

**FLORIDA TRAIL ASSOCIATION, INC.**

**CHAPTER OPERATING PROCEDURES**

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EXHIBIT A: Chapter Membership Affiliation Chart..... 1

EXHIBIT B: Chapter Operating Procedures Addendum ..... 1

## DEFINITIONS

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Associated Chapter</b> | a component of the FTA chartered by the Board which is composed of the members of the FTA who reside within a defined geographic area outside of the State of Florida.   |
| <b>Board</b>              | the corporate Board of Directors of the Florida Trail Association, Inc.  |
| <b>Bylaws</b>             | the Bylaws of the Florida Trail Association, Inc.  |
| <b>Chapter</b>            | a component of the FTA chartered by the Board which is composed of the members of the FTA who reside within a defined geographic area of the state or who are otherwise assigned membership in the Chapter by action of the Board.   |
| <b>Dissolution</b>        | an action by the Board to close down and terminate a Chapter as an organization within the FTA.  |
| <b>FNST</b>               | the Florida National Scenic Trail, a National Scenic Trail established by Act of Congress. The FNST is one of eleven national scenic trails. While the FNST follows the route of the Florida Trail, it officially includes only those segments of the Florida Trail that have been certified by the USDA-FS as meeting the requirements for national scenic trail status as specified by the National Scenic Trails Act. For use in this document the Florida Trail and the Florida National Scenic Trail are interchangeable. |
| <b>FT</b>                 | the Florida Trail, the continuous route of the thru-trail from Gulf Islands National Seashore to Big Cypress National Preserve. It refers to both National Scenic Trail certified and non-certified trail segments. For use in this document the Florida Trail and the Florida National Scenic Trail are interchangeable.  |
| <b>FTA</b>                | the Florida Trail Association, Inc., a volunteer, membership-based 501(c)(3) Florida not for-profit Corporation. The FTA's primary purpose is to develop, maintain, promote, and protect the Florida Trail.  |
| <b>FTA Office</b>         | the FTA Statewide Administrative Office  |
| <b>FTS</b>                | the Florida Trail System, which is composed of trails officially adopted by the FTA that are not part of the Florida Trail. These trails may include loop trails, connecting trails, side trails, and cross trails which are maintained by individual FTA Chapters throughout the State of Florida.  |
| <b>Inactivation</b>       | an action by the Board to pause or stop all or partial activity and order the chapter to remedy any violation or harm.   |
| <b>Member</b>             | a member of the FTA in good standing as defined in the Bylaws Article III.   |

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Membership</b>        | any of the various classes of membership established by the Board as defined in the Bylaws Article III, Section 2.   |
| <b>Sub-chapter</b>       | a component of the FTA chartered by the Board which is composed of the members of the FTA who reside within a defined geographic area of the state or who are otherwise assigned membership in the Sub-chapter by action of the Board. A Sub-chapter is assigned by the Board to a Parent Chapter, which is responsible for organization and oversight of the Sub-chapter. |
| <b>USDA-FS</b>           | the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service   |
| <b>VP of Development</b> | the Fourth Vice President, Development and Outreach.   |
| <b>VP of Trails</b>      | the Third Vice President, Trails of the FTA.   |

**Article I. INTRODUCTION** The Florida Trail Association Chapter Operating Procedures is a governing document of the Board that guides and explains the purpose, functions, responsibilities, and business of FTA chapters. This document serves as a chapter’s guiding directive and replaces the individual Chapter Guidelines or Chapter Bylaws previously used, providing a uniform document for all chapters. Chapter leadership uses these directives and guidelines to understand the chapter’s role in the FTA and to govern its actions for conducting business and communications for the FTA. The Chapter Operating Procedures also includes an Addendum which is a form that chapters complete and place on file for members and other chapter leaders to reference. In the Addendum, a chapter notes its individual preferences not otherwise specified in the document, such as its standing committees, nominations and election schedule, terms of office, times of chapter meetings, etc. In providing a comprehensive guideline for chapters, the Chapter Operating Procedures document serves as a complete reference for all chapter operations.

