



Florida Forever Back Country Horsemen, Inc.

Preserving our equine cultural heritage on public lands for today and tomorrow

FFBCH Newsletter January 2008

Croom Gets New Horse Trail



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At the Trail Council meeting on Jan 7, Joe Tyberghein, the Director of Recreation at Withlacoochee State Forest announced that they have added a new trail to the current equestrian trail system at Croom.

WSF and horse people have long recognized that a trail in this area was needed. However, the environmentally sensitive issues within this area presented problems for all trail users. A solution required balancing the commitment to providing quality recreational opportunities while conserving ecologically sensitive areas.

The solution, as described at the Trail Council meeting by

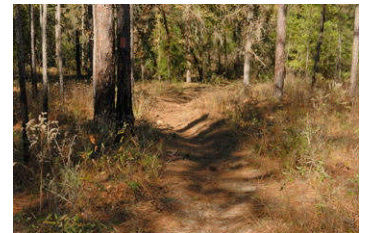
Joe, will be a major reroute of all user trails in that area. That includes a rerouting of the hiking trail and bike trail as well as the addition of the new trail for equestrians.

The new equestrian trail runs from FR 4, just west of FR 5, and winds southwest along a nice single track trail, up and over a ridge and down to what we know as 4B. It turns southwest and connects to the trail for Tucker Hill and Dempsey. This trail provides a much needed connector trail for making loops of varying lengths out of the Dempsey area and the trail head at Tucker Hill.

We will let you know when the trail is open and ready for us to ride.

We would like to thank WSF personnel and especially Joe Tyberghein for working so diligently to provide us this trail. We would also like to thank the Trail Council members for their cooperation with the re-route of their trails.

This solution provides a key trail in the equestrian trail system while protecting the critters that inhabit the critical wetland area.



The new trail is pretty!

FFBCH Kicks Off 2008 Membership Drive

Special Notes of Interest:

- ◆ **General Meeting
January 23, 2008
2:00 PM**
- ◆ **RTT Workdays
Sat, Jan 12, 2008
Wed, Jan 30, 2008**

Happy New Year to all!

Wasn't it just yesterday that we started FFBCH? In fact, it was March of 2007 that we met and formed our new organization.

We were approved as a chapter of the national organization Back Country Horsemen of America in April 2007.

BCH's membership year ends in December and therefore, so will ours.

We are proud of our first year's accomplishments; re-opening portions of the Withlacoochee State Trail for equestrians; supporting WSF to improve the horse trail system and help with the maintenance of the

trail system; and developing horse trail maps for user download on our web-site.

We encourage you to join us as we work with our public land managers to improve our recreational horse experience.

Go to our web-site for a membership application.
www.ffbch.org

FFBCH Organizes Effort to Re-open WST for Equestrians

FFBCH Gets Nationwide Recognition

FFBCH's efforts to re-open portions of the equestrian trail on Withlacoochee State Trail have gained national recognition in Trail Blazer magazine. Writers of two different columns in the magazine have contacted us, asking for information about and pictures of our workdays. Look for our name in their upcoming issues.

The turnout of volunteers for our workdays to re-open the Withlacoochee State Trail for equestrians has been outstanding. We are thrilled and appreciative of all the help and support and enthusiasm that you are all putting into this project. We would especially like to thank Steve Stackhouse, Withlacoochee State Trail Manager for working with us on this effort.

The three workdays we held in 2007 have opened approximately 2 to 3 miles

of trail in one of the prettiest sections of WST.

The next workday is Saturday, January 12, 2008. On that day, we expect to open the section of trail between Nobleton and Croom Rital Road for use by equestrians.

We have created a special email list of volunteers interested in helping to work on the WST. We send out email reminders of workdays and progress reports to the people on the list. If you would like to add your name to our

volunteer list, please send Kathy Thompson, an email

kathomps@gate.net

or call Kathy at
(352) 796-9272.

Another workday is scheduled for Wednesday, January 30, 2008.

Our goal for 2008 is to get the section of trail between Nobleton and Ridge Manor Trailhead open for equestrian use.

FFBCH in 2008 from the President's Saddle

The progress that FFBCH has made since our inception a mere 9 months ago is beyond my wildest dreams and expectations. We have made significant strides in a short amount of time.

