



Florida Forever Back Country Horsemen, Inc.

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

FFBCH Newsletter December 08

Breaking News

Trail Pace

FFBCH invites you to join us for our first annual Trail Pace on **Saturday, February 21, 2009** in the Croom Tract of the Withlacoochee State Forest, Brooksville, Fl. This is your chance to ride our beautiful equestrian trails in the Croom forest on a well marked course. Proceeds from the event will help fund FFBCH workdays and trail maintenance expenses.

The Trail Pace is similar to a hunter pace, but without jumps. We will have various divisions so that you can complete at a pace that is comfortable for you and your horse. The trail will be 8 to 10 miles. The exact distance of the trail will be a "secret" to all riders. The riders coming closest to the pace time for their division will be the winner of the division.

You will have the opportunity to learn how to pace your horse's "mph" and to find out what your horse's pulse rate is at the beginning and end of your ride.

For more details on this event, check our website at www.ffbch.org/Trailpace

DEP Checks Coggins on Greenway

We have received word that DEP is stepping up patrols at the Greenway, specifically looking for Coggins violations. Riders were recently checked and informed that it is a misdemeanor and \$258 fine if we are not carrying our Coggins **at all times--** including on our saddle while riding on the trail.

Connector Trails Croom Forest to RTTs approved

We are happy to report that equestrians now have two marked trails to connect Croom forest to RTTs. The northernmost trail extends the trail that emerges onto Croom-Nobleton Road across the road and onto RTTs. The southern trail connects the horse trail to Tr 10 and then on to RTTs.

These connector trails give us access to a very nice regional trail system that includes Croom forest, RTTs and Townsend Regional Park horse trails.

Reminder
Always carry your Coggins papers with you when riding or driving your equine.

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Special Notes of Interest

General Meeting December 4, 2008
Golden Corral Brooksville, Fl
Dinner 6 PM
Meeting 7 PM

Volunteer Day to Mark Trails in Conner Preserve

Equestrians, our effort to get equestrian trails designated in Conner Preserve has paid off.

Now we need your help to mark these trails

Workday is scheduled for **Saturday, December 13 at 8:30 AM** to mark the equestrian trails. Meet at the entrance to the Conner Preserve on State Road 52 just east of U.S. 41. Please contact Mike Bradley for more details and to let him know that you plan to help.

randemacres@verizon.net

The preserve, includes wetlands, pine flatwoods, cypress domes, freshwater marshes, uplands and pasture. It also contains the headwaters of Five Mile Creek. The hope is to connect this tract to other property in the area such as the Serenova Preserve and Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park.

The weather has turned cool. The bugs are gone. It's time to turn our attention to riding our horses and preservation of our right to enjoy the outdoors with our equine partners. FFBCH organized in March of 2007. A lot has happened since then and a lot of things are currently happening. I want to take this opportunity to discuss where we are and where we are going.

First and foremost I am happy to say our relationship with the Withlacoochee State Forest has improved over the past two years. We are now working together as partners to provide the opportunity for quality equestrian recreation. This was our number one priority when we organized. It has been a little bumpy along the way, but we feel encouraged that we can move forward from here.

The state land management agencies have suffered significant budget cuts. They have hiring freezes. This impacts their ability to support trails. The difference between the

BCHA and other equestrian groups is the BCHA and its chapters such as FFBCH are dedicated to helping land managers through providing volunteer support. Last year alone the BCHA provided over a quarter of a million volunteer hours at a value of in excess of 5.6 million dollars to land managers nationwide. The opening of the equestrian Rails to Trails equestrian trail, the establishment of new trails in the Tucker Hill area and the rerouting of the Tucker Hill trail last year are good examples of what can be accomplished when we work with our land managers.

Some upcoming volunteer events – covered in detail in this newsletter – are the work day at the Conner Preserve to mark new horse trails. We will soon start to work on the Rails to Trails – on maintenance of the current trail and extending the trail both north of Townsend Park and south of Ridge Manor. With the new connector trails from the Croom Horse Trail system we now have a "regional

trail system" with multiple trail heads and over 60 miles of trail. We are kicking off a program to aid WSF in monitoring the horse trail system to help determine where maintenance is needed.

