



**New Trail Towns
Designated, Florida
Greenways and Trails
5-Year Plan Approved**



Florida's emerging [Trail Town program](#) continues to expand with the addition of three new towns that were designated at the September 14 [Florida Greenways and Trails Council](#) meeting in Titusville.

Malabar, located at the southern end of Brevard County along Florida's East Coast, was designated due to its vigorous efforts to establish walking, bicycling and paddling trails through its conservation areas. The town has an active [Trails and Greenways Committee](#) that works to connect their trail system to neighboring towns and they came together to build an impressive trail shelter, an ideal spot for a rest break or picnic or to take refuge from a storm.

Vilano Beach, located just north of St. Augustine along Highway A1A, has developed a wide range

Fall 2018

Celebrate Florida Greenways and Trails Month!



October is Florida Greenways and Trails Month and that means drier, cooler days—perfect for getting outdoors! Take some time to explore a wooded path, ride a paved rail-trail, or glide down your favorite river or stretch of coastline.

The [Office of Greenways and Trails](#) (OGT), within the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Recreation and Parks, welcomes this annual occasion to highlight the variety of local and regional trail activities throughout the state and their health and economic benefits.

For paddling enthusiasts, several statewide events are scheduled, leading up to November--Florida Paddlesports Month. These include the [Paddle Florida Suwannee River Wilderness Trail trip](#) Oct. 19-24, and

of amenities for bicyclists on the [East Coast Greenway](#) and paddlers on the [Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail](#). The town has wide paved trails on both sides of their main boulevard along with directional signage on every block.

Clermont, located at the halfway point of the [Florida Coast-to-Coast Trail](#), provides numerous amenities for trail users such as restrooms, shade, information kiosks, way-finding signs, water fountains and showers. A "Meet in the Middle" trailhead is planned and will be complete in 2019. In addition, motels, restaurants and a pedestrian-friendly downtown can easily be accessed from the trail.

Several other towns are working with the Office of Greenways and Trails on Trail Town applications.

At the September 14 meeting, the Council also designated a site for trail access to the 11-mile Upper Tampa Bay Trail from Westchase Medical in Tampa. This designation allows trail users to park and safely access the trail from a designated area. In addition, the Council approved the Florida Greenways and Trails 5-Year Plan. This plan will guide OGT through 2022 as it works to establish and promote multi-use trails throughout the state. A major focus of the plan is on regional trails and partnerships.

SUN Trail Momentum

several guided day trips in Florida state parks. And don't forget the [Paradise Coast Blueway Festival](#) November 17-18 in southwest Florida. Also, 16 paddlers are taking part in the annual [Apalachicola RiverTrek](#) Oct.9-13 to support the Apalachicola Riverkeeper.

Bicycling events are highlighted by the October 13 [Spaghetti 100](#) bicycle event east of Tallahassee and the [Gainesville Cycling Festival](#) Oct. 20-21.

All types of trails are being celebrated at the [Florida Trail Association National Trails Festival](#) in Deland this weekend. Nature lovers and outdoor enthusiasts are paying homage to the 50th anniversary of the National Trails System Act at this free event.

[Florida State Parks](#) are offering a variety of local trail-related events. [Find an event](#) near you! Keep checking the [Florida Greenways and Trails Community Calendar](#) for scheduled trail events throughout the year, and the [online trail guide](#) for places to go. Florida has more than 10,000 miles of land-based trails and 4,000 miles of paddling trails that provide enormous benefits for Florida's economy and tourism and the health and well-being of trail users.

The Future Belongs to Trails!



Continues



by Robin Birdsong, FDOT
SUN Trail Coordinator

Implementing trail projects into an integrated statewide system requires coordination and a concerted effort. Florida lawmakers established the [Shared Use Nonmotorized \(SUN\) Trail program](#) in 2015 under [Section 339.81, Florida Statutes](#) and directed the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) to make use of its expertise in providing a safe comprehensive statewide transportation network and to implement the program. The SUN Trail program provides funding for expanding transportation options by developing paved multiuse trails for bicyclists and pedestrians as a component of the Florida Greenways and Trails System.

Momentum for connecting trails continues with the progression of project phases of the nearly \$100 million allocated through the SUN Trail program from 2016/17 to 2018/19. Most recently, construction of the [Timucuan Trail/State Road A1A Multi-Use Path](#) began August 22. This \$2.7 million SUN Trail funded project will connect the Ft. George Trailhead and Huguenot Park in Jacksonville. Connecting to the new Pierson Elementary School, the SR 15 (US 17) trail opened in August.

By Eric Draper, State Parks Director

On a recent visit to the [Cross Florida Greenway](#), park manager Mickey Thomason took me on a boat ride through a section of the old Cross Florida Barge Canal. Mickey has been a steward of the greenway for over a decade, and he knows its 110 miles better than anyone. Cruising down the canal, we spotted lounging alligators and an osprey clutching a fish in its talons. When we passed Rodman Campground, campers waved at us from the shore. We saw Buckman Lock, a massive piece of Cold War-era infrastructure that looks out of place among the water and forest.

The lock is a reminder of how the land that is now the greenway was once destined to be an environmentally-disruptive canal spanning the length of the state. Times have changed. The greenway is now Florida's most-visited state park and a model for greenways and trails across America.

There are many changes coming for Florida's trails. The Office of Greenways and Trails has developed a plan for the continued expansion and improvement of trails throughout the state. People in the Trail Town communities of Dunedin, Titusville, Vilano Beach, Clermont and Malabar know that parks and trails are a great investment of their time and money. Projects like the [Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail](#) and the [Florida National Scenic Trail](#) — along with parks such as the Cross Florida Greenway — are making residents happier and healthier and attracting visitors from around the world. As Florida's trail network grows, local economies and quality of life grow too.