Where do we go from here?

What gives the Back Country Horsemen credibility when there are differences between public land managers and horsemen over critical land use issues is BCHA's dedication to service. This model has served well nationwide and it is serving us well in Florida. At the

heart of the BCHA and FFBCH is the willingness of equestrians to volunteer.

Volunteers Make Trails Happen

First is the practical issue – in today's climate neither federal nor state land managers have the resources to build and maintain trails to satisfy the growing demand for equestrian recreational opportunities. If we want the trails, we must pitch in with our time and labor and equipment to help build and

maintain them. Today land managers are not going to provide trails they know they cannot maintain. We must support our land managers if we expect them to provide us with trails.

The second reason is one of fostering good will. By showing we care, by taking care of our trails, by being responsible trail users we prove to the land managers that we are partners they can trust. It is the element of trust that has enabled the BCHA to be so successful in the past. Trust will insure FFBCH's success in the future. The public land

managers are much more willing to work with a trusted partner.

As horse people, our resolution for 2008 will be to get out of our saddles and onto the ground to help with trails.

We encourage you to volunteer as part of the BCHA family and FFBCH. However, any way that you choose to volunteer is fine. Just do it!

Happy Trails,
Truman Prevatt, President

Horse Owners and The Land-Use Crisis from MyHorse.com

If you've ridden or owned horses for more than a decade, you have noticed places you used to ride that have been transformed into houses or malls, barns that have closed as suburbia surrounded them, competitions that were forced to move because their show grounds were sold to be bulldozed, or foxhunts that kept moving their territory farther and farther away from where they used to be.

A 2005 study by the Brookings Institute and Virginia Tech University predicts that it is going to get much worse.

“Land use and land conservation are the most important issues facing horse owners of the 21st century.”

This isn't a study by a conservation group hoping to increase membership by scaring you. This is a study for business executives, predicting how they can cash in on what the authors predict will be a real-estate boom “that, by 2030, will dwarf America's post-WWI build-out.”

Florida is one of the prime areas for this projected development.

This means a significant impact to recreational equestrians--our ability to recreate with our horses, whether it is horse shows, fox hunting or trail riding.

It is a wake up call that we must organize and become politically involved to protect our interest – no one else is going to do it for us.

- ◆ We have to work with our local Governments so we are represented in land use issues.
- ◆ We must work with our public land managers to insure that our public lands remain open to equestrian use.

We are lucky in Florida because the Preservation 2000 and Florida Forever programs have spent 2 billion dollars over 20 years to bank a large amount of public land. These public lands will rapidly become the only areas we will have left for equestrian recreation.

We must organize and work with and support our land managers to help them provide this recreational opportunity. The full article can be found at: http://www.myhorse.com/barn/pastures/horse_owners_and_the_land-use_crisis.aspx#top

Newly Acquired Public Lands in Florida

Colt Creek State Park

Colt Creek State Park and RO Ranch are in the planning and development stage with facilities and trails for equine use. We equestrians have a great opportunity to get involved by volunteering and by providing input in the early stages. We can have a say as to what amenities we would like to see at these facilities.

Colt Creek State Park is located 16 miles north of Lakeland just south of the Withlacoochee River off of State Road 471. Plans are to eventually tie the Colt Creek trail system with the existing Hampton trail system in Greenswamp East. Get more information at:

<http://www.floridastateparks.org/coltcreek/>

Hampton at Greenswamp East

<http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/recreation/areas/green-swamp-east.html>

R.O. Ranch

The R.O. Ranch is a 2,500-acre equestrian park being developed in north-central Florida by R.O. Ranch, Incorporated and the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD). The park is a long-time dream of Frank "Red" and Olive Schulte,

who wanted to share their love of the environment and mules with the public. When the SRWMD established R.O. Ranch, Inc., a Florida nonprofit corporation, the couple gave a \$3.5-million endowment to fund the ranch's operations. Thanks to their generosity and foresight, many generations will have a public place to ride horses and mules, and experience Florida's rich natural environment.

<http://www.roranch.org/>

New for 2008

There has been much to accomplish in 2007 for FFBCH members. In addition to working with the various public land managers to improve the existing trail systems, we have had the all the responsibilities associated with getting a new organization up and running. Priorities often dictated what got done first

and what fell by the wayside. One of the most important responsibilities, that is, establishing FFBCH's identity with a logo, took a long time.

