



FROGG

Friends of the River of Grass Greenway



Volume II Issue 2

website: www.evergladesROGG.org

FROGG, P O Box 5031, Everglades City, FL, 34139

email: info@evergladesROGG.org

Winter 2017

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Visit us at the FROGG Booth during the following events:

January 6-8
White Pelican Festival
Chokoloskee

February 11-12
Everglades Seafood Festival

February 28
Festival in the Woods
Picayune Strand

(see page 3 for more details)

Friday, February 10
Collier MPO Meeting
Naples, Florida

(see page 3 for information)

Register Now
April 2, 2017
10th Annual
Everglades Bicycle Ride

New FROGG Board Member



Kurtis (Kurt) Tucker, a resident of Miami-Dade, is an experienced, award winning, professional life insurance agent who is committed to providing appropriate, unbiased advice and products to clients. He helps people figure out what coverage makes sense for them based on their particular family or business situation and then seeks out the best the industry has to offer. He understands the trust each person places on their insurance agent to help them obtain high value for their premium dollars.

Kurt received his B.S. in Anthropology in 1977 and his M.B.A. from the University of Florida in Gainesville in 2004. He is married with six children and eight grandchildren (so far), loves cycling and rides with Team Storm Riders in Miami-Dade County. As a young man, he raced bicycles in Florida and in Germany.

If you are interested in becoming a Board member of the Friends of the River of Grass Greenway, please contact Patty at (239) 695-2397, email your résumé to info@evergladesROGG.org or send to FROGG, P.O. Box 5031, Everglades City, FL 34139.

EVERGLADES BIKE RIDE

Sunday, April 2, 2016

Join us for a ride in the Everglades! Cyclists will have an opportunity of experiencing the ride of their choice, at their own pace. In addition to the ride, participants will be provided a continental breakfast, free bike repairs compliments of Bikes for Tykes of Naples, SAG support, tour of historic Smallwood Store Museum in Chokoloskee, lunch with a special treat of local homemade calamondin cake. All rides start/end in "downtown" Everglades City across from City Hall.

For a short ride, there is a 15-mile route winding through historic Everglades City built in the 1920s, then cycle across the mangrove-dappled causeway to Chokoloskee Island which arguably has the most colorful history in Collier County. For cyclists wanting a more challenging ride, you can choose from two longer distance routes: the 27-mile off-pavement route includes Fakahatchee Strand, an intimate encounter with nature through pristine cypress forest famous for its orchids and bromeliads; the 62-mile paved route includes 17 miles along US41 in Big Cypress National Preserve through quintessential Everglades with scenes of cypress forests juxtaposed by stunning prairies, then a stretch along CR29 to view the wilds of Fakahatchee, finish with a tour of historic Everglades City and Chokoloskee. For more information, visit www.evergladesrogg.org and click on "Events" to register and for more information.

ROGG's Mission Statement: The River of Grass Greenway is a safe, non-motorized transportation and recreation corridor across the Everglades between Naples and Miami that provides opportunities for education, stewardship, and preservation of the environmental, historic, and cultural assets of this unique area.

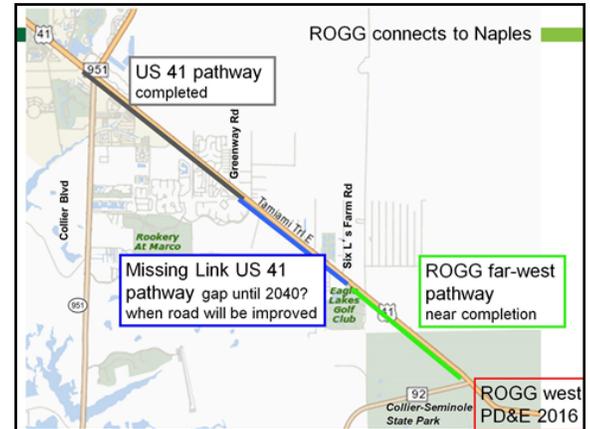
The Missing Link

Congratulations to FDOT for completing two significant projects that enhance the safety factor for those walking, hiking and cycling along U.S.41 from east Naples to Collier-Seminole State Park .

The first project (from Collier Blvd to Greenway Road) was completed in early January when this road section was widened to six lanes and included a separated 10' shared-use sidewalk.

The second project was the 2.3 mile separated multi-use pathway from 6L Farm Road to San Marco Road (CR92) which just opened in December -- a welcome alternative for cyclists, joggers and pedestrians living here or visiting our area.

The "missing link" is the 2-mile section between Greenway Road and 6L Farm Road, which is part of Collier County's 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan (programmed but not yet funded). If you are interested in commenting about this segment, contact D'Jaun Harris, District One Community Liaison, Florida Department of Transportation Southwest Area Office, at djuan.harris@dot.state.fl.us.