Last year most of the expense of working on trails was supported by the individual members – be it fuel, keeping the chainsaws running, new chains, etc. We have established a budget line item to cover such and to have available trimming equipment such as loppers. We are planning a fund raiser "Trail Pace" to help fund that effort.

The Southeast Equestrian Trail Conference is coming to Florida in 2009. It will be in Gainesville in July. I urge everyone that can to attend.

We have elections coming up. The elections for our officers are staggered to maintain continuity. This year we will be electing Vice President and Secretary and one director. Those that might be interested see the article to get more information. You

will vote by mail.

An organization is only as strong as its members. We have succeeded because we present a united face for equestrians. Through our numbers we have made progress with land managers in Central Florida. We helped turn around SWFMD on the Conner Preserve. We worked with WSF to enhance the trail system in Croom and connect it to RTT – and this work is continuing because of your support.

When your membership renewal for the new membership year arrives along with your ballot – consider the importance of our mission to your enjoyment of your equine partner on trails on your public land. Without our help the state land management agencies do not currently have the resources to support the type of trail systems we need and desire. With your support we can make a difference.

FFBCH Election of Officers by Louise Bower

Now that the presidential election is over it is time to think about the FFBCH election.

This year the offices of Vice-President, Secretary, and 1 Board of Directors slot are up for election. These positions serve for 2 years and will begin their

terms at our annual meeting to be held sometime during the 1st quarter of 2009.

As chairman of the nominating committee I'm asking for members who are interested in running for office to please contact me. We will close

nominations at the general meeting in December.

I can be reached at horsecrazy@gowebco.com or 352-344-9867

Thank You, Louise Bower

**FFBCH Welcomes
New
Organization Member
Suncoast Trail Riders**



'Tis the Season

FFBCH General Meeting

Thursday, December 4, 2008

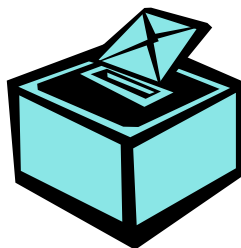
Golden Corral in Brooksville, Fl.

**Dinner at 6:00 PM
Meeting Starts at 7:00 PM**

Topic

VOLUNTEERS COUNT

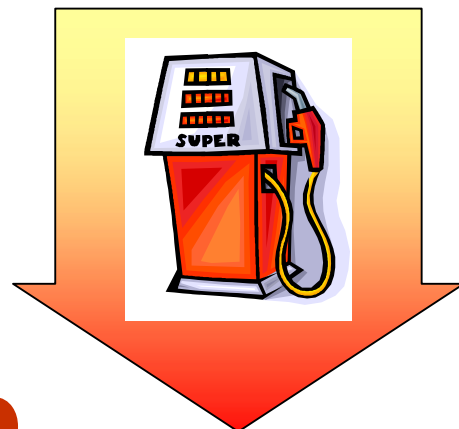
Vote



Renew



Membership



Southeastern Equestrian Trail Conference Comes to Florida in 2009

The Southeastern Equestrian Trails Conference (SETC) will be held July 9 to 12, 2009 in Gainesville, Florida.

Making Sents out of Sustainability

The purpose of SETC is to bring together people who are concerned about the future of the natural and cultural heritage of the trail experience from the back of a horse. SETC strives to foster equestrian self-evaluation, learning and the development of a conservation force that will influence land-use policies at local, state, regional and national levels.

From its humble beginnings several years ago, this annual gathering of trail advocates, trail volunteers, trail managers, public agency officials and trail planners and policymakers has grown to include hundreds of participants. Every year, the SETC increases its influence in bringing the horse trail world together to help understand, shape and solidify trail policies and agency-user cooperation.

Learn how to effectively work with land managers. Learn trail design and construction. Discover great places to ride/drive in the Southeast. Find out how to handle trail issues. Learn the whys and wherefores of

trail using, maintaining and building.

Green Horses

The idea of a meeting of equestrian trail minds throughout the Southeast grew several years ago (2000) with an initial conference at Clemson University. SETC stayed at Clemson till 2003, at which time it started its rotation around the South East. Florida started the rotation July 2003.

