



FROGG

Friends of the River of Grass Greenway

Volume I, Issue 2

FROGG, P O Box 5031, Everglades City, FL, 34139

Winter 2009

website: www.evergladesrogg.org

email: evergladesrogg@hotmail.com

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

ROGG Meeting

to organize

The Everglades Ride

Everyone Welcome !!

Thursday, December 16

4:30 pm

Cracker Barrel at 951 & I-75

If you are unable to attend the organization meeting but would like to help with the planning or participating in the Everglades Ride 2010, please contact Patty Huff at 239-695-2397.

The Everglades Ride 2010

Saturday, March 20

**McLeod Park
Everglades City**

**Register Now
See Details page 4**

**RENEW YOUR
MEMBERSHIP TODAY**

Update on River of Grass Greenway

ROGG receives Top Priority

At the joint Lee/Collier MPO on October 16 the River of Grass Greenway project received top priority for the Design Study west of CR92 and the Feasibility Study between CR92 and CR29. This decision was very important for the FDOT Regional Transportation Enhancement Grant applications that were submitted by FROGG.

OGT upgrades ROGG prioritization

In a recent meeting between FROGG and Florida's Office of Greenways and Trails (www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt), we were informed that the ROGG has been elevated to "highest priority" on their Multi-Use Trail Opportunity Map. This ranking opens funding opportunities through OGT.

Hands Across the Swamp

Patty Huff and Leslie Paris were invited to speak about ROGG before the Everglades Bicycle Club in Miami on November 10. Approximately 50 members attended and were very interested in our efforts. EBC expressed their support and assistance for ROGG.

ROGG receives Letter of Support

On November 13 the City of Marco Island Path Ad-Hoc Committee sent a Letter of Support to the River of Grass Greenway in support of the proposed pathway across the Everglades.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Just a reminder that memberships must be renewed each calendar year. At this time the majority of your membership dues go to provide promotional materials (e.g., brochures) to let the world know about ROGG. Also, applications submitted in December apply to 2010 membership. A new "lifetime" membership category is now available for \$1000. FROGG memberships can be submitted online through active.com. Click on www.evergladesrogg.org, then "join FROGG now."

Biking the Fakahatchee and Picayune Strands

by Craig Woodward

The Naples Mid-Day Optimist Club organized a biking trip from Naples to Everglades City and my brother, Mark, who is a member asked me to join the group. Fortunately, after a very long hot summer, the weather cooled down the first Saturday in November and we all met on Morgan Road about a half a mile down Sable Palm Drive off of SR 951 north of the Veronawalk project. Thirteen guys got their gear together and enjoyed Bloody Marys before hitting the trail.

Knowing that Gulf America Corporation had put in a maze of streets in southern Golden Gate Estates, I decided to bring a GPS as I was concerned that many, if not all, of the road signs would be gone with the government restoration project now underway to restore the Picayune Strand. I also went online to Google Earth and Google Travel and plotted out the proposed route. We left a little after 10 am and headed east on Sable Palm Drive for about 4 1/2 miles, the first part of which was relatively easy on a paved road; but the road worsened as it turned to gravel and eventually died into a large mud flat. We needed to continue due east, but the only options available were to go south down a gravel road, which turned out to be a private driveway, or head north on a meandering gravel road that looked in very poor shape. We headed north, winding our way through open prairie with few trees and miles of open brush and some scrub pine. The dirt road continued to get worse with many potholes and washout areas with remains of filter cloth in most of them; the efforts of a Samaritan who had tried unsuccessfully to stabilize the roadbed. I became alarmed as we were riding mostly due north and I knew that we really needed to head in an easterly direction, then the road started to curve to the east and then south ending up connecting with one of the old platted, but unpaved streets, 78th Avenue SE which would lead us into Miller Blvd. We rode and rode, biking in places through a large washout area that was totally mud (remarkable since it had not rained in several weeks) and thru two voids in the roadway filled with small boulders, literally the size of cauliflower heads. Everyone was riding mountain bikes or hybrids as the route would have been virtually impassible for a road bike.