**Article II. CHAPTER NAME AND JURISDICTION**

**Section 1. Chapter Name** – The Chapter name is approved by the Board.

- A. Members of a new Chapter may, by majority vote at a duly called meeting, select the name of the Chapter and propose it to the Board for approval. The name should reflect the geographical region, scenic character of the natural environment of the area, or hiking and should not be offensive to anyone.
- B. Members of an existing chapter may change their chapter name only for a good reason with justification and after careful consideration that a name change is warranted. The following procedure shall be followed when proposing a name change to the Board:
  - 1) An announcement of the intent to change the chapter name shall be sent to the entire membership with the justification for the change and the suggested new name or names to be voted upon.
  - 2) Voting shall be held at a duly called and convened Chapter meeting with notice given to the entire chapter’s membership no less than 30 days prior to the meeting.
  - 3) A method to collect votes from those unable to attend the Chapter meeting in person shall be make available so that all members wishing to vote may do so.
  - 4) After a majority vote has approved the new name, the Chapter shall submit the name change request and justification for the name change to the Board for approval.
- C. After Board approval, the Chapter shall be known as the  
“ \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter of the Florida Trail Association”

**Section 2. Membership Jurisdiction** – Membership jurisdiction of a Chapter is designated by county as approved by the Board. Chapter names and associated counties are identified in Exhibit A, Chapter Membership Affiliation Chart.

**Section 3. Trails jurisdiction** - Responsibility for construction and maintenance of sections of the FT or FTS is assigned to a chapter by the VP of Trails. This assignment area may or may not be the same as the geographic membership area. See the Florida Trail Manual for chapter trail assignment.

**Article III. PURPOSE** - The purpose of Chapters is to organize the membership into geographically cohesive groups to foster team spirit and to facilitate leadership and management of members in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the FTA.

**Article IV. FUNCTIONS:**

1. To carry out or assist in the functions, services or tasks delegated by the Board.
2. To safeguard the exempt status of the FTA as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Chapters will strictly avoid political support of any individual to the election, nomination, selection or appointment to any federal, state, local public office or office in a political organization. Political support includes both financial and non-financial support. However, advocacy that shares and communicates the missions of FTA regarding issues most closely related to the FTA is a permitted activity. Any planned advocacy actions need to be discussed with and sanctioned by the Board. The prohibition against political activity is relevant to Chapter activities; any member, as an individual, may support a political candidate or political party provided they do not do so as a representative of their Chapter and/or the FTA.
3. To support the FTA in its goal to build, maintain and promote a hiking trail that extends the length of the Florida known as the Florida National Scenic Trail or Florida Trail.
4. To assist in providing local and FTA-wide activities for the members of the FTA and the public.
5. To seek local and social media coverage for the FTA and to fill other communication and public relations functions.
6. To offer opportunities for members to contribute to meaningful volunteer work and to become involved in the leadership of the FTA, both locally and statewide.
7. To provide opportunities for members and the public to learn about the natural environment and outdoor activities including, but not limited to, backpacking, camping, and hiking.
8. To assist Trail Coordinators, Section Leaders and Trailmasters in building and maintaining the FT and other hiking trails in the FTS.
9. To support the FTA in the recruitment and retention of members.
10. To support the fiscal health and welfare of the FTA by providing required



financial reports in a timely manner and to raise and contribute funds in support of the Chapter and the FTA.

## **Article V. MEMBERSHIP**

**Section 1. FTA Membership** - is as specified in the Bylaws, Article III.

**Section 2. Chapter Membership** - FTA Chapter Membership is determined by the counties within the Chapter's boundaries as determined by FTA's Board of Directors. Exhibit A, "Chapter Membership Affiliation Chart," lists the counties within the boundaries of each current Chapter.

- A. Members residing in Florida are initially assigned membership in the Chapter within which boundaries they reside. They may, however, request reassignment to another Chapter by contacting the FTA Office if they so desire.
- B. Members residing outside of Florida may:
  - 1) Become members of an out-of-state Chapter, if one exists.
  - 2) May request membership in a Florida Chapter of their choice from the FTA state administrative office.
  - 3) May remain as members without Chapter affiliation.

### **Section 3. Voting Privileges:**

- A. On FTA matters, except for those Membership levels designated by the Board as having no vote, there shall be one vote for each FTA Membership regardless of whether the Membership Level provides an Individual or Family membership. There shall be no vote for Alliance or Commercial levels of Membership.
- B. For Chapter matters, there shall be one vote for each adult (18 years or older) who is an FTA member through either Individual or Family membership. There shall be no vote for Alliance or Commercial levels of Membership.