News Along the Tamiami Trail ...Florida Department of Transportation

West End

New Share the Roads Signs: As a result of FROGG's communication with FDOT and our commitment to ensure safety along US 41, two "Share the Road" signs were recently installed: one at Collier-Seminole State Park (facing east) and the other at the corner of US 41 and SR 29 (facing west). We applaud FDOT for listening to our requests and working together with FROGG. It should be noted that many people "share the road" along Tamiami Trail, not just cyclists. There are fishermen on or near the bridges, photographers and bird-watchers who stop and walk along the highway to view the wildlife. Share the road is for everyone. We will continue with our efforts to provide safe travel and use for everyone.



Photo courtesy of FDOT

RPM (Raised Pavement Markers): There are still many "bad" RPM's 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 (*see photo and article on page 4 regarding current RPM's*).



Cycle friendly "good" alternatives could be implemented (*as shown on the left*). FDOT replaced the old RPM's during a resurfacing project last year between Port of the Islands and CR29. These Audible/Vibratory Markings are used instead of the RPM's for the narrow bridge treatments and are not within the shoulders but along the white edge line. At FROGG's urging, FDOT's Traffic Operations staff has agreed to look into removing the "bad" RPM's where feasible. However, not all get removed. We will continue communicating with FDOT about these safety features.

EAST End

Currently there is a resurfacing project east of Loop Road with one lane traffic; the overall project is scheduled for completion through March 2017. In addition, the FDOT and the National Park Service have started the design-build process of two new bridges along the Tamiami Trail from east of Osceola Camp to west of the Airboat Association of Florida (approximately between 8 miles and 11 miles west of Krome Avenue). This project will provide additional freshwater flow within Everglades National Park and improve the ecological conditions in the park and in the central Everglades, north of Tamiami Trail. The first phase includes the widening of the roadway on the north side with an estimated completion date of February 2017. One lane may be closed during non-peak daytime and nighttime hours. Flaggers will be used to help guide drivers through the work zone from east of Osceola Camp to west of the Airboat Association of Florida. Note for cyclists: there are barriers on the shoulders of the road so the only option is to ride in the traffic lanes.

The construction of the two new bridges will be immediately south of the existing roadway and the bridges will touch down near Everglades Safari Park to maintain access to the property. The existing Tamiami Trail roadway will be removed next to the bridges. This project has an estimated completion date of 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.

FROGG Board Members: Dayna Fendrick (Naples) Patty Huff (Everglades City) Scott Shook (Marco Island)
Oscar Rattenborg (Ft. Myers) Kurt Tucker (Miami-Dade)

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STOP BY OUR FROGG BOOTH at the following events:

WHITE PELICAN FESTIVAL January 6-8 9 am - 5 pm

Celebrate the majestic White Pelicans at the Historic Smallwood Store on Chokoloskee Island. There will be guided Pelagic Boat Tours (advanced reservations required), as well as presentations, arts & craft booths, authentic Seminole foods, guided walking tours of the Island for the birding enthusiast and entertainment by local musicians. All Pelagic Boat Tours are \$40 for a 1 hr motorized boat tour, or 1½ hr kayak tour. For reservations: (239) 695-0016 or (239)695-2989, or visit <http://www.smallwoodstore.com/gigantic-snowy-birds-visit-florida/>.

EVERGLADES SEAFOOD FESTIVAL February 11-12

Join us for this annual festival in historic Everglades City: music fest, arts and crafts booths and lots of seafood. For more information: www.evergladesseafoodfestival.org

FESTIVAL IN THE WOODS Picayune Strand Saturday, February 18

10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Florida Forest Service sponsors this 3rd annual festival to support the Picayune Strand Restoration Project. Events include wildlife presentations, guided hikes & bicycle tours, children activities, environmental exhibitors and more. The festival will be held in the Picayune Strand State Forest: entrance at the Sabal Palm Hiking Trail Trailhead which is 3.3 Miles East of Collier Blvd. on Sabal Palm Rd. For more information, call Melinda Avni at (863) 612-0776 or Melinda.Avni@FreshFromFlorida.com.

ACTION ALERT !!

Calling all advocates of the River of Grass Greenway! We need your help in expressing your support!

On **Friday, February 10**, there will be an important meeting of the Collier County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Board, and the River of Grass Greenway will be on the agenda. It is imperative that we are well represented at this meeting to show the benefits of the proposed pathway.

Although at its October meeting the MPO Board approved of the non-transportation alternative transportation map (which included the River of Grass Greenway), the Board will again be discussing ROGG so we need to have our supporters be there or write letters.

If you are able to attend (and speak), the meeting will be held at 9:00 am in the Collier County Board of County Commissioners Chambers, located at 3299 E. Tamiami Trail in Naples.

