



Florida Forever Back Country Horsemen, Inc.

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

Special Edition

FFBCH Newsletter February 2008

Tales of Trails—an Update

FFBCH

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Special Notes of Interest:

◆ **Next FFBCH General Meeting will be announced soon for a Saturday in March**

◆ **Pasco County Greenways, Trails & Community Workshop February 5, '08, 6:00 PM**

Happy Valentines Day to all!

We have updated news from the Forever Florida Back Country Horsemen (FFBCH) about the horse trails on which we have been working at the Croom tract, Withlacoochee State Forest, and the equestrian trail on the Withlacoochee State Trail.

New trail now open

The new horse trail at Croom that was announced at DOF's January Trail Council meeting is now open and marked for equestrian use.

Tucker Hill trail rerouted

The trail going north out of Tucker Hill in Croom has been rerouted to eliminate riding in the deep ditches and to make the trail more sustainable for long term use.

WST equestrian trail open to Ridge Manor

The Withlacoochee State Trail for equestrians is now fully open from the Istachatta Store to Croom Rital Road. It has been bush hogged from Croom Rital Road to Ridge Manor and can be ridden.

The trail we rode unofficially for years in Croom – on closed forest road, 4A is in an environmentally sensitive area that DOF wants to protect. For the past year it

has been entirely closed to horse use. However, we needed a horse trail near that area to support equestrian loops out of Tucker Hill. The new trail will satisfy that need.

The road 4A is still closed at both ends to all types of use. The new horse trail uses the middle portion of 4A. There are fallen trees blocking 4A at the Tr 3 intersection and signs saying no horses where 4A intersects with Tr 4. Please be good citizens and honor the obstructions to keep the road closed and the no horse signs.

From Tucker Hill, access the new trail from the newly marked single track trail at the bottom of the Tucker Hill trail. It will connect you to 4A. Ride east on 4A to where the hiking and bike trails intersect with 4A. Take care as this is a busy intersection. We then ride over a very pretty hill on what used to be the hiking trail to connect to Tr 4.

On Tr 4, the access to the new trail is about 1/4 of a mile west of where Tr 5 intersects with Tr 4 and about 1/2 mile going east from where Tr 3 intersects with Tr 4. The trail goes south very close to where the hiking trail and biking trail

crosses Tr 4. Our new trail does not cross Tr 4, so please turn either right or left when approaching Tr 4 from the Tucker Hill area.

DOF and FFBCH worked together to reroute the trail off Tucker Hill to avoid the badly eroded areas. It is still in the same area but follows the contours of the hill and uses side slope to make the trail more sustainable and minimize future erosion. The erosion problem occurs because of the way the trail was originally laid out--that is it went straight up and down the fall line. On fall line trails, the water builds up both volume and velocity and washes away the soil and creates ditches. The best way to prevent erosion is to move fall line trails onto the side slope. That way you get the water off the trail before it can build up volume and velocity.

Today, with the growing usage and demand for trails, both the land managers and the users are understandably concerned about having trails that are sustainable. Organizations like the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics have been created to address those concerns.

(Cont'd on page 2)

Tales of Trails—an Update (cont'd)

The Leave No Trace Center was formed at the bequest of Federal land managers to help develop methods and educate users in ways to minimize the impact of our use on the land. The Back Country Horsemen of America were a charter member on the Board of Directors of the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics and is the official equestrian trainer for Leave No Trace.

Both the Tucker Hill trail and the 4A trail were rerouted according to the best design methods possible, given that we were constrained to a starting point and finishing

point and a corridor defined by the current trail. FFBCH brought in a certified Trail Master from Georgia to help lay out the reroutes. On both trails the side slope was used as much as possible so the water drains across the trail rather than down the trail. Where the trail does climb it uses sweeping, climbing turns to maximize the side slope layout. The layout also uses "grade reversals" to dump any water than might run on the trails so it will not pick up volume and velocity and cause erosion.

On the trail off of 4A these climbing turns start by going north up the long hill.

The rerouted Tucker Hill trail is basically two long sweeping, climbing turns. In both cases we have maintained the same trail corridor – the new trails, however, are much more sustainable than the old trail treads. The new layout will minimize the maintenance required and shed water so it runs across the trails therefore minimizing erosion.

These trails are laid out to be sustainable and safe for riders and horses of all skill levels. They are also quite pretty. However, it is up to each of us – the users - to ride the trails as they are laid out. If users ride the

trails as they are laid out – erosion will not be an issue. However, cutting trail and creating areas of disturbed soil on the fall line will cause the trails to be prone to erosion. Eventually the cut trail will look as bad as the current Tucker Hill trail.

It is up to each of us to be responsible users and good stewards of our public lands.

Ride long, ride hard, ride safe and respect the land on which you ride!

Truman Prevatt, President of FFBCH

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.

Pasco County Greenways, Trails & Community Workshop

February 5, '08, 6:00 PM

Pasco county, with assistance from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program, is seeking citizen input for a

trail planning effort and would like the public's help to determine the needs, potential routes, recreational uses, and points of interests for a countywide greenway and blues system.

There are two workshops. One was already held on January 31, 2008. The other will be held February 5, '08, 6:00 PM at the Charles McIntosh Civic Center/American Legion Hall

37745 Church Avenue, Dade City, Florida.

Please RSVP by calling or emailing: Melinda Butz, Pasco County Parks and Recreation Department, (813) 929-1290 or mbutz@pascocountyfl.net

Guest Speaker Praises FFBCB

Steve Stackhouse, Manager of Withlacoochee State Trail was the guest speaker at FFBCB's general meeting in January.

In his presentation to our group Steve said that he has 3 main groups, bikers, hikers and equines using the rails to trails. Steve is the only full time employee with help from 2 part time employees. It is a daunting task trying to keep up with the regular maintenance needs of the heavily used 46 mile park. The 46 mile park varies in width from 50 to 200 feet wide along its entire stretch. It has a 12 foot wide, paved trail with park like side usage and equine trails.

The state purchased this land in 1990. After the

2004 Hurricanes, the equine trail became impassible in most places. With so little help, Steve can barely keep up with the regular maintenance of grooming, trimming and clean up of the trail. Constant vandalism adds to his workload and has made it nearly impossible to devote the time and resources necessary to clear the equine trail after the storms.

Steve said that the bikers are the main group that uses the paved trail system. More impressively, they have an organized group of approximately 400 volunteers that help him maintain the paved portion of the trail.

With no group of equine volunteers to help, the

equine trail fell further behind in its need for attention. In the past, Steve heard much complaining about the condition of the equine trail. However, no one stepped up to help him improve the situation.

Then along came Florida Forever Back County Horsemen who volunteered to clear this pathway.

Steve is thrilled with our efforts. Steve has been working along with us and together we have cleared the WST for equestrian use from the Istachatta General Store just north of Nobleton south to where I-75 crosses the WST. The trail has been bush hogged and will soon be clear all the way to Ridge Manor. That is 10 miles of newly opened

equestrian trail in one of the prettiest sections of the WST for our use.

Steve plans to tell his upper management in the Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Greenways and Trails, the people in the Florida Department of Agriculture, and whoever else will listen to him about the wonderful job FFBCB has done volunteering and working on the WST trail.

Steve said many kudos to our volunteers for joining with him, rolling up our sleeves, and working hard to solve a problem.

Don't forget to pay for your 2008 FFBCB membership!

Wasn't it just yesterday that we started FFBCB? 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 does 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 helping 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

**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.