Becky Fulcher was very prompt in providing the artwork for the logo. Thank you, Becky. Kathy Thompson finally learned the software that allowed

the artwork to be converted into a digitized form. (She can move a pixel anywhere now!) Also, big thanks to an artist friend, Marcia Brown, who provided Kathy with input on stylizing the artwork into logo form and telling her where to move those pixels.

We hope you like the logo!



Equine Network List

One of FFBCH's most important accomplishments in 2007 can be credited to Mary Lou Patton. Mary Lou conceived and nurtured the Equine Network List to

its current size of over 1000 names of equestrian people throughout the state of Florida. The network list is an important tool for FFBCH to get information,

updates, and alerts concerning equestrian related issues to numerous people in a timely manner. Whether or not you are a FFBCH member, we would

like to include your name and email address on the Equine Network List. To add your information, contact Mary Lou Patton at [<mamma_lu@yahoo.com>](mailto:mamma_lu@yahoo.com).

Tales on the Trails

FFBCH General Meeting

**Wednesday, 2:00 PM
January 23, 2008**

E Hernando Branch Library
6457 Windmere Road
Brooksville, FL 34602
(352)754-4443

Guest Speaker is Steve Stackhouse, Withlacoochee State Trail Manager. Also, on agenda is discussion of the new trail at Croom.

USDA Census

The USDA will begin mailing out its 2007 Census of Agriculture forms to

insure that the American Horse Industry is correctly counted in the upcoming Census. The tally is done every five years. It counts farms, ranches and their operators. Used to measure land use, production practices, and costs and income, the last Agriculture Census was done in 2002.

If you wish to participate, go to web-site "American Horse Council" then to section "Every Horse Counts". All Census forms must be completed by February 2, 2008.

Upcoming Workdays

Withlacoochee State Trail
Sat, Jan 12, 2008
Wed, Jan 30, 2008

For times and meeting locations contact
Kathy Thompson
kathomps@gate.net

Preservation of Equine Heritage on Public Land Act (S 2283)

This bill was filed in the Senate, Nov 2007 to protect public lands from being closed to horse and pack animals. It is now in committee. The bill

directs the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture to manage the federal lands under their jurisdiction "in a manner that preserves and facilitates the continued use and access of pack and saddle stock animals" on lands on which "there is a historical tradition" of use.

The bill passed the House the last two sessions but didn't pass the Senate. If you support this bill, please make your senators aware.

Or go to:
http://www.washingtonwatch.com/bills/show/110_SN_2283.html#toc3
and let your voice be heard.

**The FFBCH Newsletter is
Published for members and friends
of Forever Florida Back Country
Horsemen, Inc.**

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**We are on the web!
www.ffbch.org**

FFBCH

An equine trail advocacy group representing the interests of equestrians who depend on Florida's public lands for their recreation opportunities.

We address current and future issues that face equestrians in their access to and the use of their equines on Florida's public lands.

Our mission is:

- To perpetuate the common sense use of and enjoyment of our cultural heritage of using horses on public lands.
- To work to insure that public lands remain open to recreational equestrian activity.
- To assist the various Federal, State and private agencies in their development, maintenance, and management of said resources.
- To educate, encourage, and solicit active participation in the use of the public land resources for equestrian users and the general public commensurate with our cultural heritage.

Why join FFBCH?

FFBCH is an affiliate of the Back Country Horsemen of America, a national organization established in 1973 and active in 22 states. By joining, you will add your voice to those of more than 15,000 of your fellow American horsemen and horsewomen who are interested in improving our equine recreational opportunities on public lands. The number of FFBCH members is all-important as we work to maintain the privilege of using and enjoying our equines on Florida's public lands.

What does FFBCH do?

We are primarily a service organization. We work with public land managers to enhance the equine recreational opportunities in the state of Florida. We do this by providing suggestions for possible trails and assisting with the physical work of maintaining trails.

How can I help?

Volunteers make trails happen. FFBCH members from across Florida volunteer their time to do trail work in their local public lands. Contact us for more information on how you may volunteer your time and skills.

