

# The Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail

Quarterly Update April 2002

Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 2002

## 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!**

## The Trail's Beginnings -

The Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail (LOST) began as the Okeechobee Segment of the Florida Trail. The hiking trail was planned and made popular by its parent organization, the Florida Trail Association. In 1993, the Okeechobee Segment of the Florida Trail was dedicated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service as a segment of the FNST.

## The Existing Trail -

Today, as a segment of the nationally recognized FNST, the LOST trail boasts 110 miles of hiking trail on the USACE service road atop the 35 foot tall Herbert Hoover Dike. The USACE maintains the dike and service road, and provides several primitive camping sites and covered shelters along the trail.

## Future Roles and Responsibilities -

In the mid-1990's, the FDOT began a series of public meetings to discuss local interest in an improved trail surface that would be suitable for all recreational user groups. In December of 1999, representatives of FDOT, USACE, FDEP and SFWMD met to define agency roles for implementing what was then called the Lake Okeechobee Segment of the Florida National Scenic Trail.

## Making "Circumnavigation" Possible -

SFWMD is coordinating with the FDOT to allow safe passage across or around the many water control structures managed by the SFWMD. Currently, trail users can only "circumnavigate" the lake by using FNST maps, which reroute trail traffic to public roads, past the water control structure, and back onto the dike.

## A Rose by Any Other Name -

As time went on, the popular name for the trail became the "LOST" trail. Some folks are still looking for a more noble or elegant name. Others like the romantic notion of getting LOST for the weekend on the **Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail**.

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## **Dateline March 2002 -**

FDOT has completed the bid package for a design/build that will provide up to 60 miles of resurfaced trail and safe passage at water control structures. These improvements are funded through 12.5 million dollars of local and statewide Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty First Century (TEA 21) enhancement funds. TEA 21 enhancement dollars are the state's share of Federal road funds set aside for non-motorized alternative transportation routes, historic transportation sites or museums, and scenic transportation projects.

## **Dateline Summer 2002 -**

This summer, FDEP will submit its forth annual legislative budget request (LBR) for funds to resurface the remainder of the trail. This LBR has not been funded to date, however it is hoped that the FDOT's success in resurfacing half of the 110-mile trail will generate the support needed to fund the balance of the resurfacing.

## **Dateline August 2002 -**

August 2002 is the date selected by the Florida Department of Transportation to award a contract for the design/build of two sections of resurfaced trail. The first section of resurfaced trail will begin on the north side of Port Mayaca and continue approximately 30 miles north and west around the lake to Okee-Tantie Recreation Area. The second section to be resurfaced will begin at Belle Glade and continue south and west around the lake towards Clewiston and as close to Liberty Point or Alvin Ward Park as existing funds will allow.

## **Dateline December 2002 -**

FDOT has scheduled construction of the first 30 miles of trail resurfacing, from Port Mayaca to Okee-Tantie, to begin by December 2002. Once the cost for paving the first thirty miles is determined, FDOT will schedule resurfacing from Belle Glade, as far as funds will allow, towards Alvin Ward Park.

## **Community Calendar -**

The next LOST quarterly update will include a community calendar announcing meetings and other events directly related to the LOST trail. If you have a LOST meeting or event that will occur between July 1 and October 21 of 2002, please call or email OGT with the meeting topic, date, location and contact person's telephone number. OGT's contact information is listed below.

**...End of April 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](mailto:rick.halvorsen@dep.state.fl.us) or contact the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Greenways and Trails at (850) 488-3701.**

**The next quarterly update will be distributed in July 2002.**