**Section 4. Termination of Membership** - Chapter membership is predicated solely upon membership in the FTA. If FTA membership is terminated for any reason Chapter membership is terminated simultaneously. As stated in the Bylaws Article 3, Section 3 membership in the FTA may be terminated as follows:

- A. Any member who fails to pay dues prior to the end of the renewal period of the previous membership shall cease to be a member
- B. The Board of the FTA may terminate the membership of any member who has been determined by a majority of the members of the Board to have violated rules and regulations of the FTA in such a manner to have been detrimental to the purposes, function or objectives of the FTA. No such determination shall be made without a hearing on the matter by the Board, to which the member

shall be invited, and at which such member shall be entitled to present his/her case.

## **Section 5. Awards**

- A. Chapters may create and present awards to Chapter members and supporters for service to the Chapter in support of the FTA.
- B. FTA State-wide Awards are presented annually at the FTA Annual Meeting. Award descriptions, requirements, and nomination forms may be found on the FTA website under “Volunteer on the Trail > Volunteer Recognition.”
  - 1) Members-in-good-standing may nominate other eligible Members-in-good-standing to receive one of the following awards. Award Nominations are reviewed by, and final selection is made by, the Awards Committee appointed by the Board
    - a) John Weary Trail Worker Award
    - b) Special Service Award
    - c) Activity Leader Award
  - 2) Members in good standing may be presented the following awards at the discretion of the President of the FTA.
    - a) Cornelia Burge Volunteer Award
    - b) Lifetime Achievement Award
    - c) Champion of the Florida Trail
  - 3) Members in good standing may nominate non-members or organizations for the following awards:
    - a) Friend of the FTA
    - b) Pathfinder Awards

## **Article VI. LEADERSHIP**

**Section 1. Leadership Structure** - Leadership of a Chapter is composed entirely of volunteers who are FTA members in good standing and who agree to participate in planning, organization, direction, administration, and/or supervision of chapter members and activities in accordance with the procedures herein and the published policies, procedures, and direction of the FTA. The Leadership of a Chapter may be described as being in two related groups as follows:

- A. The **Leadership Team** is all individuals who accept responsibility for performing any Chapter office or leadership function described in Sections 4, 5, and 6 below.
- B. The **Executive Team** is a subset of the Leadership Team, identified by the Chapter, that has executive decision-making authority and that plans and oversees all aspects of Chapter operations and administration.
  - 1) The Chapter shall define the membership of its Executive Team. Depending on the Chapter and the available number of active leaders, the Executive Team may consist of as few as two members (Chapter Chair

and Chapter Treasurer) or may also include selected others from the Leadership Team, the entire Leadership Team, and/or Leadership Members-at-Large (as defined in subparagraph 5. below.).

- 2) A Chapter may entitle its Executive Team as a Coordinating Committee, Executive Committee, Management Team or other appropriate title but shall not refer to it as a Board of Directors, this title being reserved for the FTA Board alone.
- 3) A record of the meetings of the Executive Team and any decisions taken whether by vote or consensus shall be maintained and filed with the Chapter Meeting Minutes.
- 4) The Executive Team creates the policy for authorization of Chapter expenditures, may create a budget to authorize planned expenditures, and authorizes emergent expenditures on a case-by-case basis.
- 5) The Chapter Chair may recommend, and the Executive Team may approve as **Leadership Members at large** experienced Chapter members to be members of the Executive Team. If approved by the Chapter membership, Leadership Members-at-Large may be voting members of the Executive Team

**Section 2. Election of Officers** - The minimum offices that require formal election are the Chapter Chair, Vice Chair (if the Chapter chooses to have one) and Chapter Treasurer. If determined by the Chapter membership other offices requiring election shall be identified in the Chapter Addendum. Unless determined otherwise by the Chapter membership all Committee Chairs, Coordinators, or Team Leaders may be appointed by the Chapter Chair with the advice of the Leadership Team and serve until they voluntarily resign or are removed for cause.

**Section 3. Removal of Leadership Team Members**- Any chapter officer or Chapter Chair may be removed without cause by a three-fourth vote of the FTA Board or on petition of 50% of the Membership of the Chapter.