Checking the GPS, I saw that the route we had taken made a large loop north, east then south to the point

where Sable Palm Drive, had it been extended east to Miller as was once proposed, would have intersected. This loop added three or four miles I had not anticipated. After what seemed like well over an hour on this dirt road we connected with and headed south down Miller Blvd which, considering it was paved in the early 1960's, is still in pretty good shape. Fortunately, while I had been correct to think we would not see any street signs, someone had wisely painted on the road surface itself the names of the avenues we were crossing. Most of the lateral streets have the asphalt removed now, but even with small new growth vegetation the old corridors remain mostly open. I was particularly interested in seeing this, as for over ten years, a title company I own with my brother (First Title and Abstract), represented the State of Florida in their purchases and closings of the literally thousands of parcels of land sold to unsuspecting buyers in the early 60's. It was interesting to speculate, as I rode through the old southern Golden Gate Estates, how many buyers ever really saw the land they purchased? We had heard stories over the years of people given plane rides and the pilots dropping small bags of sand to show them where their property was. Fortunately, I had no time to go exploring for old worthless bags of sand! We made good time heading south as we counted down streets looking for our left turn at 100th Ave South - also known as Stewart Blvd. With the new cool weather and hunting season open, there was activity and we passed by a few trucks full of hunters.

After about 6 1/2 miles, we spotted on the road the spray painted sign for Stewart Blvd. and headed due east. My wife, Bonnie, who has done a lot of long distance biking with me, alerted me the night before that I could expect a strong headwind blowing from the east. That was an understatement. We had no choice but to bike directly into the wind and took turns drafting - a new experience for me on a mountain bike! As we crossed each of the three old concrete bridges, we stopped at each one to rest. Looking north and south at the long dredged canals constructed to drain the land and create the thousands of residential lots it made one rather sad. Fresh water, by the millions of gallons, the lifeblood of this unique ecosystem, is continuing to flow slowly south through these artificial waterways, as it has been moving day and night for close to 50 years into the confluence of the canals, located just north of the old Remuda Ranch, then pouring over the weir adjacent to U.S. 41, under the bridges at Port of the Islands,

into the long straight Faka Union canal, and finally completing its journey thru the Ten Thousand Islands into the Gulf of Mexico. The environmental damage to the Picayune can only be truly understood by comparing it to the Fakahatchee.

As we biked due east on Stewart, we hit the point where the government has now removed the asphalt and the road turned gravel again, making one wonder what logic there is in removing existing pavement on the major arteries which are planned to remain as access corridors? I was glad I was riding a full suspension bike, which is a luxury on jarring bumpy roads. The most eastern Golden Gate canal has now been removed, the bridge is gone and has been replaced with a fill section - giving one a glimpse into the future restoration of the Picayune. At the end of Stewart we stopped and had lunch at a new informational sign describing the Picayune and Fakahatchee Strands and talked to a hunter who suggested we might want to wear orange vests when biking during hunting season! I still had water in my camelbak so I shared bottled water with others, who apparently never learned the cardinal rule of distance biking, especially in the wilderness - bring plenty of water!

After lunch we entered the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve through the western entrance of Janes Scenic Drive. What a relief it was to immediately bike under the shade canopy of large cypress trees, look to the sides of the road and see dark standing water and view a short distance into what can only be described as a primeval jungle. The evaporation of all of this standing water dropped the temperature even more in sharp contrast to the dry, hotter southern Golden Gates Estates. The roadbed improved to a hard packed sand with a small gravel surface - ideal for biking --while the heavy vegetation gave us a relief from the wind. We biked south and east winding thru this State Park and it was clearly the highlight of the trip. As we got closer to Copeland we rode thru the beautiful open prairie running north and south that lies just west of SR 29.

Biking thru Lee Cypress, the old logging camp constructed by the Lee Tidewater Cypress Company in the late 30's and early 40's, reminded me of the first time I had been in this town in 1968. My mother was teaching high school in Everglades City and took me along to visit some students who lived in Lee Cypress. The two memories I have from that visit are of a sign with two arrows that stood at the entrance of the town, one pointed one direction for blacks and the other the opposite direction for whites; and of the old locomotive that sat in the back of town which is

now located at the Collier County Museum in Naples. Even in little towns, where time seems to have passed it by, things have changed.