The SETC now includes 13 states whose horse councils or other equine trail organizations meet to learn from one another as well as agency and professional trail personnel. A wide mix

of participants and different user groups brings to the forefront trail issues at every level, and the event has grown to national importance. The Federal Highway Administration has supported the conference from the beginning and recognizes it as the only national conference with this scope.

For more information visit the website at:

www.SoutheasternEquestrianTrails.com

This year's conference is dedicated to the Heritage Horse of Florida, the Florida Cracker horse.

Croom Trail Reconnaissance Program by Mary Lou Patton

Johnnie Arquette, our Withalcoochee State Forest Trail Ranger, has given FFBCH, the green light to implement a Trail Reconnaissance Program.

I have volunteered to chair this program.

The program will entail

monitoring sections of trails in the Croom Tract on a monthly basis, for anything that needs attention, such as trees down, branches hanging low, trash, etc.

I need your help to name trails and volunteers to monitor sections of trail.

For instance, the trail from

FR7 to FR5 and FR3, I am told is called Camelot. The trail from FR 2 to FR3 is the Woodpecker Trail. By naming the trails, if someone gets injured, this will make it easier to tell people how to find us.

So all you out there that have been riding these trails

much longer than I, please email me at

mamma_lu@yahoo.com

or phone me at 352-799-9272. Let me know what you call your favorite trail and if you are willing to monitor it.

Our Sympathy

We are sad to report that one of our members, Steve Binikos passed away recently. Our deepest sympathy goes out to Steve's family and friends.

FFBCH and all equestrians wish to express our great appreciation for the help and support that Steve so generously gave us in our efforts to re-open the Withlacoochee State Trail.

Jaws was Steve's tractor. Steve graciously provided the driver, Dana, and the fuel at no cost to us. Without his support our task would have been much more difficult.



Fire Destroys Living Quarters Trailer

Recently a number of our FF BCH members attended an endurance ride in the southeast. This annual ride is held on a private farm and ordinarily has over 100 riders with their rigs camping in fenced pastures.

This year an extraordinary amount of rain fell the day before the ride. Everyone

was grouching about the weather. Rigs were getting stuck in the mud and had to be pulled out with a tractor. The rain stopped by ride start Saturday and by late Saturday the temperature started dropping, becoming very cold by Sunday morning.

On Sunday morning a living



Report on Fire by Lindsay Campbell

Sunday AM folks started leaving early. There was some concern as to how many would have to be pulled to the road. But by 8:30 at least 2/3 had successfully exited the property.

One rig, stuck from the day prior to the ride, awaited the arrival of the tractor to be hauled out. At 8:30 I was just finishing dressing when I heard screams and yelling and people running. I heard the frightful words "Fire!" I exited to find myself facing an LQ trailer rapidly being engulfed in flames.

Ugly black smoke was swirling off the roof and the west wind was whipping it toward a steel stock trailer about 30 feet away from the

LQ. The stuck LQ was rapidly yanked from in front of the burning rig by the tractor; a pretty impressive feat of attaching chains and hauling butt. The owner of the steel trailer ran to her truck and got it away from the trailer, as it was not attached.

The LQ owner's truck unfortunately was attached to its trailer. The LQ's metal was already too hot to disengage the truck, plus the keys were in the burning trailer. A few people got close enough to try fire extinguishers and a nearby water spigot with a hose was utilized, all to no avail.

Attention was turned to hosing the pasture around the LQ and hosing the side

quarter horse trailer suddenly caught on fire. Fortunately no one was injured, but the trailer was completely destroyed. It was a very frightening, eye-opening experience, and under different circumstances could have been much worse.

One of our FF BCH



Pictures by Teddy@runningbear.com

of the steel trailer parked beside it. That trailer had a lot of hay on board.

Two pops like gunfire occurred a few seconds apart. The two propane tanks under the gooseneck had, thank goodness, blown their safety valves from the heat and dissipated the dangerous propane into the air like all tanks are now designed to do.

The fire department arrived at 8:45. They were able to save the LQ truck although it did sustain some heat damage. The LQ burned almost to the ground by 9:00. The inside was totally gutted, including the tack. It was heartbreaking to see. But so lucky no one was hurt and all horses safe.

members who camped in the same pasture as the trailer that caught fire has given us this report. She has also included some of the lessons learned from this accident.

