Association and its advocacy programs www.floridabicycle.org.

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Map / Brochure for Amenities along the Tamiami Trail

Our popular Map/Brochure for the Tamiami Trail is currently available at bike shops around Naples and Marco Island.



Copies can also be found at the various Chamber of Commerce and businesses along the Tamiami Trail. It is designed for those wishing to hike or cycle on US41.

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, this map is shown from west to east.

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. Please visit our website for this and other maps/cycle tours and information along the Tamiami Trail:

www.evergladesROGG.org.

Cycling along the Tamiami Trail in the Big Cypress National Preserve

by Patty Huff



One way to experience the Big Cypress and the interesting cultural sites in the area is to cycle from historic Everglades City east on the Tamiami Trail (US41) through the Big Cypress National Preserve. Parking is available at McLeod Park across from the Rod & Gun Club (pictured left) in the center of town or at the Everglades Area Welcome Center in Carnestown (named for Barron Collier's wife Juliet Gordon Carnes and son Samuel Carnes Collier) at the intersection of US41 & SR29. From this point, cycle east for just two miles where you'll discover one of Florida's oldest tourist attractions: Wooten's has a live alligator show and animal sanctuary housing panthers, a tiger, otters, snakes, and over 100 alligators (www.wootenseverglades.com). Back on US41 continue riding east

for .7 miles to the Big Cypress Swamp Welcome Center. Here you will learn about the natural and cultural history of the area. Facilities include a bookstore, gift shop, and public restrooms. Park rangers will provide information about the Preserve; also visit website <https://www.nps.gov/bicy/planyourvisit/big-cypress-swamp-welcome-center.htm>.

Back on the Tamiami Trail, take a right for 1½ miles to the smallest post office in the United States. In bygone days this building in Ochopee was just a tiny shed until 1953 when a fire destroyed the general store and post office; it was then converted into a post office which is still in use today. Along the Tamiami Trail, you will be traveling on shoulders; be very cautious as you approach the narrow bridges.

Another ½ mile down the road you'll discover the Skunk Ape Headquarters (<http://www.skunkape.biz/>) located at the Trail Lake Campgrounds. You can't miss it with the large likeness of a panther and a skunk ape in front. You may want to pick up a few Everglades and Native American souvenirs in the gift shop and see 400 lb "Goldie", the 22-ft python, and the talkative parrots. If you're in the Everglades overnight, check out their chickee cottages and campsites (<http://www.evergladescamping.net/>).

Continuing east on US41 for two miles the next stop (and our turn around area) is the H.P. Williams Roadside Park (on the north side) which has a boardwalk along a canal to spot the alligators and wildlife as well as picnic tables and restrooms. This small roadside rest area is named for Homer P. Williams, an engineer who worked for Barron Collier during the construction of Tamiami Trail in the 1920s.

After so many miles (more if you start in Everglades City), you'll be ready to treat yourself to a cold drink and/or lunch. Two and a half miles back on the north side of the Trail is the popular Joanie's Blue Crab Café offering delicious local favorites, including "Swamp Combo": 2 frog legs, gator nuggets, crab cake, Indian fry bread with Joanie's famous salsa with a side of coleslaw. If you're lucky, Raiford Starke will be there playing his guitar and singing his Everglades country music. Call 1-239-695-2682 before you go; currently the Café is open Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Visit website <http://joaniesbluecrabcafe.com> for more information.



As you ride back to the Welcome Center in Carnestown, look for more gators along the canal; the muhly grass is beautiful during the wet season. In two miles you'll arrive back at the corner of US41 and SR29, turn left for another 4 miles back to Everglades City (only a half hour drive from East Naples or Marco Island); it is an old Florida town purchased from the Storter family by Barron Collier in the 1920s. We have a wide range of accommodations and restaurants (however, during the summer months many cafés close so check online at www.mulletrapper.com for a complete list). Visitors to the area enjoy touring the original Collier County Court House (now City Hall), the Museum of the Everglades, and the Smallwood Store & Museum in Chokoloskee as well as participating in the many outdoor recreational activities.

The on and off-road opportunities for hiking or cycling in the Everglades is extensive and a great way to experience the "real" Florida. The distinctiveness of the Tamiami Trail is that it is not only a regional corridor connecting the two coasts in south Florida but also traverses six of our state and national parks with a variety of off-road spurs to enjoy the wilderness. For more information about hiking and cycling in the Everglades, download a map at <https://evergladesrogg.org/tamiami-trail/>.

The bicycle, the bicycle surely, should always be the vehicle of novelists and poets. –

Christopher Morley

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