We biked south on SR 29 crossing U.S. 41 at Carnestown and the rest of the ride was like going home for me. I have a weekend house in Everglades City and every Saturday or Sunday ride a 15 mile loop to U.S. 41 and then to Chokoloskee Island and return back to my home which is on the Barron River. At around 3:30 p.m. we dropped off most of the bikers at the Captain's Table where they had rooms reserved and I headed home for a shower. Later, after most of the bikers had done their part to help the local economy at the bar at the Seafood Depot, everyone came to my house for a party of Everglades City specialties: stone crab claws with mustard sauce and beer! I went to bed shortly after that, while the group headed for Camellia Street Grill (fabulous food!) for dinner and then to Leebo's Rock Bottom Bar to finish off the evening.

The next morning we all met for breakfast at Backcountry Cafe and had a great meal. I was only making a one way trip as I was now home in E-City, but everyone else headed back to Naples retracing the same route - but this time with the wind at their backs; well almost everyone, two bikers called for rides home - one with a sore rear from failure to wear bike pants and the other with sore hands (no bike gloves) and sore muscles!

My one way trip was about 37 miles and took a little over 5 hours at a rather pokey pace, stopping for rest breaks,



for lunch and to check out alligators and deer. The trip is well worthwhile and is highly recommended for those who plan properly, travel in a group, and want to spend a day experiencing the "real" Florida.

Craig Woodward is a member of FROGG and has biked across the State of Missouri on the Katy Trail, down the Oregon Coast, thru Vermont, and in Wyoming. He and his wife, Bonnie, biked 300 miles east across southern France from the Bordeaux region to the plateau of the Massif Central, 150 miles along the Tuscan coast in Italy, in Canada and throughout Florida. Craig grew up on Marco Island and has practiced law there since 1980.

Come Stay and Play in the Everglades!

The Everglades Ride 2010 is will be held on **Saturday, March 20**, in Everglades City. The proceeds will be used to support the River of Grass Greenway and Reach Out Everglades & C.O.P.S., Inc., the local area charity which provides financial assistance to needy families. The festivities will begin on Friday night with music and cookout. This year we are encouraging the riders to come early and stay longer to take advantage of the unique family opportunity that combines cycling, hiking, nature, history and culture of the Everglades area. There will be discounted prices available for participants in the Everglades Ride: hotel rooms, restaurants, kayak trips and swamp walks. Other activities in the area during this weekend include Panther Refuge Week, Art-in-the-Glades, Museums and a Walking Tour of Historic Buildings in Everglades City, something for the whole family. Register before **March 10** to receive a discount for the ride which also includes a picnic lunch in the Park.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

7:30 am Registration at McLeod Park,
Everglades City
8:00 am 62- & 82-mile riders start
8:30 am 50-mile riders start
9:00 am 16- and 23-mile riders start
9:30 am 8-mile riders start
11 to 1 pm Lunch

Please contact 239-695-2397 or Email:
evergladesrogg@hotmail.com for more
information about the events!

Florida Panther Refuge Week

The National Wildlife Refuge Annual Open House will be held on Saturday, March 20, from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Panther Refuge Week is scheduled for March 13 through the 20. Details of events will be available on their website: <http://www.fws.gov/floridapanther>

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome to the following members who have become a "FROGG":

Jerry Van Hecke (Naples, FL)
Andrew Hill (Naples, FL)
Martha Cole (Naples, FL)
Patricia Spencer (Naples, FL)
Craig and Bonnie Woodward (Marco Island, FL)

Friends of the River of Grass Greenway

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION (Renewable every January)

Individual/Family (\$5-50)
-- chose a rate that is affordable for you
 Silver (\$250)
 Gold (\$500)
 Lifetime (\$1000)

*Checks payable to "Friends of ROGG"
and send to ROGG, P.O. Box 5031,
Everglades City, FL 34139*

Memberships are entirely tax-deductible.
FROGG is an entity of the Naples
Pathways Coalition
a 501(c)3 non-profit organization

Name _____

Email _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Alternate Address

Months from _____ to _____

FROGG, P O Box 5031, Everglades City, FL, 34139
website: www.evergladesrogg.org email: evergladesrogg@hotmail.com