If you are unable to be there in person, please email your support letter to the MPO Executive Director Anne McLaughlin at AnneMcLaughlin@colliergov.net.



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/>



Naples Velo

Naples Velo is the area's longest lasting bicycle club in Southwest Florida which started in 1994 and has recently established a partnership with FROGG to continue our work in providing safe cycling in south Florida. Naples Velo Bicycle Club is a not-for-profit organization promoting cycling at all skill levels and dedicated to improving cycling safety and awareness in southwest Florida by enhancing cycling awareness through advertising and community events and supports the enactment of cycling safety laws, amateur cycling racing, and other charitable organizations with a common mission. **HELP MAKE SAFETY A PRIORITY!** Visit

<http://naplesvelo.ning.com/>

Thank you, Naples Velo,
for being a part of our team !

Tour de Marco 7

Sunday, February 26

Marco Island YMCA • 101 Sandhill Bicycle tour highlighting the bicycle lanes and shared use paths on beautiful Marco Island which contains some of the only hills in Southwest Florida. Proceeds benefit the Marco YMCA. Registrants before April 8 are guaranteed a tour t-shirt. Event details and schedule:

Registration begins day of event at 7 a.m. 30 mile tour starts at 8 a.m. 5 and 15 mile tours begin at 9 a.m. Features 5, 15 and 30 mile options. Visit <http://www.active.com/marco-island-fl/cycling/races/tour-de-marco-7-2017>.



Tour de Parks Sunday, March 26

Friends of the Legacy Trail and the Sarasota Manatee Bicycle Club will sponsor 20, 35 and 62-Mile Scenic Rides. Start and finish at the historic Venice Train Depot, East Venice Ave in Venice. Entry Fees: \$35 thru February 26, \$40 February 27 thru March 23, \$45 After March 23. For information: <https://www.friendsofthelegacytrail.org/2017-tour-de-parks/>

Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)

by Patty Huff



Whether you arrive by car, bicycle or boat, one of the best places to photograph birds is just a short distance from Naples and Marco Island. Driving east from CR92 Ten Thousand Islands NWR is located between Marco and Everglades City. You may also reach the refuge by boat from Goodland or Port-of-the-Islands.

This 35,000 acre refuge was established in 1996 and protects important mangrove habitats and wildlife, including 189 species of birds and approximately 200 species of fish. It is a wonderful place to observe wading birds, shorebirds, diving water birds, and raptors. Common mammals found in the area include raccoon,

river otter, and bottle-nosed dolphins. Endangered species include West Indian manatee, bald eagle, peregrine falcon, wood stork, and the Atlantic loggerhead, green, and Kemp's Ridley sea turtles.

There is a mile long unpaved pathway to walk or ride your bike. Along the way is an observation tower to view the wildlife from above. Come see for yourself and enjoy our southwest parks!

Tamiami Trail by Bike

by Oscar Rattenborg

I had the honor of participating in the 6th Annual “72 Hours to Key West” fundraiser for children this past November. The first day was from Ft Myers to the outskirts of Miami. The route involved smaller roads paralleling the Gulf Coast. Nice riding with lower traffic loads. The Everglades portion was limited to following US 41 from Naples to Krome Avenue outside of Miami.

The Naples to Collier-Seminole State Park road way was a dream with a bike path as well as a wide shoulder next to the road. The wide shoulder allowed for fast bicycle travel without the stops associated with the bike path. The next section to Everglades City was not as pleasant. The bike path stopped and the road narrowed as did the shoulder. To add to the levels of stress, the bridges were narrower than the shoulder and forced bicyclists to merge into traffic to pass. The lead-up to each bridge also had elevated road markings (*see photos*) that jarred your body at each traverse. We won't mention that cars at times pass coming towards you at high speed. To say the least, this section is far from a relaxed country ride – limited sightseeing.



The Everglades City to Shark Valley section is beautiful with many vistas, more birds and alligators as well as options to explore the Miccosukee culture. The road shoulder is in better condition and lacks the raised markings.

Shark Valley to Krome Avenue has new pavement with nice shoulders. The only challenge is the water control structures which narrow the road. Not as natural an environment, but still enjoyable. After 130 miles, the Miccosukee Resort (where we had reservations for the first night) lights were a welcoming sight.

The proposed River of Grass Greenway could make this adventure both safer and more enjoyable. A separate path would allow for more of a focus on the beautiful nature than marking the next car passing you. It would be like riding the beautiful path at Shark Valley with the nature of the Everglades surrounding you. I bet that many organized events as well as bicycle tourists would embrace the River of Grass Greenway as a safe and rewarding adventure. Currently, many bicycling touring companies would rather send you across SR 80 to Lake Okeechobee than attempt US 41.

For more information about this ride, visit website <http://72hourstokeywest.com/>.

Every time I see an adult on a bicycle, I no longer despair for the future of the human race. H. G. Wells