This is valuable food for thought for all of us who go camping with our horses.

The culprit was a Mr. Buddy Heater, a catalytic (no open flame) type heater. It was a nice 2007 LQ, but it had only electric for heat. The owner had no generator and there were no hook ups, so she had the buddy heater on for warmth. These gadgets are supposedly designed to shut off if they fall over. So it is thought that the heater melted and started the fire as this has reportedly occurred in other incidents with this type heater.

All of us offered our condolences. A ride home for the daughter and the two horses was found, and the owner, as we left, was on her cell phone, tears running down her cheeks, breaking the news to her husband.

Lessons Learned from the Fire

1. We will freeze before we ever use a buddy heater in an LQ. If we absolutely HAVE to use one it WILL NEVER be left on while unattended.
2. Aluminum LQs burn unbelievably FAST.
3. Always have an extra set of truck keys AND KEEP THEM ON YOUR PERSON AT ALL TIMES. An insurance tag with policy and phone numbers on the key ring is very useful.
4. If safe, leave a truck key on the dash and keep your truck unlocked. If someone has to move it in an emergency they can do so.
5. When you are camping, disconnect your truck from the hitch, chains, power and breakaway lines. Leave the truck in position under the trailer so that it can drop onto the hitch to move the whole rig quickly if necessary.
6. A hitch coupler that automatically locks when it is fully on the ball will save precious seconds since you won't have to crawl into the truck bed to lock it on.
7. Electric or hydraulic jacks are easy and quick for moving the trailer on and off the hitch.
8. If possible keep 100 or more feet of distance between you and the next LQ, including your awning. Awnings burn very well.
9. NEVER block anyone in.
10. Get a trailer with a gas furnace as well as electric heat strips in it. Gas furnaces run off the propane tanks on the trailer and the battery on the trailer runs the fan to disperse the heat.
10. Make sure your truck and trailer are fully insured. Take photos of both on the inside and outside of the trailer, including the tack area. Keep the photos in a strong box or other fire proof, burglar proof place. NOTE: If your trailer policy does not cover the contents of the trailer, your homeowner's policy might so check with them, too as LQs are considered second homes.
11. Be extremely careful to contain your camp fires as well. A wildfire could endanger an entire campground.

Landfill Threatens Neighborhood Next to Croom Forest

In 1998 Judge Springstead ruled that 26 acres at the end of Wildlife Lane on the south end of Croom Forest could be used as a Construction and Debris (C&D) landfill. The property has changed hands and the new owner is selling out to a C&D landfill company. The new owner stands to gain 36 million in dumping fees.



70 semi dump trucks a day are projected to be driving each way on High Corner Road and Wildlife Lane to dump their loads of C&D debris in the landfill.

We encourage surrounding neighbors and equestrians to join together to fight this proposed landfill.

Currently DEP is doing its investigation to decide whether approval can be granted. To influence this decision we must call all Brooksville County Commissioners and the DEP.

Steve Morgan of DEP Steve.Morgan@DEP.State.fl.us is in charge of reviewing the application. We have the right to be informed of all proceedings. Please submit requests to be informed by email to Susan.Pelz@dep.state.fl.us

The application process takes from 6 months to 18 months. There is an initial review of first submitted questions and then a request for more information. The fact that it is located in a residential neighborhood has no impact on DEP. Their approval is based strictly on environmental rules and regulations. They are not involved in zoning and residential issues.

Zoning and other issues must be addressed to our Hernando County government only.

If DEP approves this application, our next step is to petition DEP General Counsel for denial of this application. If DEP denies

this application, LLC can petition for rehearing.



DEP OFFICE
Program Director
Susan Pelz
Southwest District
13051 N. Telecom Parkway
Temple Terrace, FL. 33637
Phone: (813) 632-7600

For more information about how to support this effort to stop the landfill, contact Becky Swerdloff at tysonah@bellsouth.net

**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:

- ① To perpetuate the common sense use of and enjoyment of our cultural heritage of using horses on public lands.
- ① To work to insure that public lands remain open to recreational equestrian activity.
- ① To assist the various Federal, State and private agencies in their development, maintenance, and management of said resources.
- ① 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 25 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.

