

The Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail (L O S T)

Quarterly Update November 2002
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A partnering project brought to you by the...

- Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)
- United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)
- Florida Trail Association, Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST)
- and the many other county, city, nonprofit and citizen partners...

...who made this world-class trail possible!

Status of DOT Segment One Trail Development:

Segment One consists of the 28 miles of trail situated between the: "St. Lucie Canal in Port Mayaca (Martin County)"... and the "Kissimmee River at Okeetantee Park (Okeechobee County)"

The Florida Department of Transportation executed the contract authorizing the Design Build Team to begin Segment One. Designs are underway. Construction is expected to begin late 2002 or early 2003.

Status of DOT Segment Two Trail Development:

Segment Two consists of the 36 miles of trail situated between: "The Caloosahatchee River at Alvin Ward Park in Moore Haven (Glades County)"... and "City Park in Pahokee (Palm Beach County)"

Segment Two has been Short Listed to three design build teams that will bid for the contract. Team selection is currently scheduled for February 3, 2003, with an expected contract execution date of March 28, 2003. Segment Two will include pedestrian bridges at the Hillsborough and Miami Canals.

Maintaining Foot Traffic During Construction:

Construction will occur in segments of approximately five miles, with each construction segment situated between existing access points. When entering a construction area, hikers will be greeted by signs and construction staff directing them to hike on the toe of the dike. If hikers are just starting out they will have the option of using the toe of the dike or hiking in the opposite direction. DOT continues to maintain a great presence and close communication with all involved communities and agencies.

Florida's biggest and longest running hiking event, the "Big O Hike" around Lake Okeechobee, begins **November 23, 2002**. For information on this and Other FTA/Lake Okeechobee activities contact Hike Coordinator Paul Cummings: cummingssh@juno.com or 9887 Cross Pine Ct., Lake Worth, Florida 33467, (561) 963-9906.

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Organization Highlight- FTA Pioneers: "We Blazed the LOST Trail"

The Trail's Beginnings –

The Florida Trail Association (FTA), a nonprofit organization made up of volunteers, working in cooperation with the United States Army Corps of Engineers, established the *Lake Okeechobee Segments* of the Florida Trail. Each of the four segments has been marked with blazes and has a written "hike plan" to direct hikers to sights of interest and around water control structures.

The FTA segments on Herbert Hoover Dike are: Lake Okeechobee North, map # 36; Lake Okeechobee West, map #37; Lake Okeechobee East, map #38; and Lake Okeechobee South, map #39. For information on Florida Trail segments statewide, or for membership information, visit the FTA website at www.florida-trail.org. For trail information select "Hike the Trail" then "Florida Trail Descriptions" or go directly to: http://www.florida-trail.org/Trail_Descriptions/FNST_Desc/fnst_desc.html

Today, FTA is working toward completion of a continuous hiking trail the length of the state. Each trail segment is blazed and maintained by FTA volunteers. When complete, the Florida Trail will be 1,300-miles long, running from Big Cypress National Preserve in south Florida to Gulf Islands National Seashore in the western panhandle of Florida.

In 1993, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers certified the Okeechobee segments of the Florida Trail as part of the Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST). The FNST is one of eight national scenic trails in the U.S. To date, several segments of the Florida Trail have received the National Scenic Trail Designation. The U.S.D.A Forest Service is providing millions in acquisition dollars and multiple staff to assist FTA as this great undertaking is completed.

Cross Section of the Multi-tread, Improved Trail Surface:

Improvements along the top of the dike will include an eleven-foot wide asphalt multipurpose trail surface adjacent to a three-foot-plus wide natural hiking surface. At the request of the Florida Trail Association: 1) The separate hiking tread will be installed on the lake-side of the asphalt tread; 2) The paved surface will have a light color to reflect heat; and 3) The hiking surface will be scraped smooth, compacted and sodded. Hikers currently walk along the service road ruts where they often encounter ankle-biting dips, spine testing loose rocks, and toe-grabbing stubs of mowed vegetation.

This multi-tread, multipurpose trail will attract citizens and visitors who will venture outdoors for healthy, wholesome recreation while enjoying the natural vistas as well as the welcome mats at diners, lodging, eco-tours, grocery stores, gas pumps and specialty shops in all the surrounding communities.

...End of November 2002 Update

If you would like to be added to the list to receive this quarterly update via email, send your request by email to rick.halvorsen@dep.state.fl.us or contact the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Greenways and Trails at (850) 245-2052.

The next quarterly update will be distributed in January 2003