The Victorian thinker John Ruskin once referred to railroads as the "iron veins" and "vital arteries" of society. At the beginning of the industrial age, the construction of a barge canal or railroad could transform communities along their routes. In the twenty-first century, trails are bringing downtown districts back to life and getting people outside to exercise, shop and enjoy each other's company. According to Dunedin Mayor Julie Ward Bujalski, residents see "the [Pinellas] trail as the main artery of our community." Railroads and canals once shaped Florida, but the future belongs to trails.

Additional SUN Trail funded projects, including the eastern most section of the [Palatka-to-Lake Butler State Trail](#) in Putnam county and the last gap of the [Palatka-to-St. Augustine State Trail](#) in St. Johns county will open this fall. A celebration for the latter will coincide with the [St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Summit](#).

Other funding sources continue to close gaps in the SUN Trail network. New sections of the [Florida Coast-to-Coast Trail](#) are opening across the state. Volusia County recently held a [grand opening celebration](#) for 20 miles of the [East Central Regional Rail Trail](#). Stay tuned for opportunities to celebrate Brooksville's [Good Neighbor Trail](#) extension and for the new section of the [Capital City to the Sea Trails](#) connecting the [Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad State Trail](#) and Wakulla High School. The [FDOT website](#) features more information about FDOT funding and projects.

Paddlesports Training Set for Fall



The Florida's Paddlesports Program trains people to be skilled leaders so paddling is safer and more enjoyable for everyone and establishes more volunteer paddling trip

Florida Trail Gateway Program Returns



By Halle Goldstein, Florida Trail Association intern

The Florida Trail Association Gateway Communities Program is underway again! This program works by connecting hikers on the 1,300-mile [Florida National Scenic Trail](#) to towns and small businesses along the Florida Trail, and vice versa. Partnerships are being created with the town councils and business owners in these communities.

This program will not only bring awareness, safety, and accommodation to Florida Trail hikers, but also provide publicity, tourism, and economic growth to businesses such as restaurants, campgrounds, and local grocery stores in these towns.

Information about each Gateway Community and partnered businesses will be made available on the [Florida Trail Association website](#) in the coming months. Stay tuned!

Hikers can also look forward to the Florida National Scenic Trail Passport Program. As seen on the Appalachian Trail and El Camino de Santiago in Spain, this passport program is a fun way for hikers to visit Gateway Communities and have a memento of each place they visited along the Florida

leaders in Florida's state parks. Since 2014, 87 people have completed the course and several of these trained volunteers are leading trips for the public in Florida state parks.

The training involves 16 hours of intense instruction with expert American Canoe Association (ACA) instructors who coach attendees through the rigorous ACA Coastal Day Trip Leader course. This course focuses on risk assessment and group management.

The next training will take place October 30 - November 2 at [Lake Louisa State Park](#) near Orlando with a limited class size. To learn more, contact doug.alderson@dep.state.fl.us.

Trail. Gateway Communities and businesses will be housing most of these collectible stamps. The Florida National Scenic Trail Passport Program will be launched in the fall.

Communities and Trails



by Brian Smith, Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation

Guide to Establishing Paddling Trails Released



OGT recently completed a guide to [Establishing and Promoting a Paddling Trail or Blueways System](#). The guide will be useful to local governments and paddling groups. Florida has 67 state designated paddling trails featured on the OGT website, covering more than 4,000 miles.

As Florida's long-distance trails move forward, the subject of trails is becoming all-encompassing. This began earlier this year with the establishment of the [Trail Town program](#) by the Office of Greenways and Trails. The program moved forward when the [Florida Greenways and Trails Council](#) designated Dunedin, located on the west end of the Florida Coast-to-Coast Trail (C2C), as Florida's first Trail Town last spring. This was followed by the designation of Titusville, located on the east end of the C2C. Both of these communities have embraced the 250-mile regional trail. By designating these first two trail towns, the idea was firmly established that communities are a key part of the trails program.

At the Sept. 14, 2018, Council meeting, the three additional communities recognized - Vilano Beach, Malabar and Clermont - exemplify the diverse community types of this initiative. The five current Trail Town communities show different ways of relating to trails and how they have pursued opportunities that benefit both the community and their trails.

The Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation is pleased

The guide provides information about developing paddling maps and trail guides, trail management, trail promotion and marketing, branding, planning events, and media outreach.

with this evolution and plans to make every effort with our partners to help communities become engaged with their present and future trails. It is rewarding to see people engaged in this way with their communities, especially when they can see a direct result of their participation.

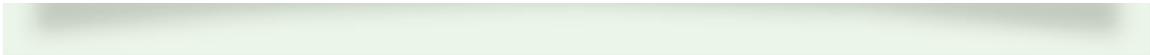
We would also like to congratulate OGT and the Florida Greenways and Trails Council on the adoption of the Florida Greenways and Trails 5-year Plan!

St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Summit Planned

The [St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance](#) is planning a three day celebration of fun, learning and community building for November 15-17 in Palatka, Hastings and on new sections of the Loop. With the completion of the Hastings Gap, this will be a true celebration since the Palatka-to-St. Augustine Trail will now be complete from Palatka to Vermont Heights near St. Augustine, helping to launch a Tri-County Agritourism Corridor in Putnam, St. Johns and Flagler counties.

Outdoor Florida App Available

The *Outdoor Florida app* is a source for finding available recreational opportunities across Florida's diverse local, state and federal lands. By downloading the [Outdoor Florida App](#) or utilizing the maps and resources on the [Florida State Parks Outdoor Florida webpage](#), you can access information about trails, camping, history, beaches, boating, sports facilities and much more.



[View as webpage](#)



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