**Section 4. Minimum Leadership Requirement** - Each chapter shall have a minimum of the following leaders as stated in the Bylaws Article IX Section 4. The Chapter Chair and the Chapter Treasurer may not be the same individual; the same individual may be both the Chapter Council Representative and the Chapter Chair or the Chapter Treasurer, if necessary.

**A. Chapter Chair**

- 1) Be the primary administrative officer of the Chapter and oversee all aspects of Chapter operations
- 2) Be the primary Chapter contact person for the FTA and the public within the Chapter's area of responsibility
- 3) Receive copies of all Chapter communications from the FTA
- 4) Be a signatory on the Chapter bank account

- 5) Preside at meetings of the Chapter membership and ensure that business is properly conducted
- 6) Call for and organize planning meetings of the Chapter leadership as needed
- 7) Appoint committee chairs, Chapter Council Representative, and submit Chapter approved Trail Coordinator to VP of Trails
- 8) Establish annual budget or an approval process for payment of expenditures in consultation with Chapter leadership
- 9) Serve as a member of all committees and/or teams.
- 10) Serve as the alternate Chapter representative at Chapter Council meetings if an alternate has not been identified
- 11) In consultation with other appropriate Chapter leaders, assists in identifying a successor before leaving office

**B. Chapter Treasurer.**

- 1) Be the custodian of Chapter funds and follow financial procedures as outlined in Article VIII of this document
- 2) Be a signatory on the Chapter bank account
- 3) Assists in the preparation of a budget and/or follow the approval process set forth by Chapter leadership
- 4) Assure that all disbursements are made timely and supported by appropriate documentation
- 5) Prepare and file appropriate and accurate quarterly financial reports to FTA, as required
- 6) Reports on financial status at Chapter meetings or as requested
- 7) In consultation with other appropriate Chapter leaders, assists in identifying a successor before leaving office
- 8) Surrenders all financial records, in written and digital format, to the successor Treasurer or the Chapter Chair within 14 days of leaving office

**C. Chapter Council Representative**

- 1) As required by the Bylaws, Article IX, Section 6, each Chapter shall provide one designated Representative of the Chapter to the Council and may designate an Alternate Representative.
  - a) The Chapter Council is a standing committee of the FTA, established in Bylaws, Article IX, Section 6.
  - b) The Chapter Council meets for one day at least three times a year on weekends generally in a central location of the state.
- 2) Duties include:
  - a) Reports the activities, problems, and concerns of the Chapter at Chapter Council meetings.
  - b) Participates in discussion of matters brought before the Chapter Council and votes on behalf of the Chapter when a vote is called. Each Chapter casts a single vote on matters brought before the council.
  - c) Reports to the Chapter information disseminated and decisions taken at the Council meeting.

- 3) Unless otherwise determined by the Chapter Membership the Chapter Council Representative and Alternate Representative (if applicable) are appointed by the Chair with advice of the Leadership Team and serve until they voluntarily resign or are removed for cause.

**Section 5. Other Required Leaders** - In addition to the above, the following Chapter leadership positions shall be required:

- A. Chapter Outdoor Activity Leadership – In order to ensure the appropriateness and safety of outdoor activities hosted or sponsored by the FTA or its Chapters individuals organizing and leading these activities are required to be qualified in accordance with, and operate under, the guidelines found in the FTA Activity Leader Guide (ALG.)
  - 1) Activity Chair/Coordinator - Unless determined otherwise by the Chapter the Activity Coordinator/Chair is appointed by the Chair and serves until they voluntarily resign or are removed for cause.
    - a) Shall be an experienced and fully qualified Activity Leader
    - b) Coordinates the chapter’s activities in accordance with the Activity Leader Guide,
    - c) Schedules and conducts both initial and regular refresher training for Activity Leaders in accordance with the Activity Leader Guide.
    - d) Supervises the Activity Leaders who have been approved by the FTA.
    - e) Ensures that all sanctioned activities are led only by approved Activity Leaders.
    - f) Ensures all FTA required forms and reports are completed and submitted per the procedures and policies in the Activity Leader Guide.
  - 2) Activity Leaders
    - a) Conduct all Chapter Activities in accordance the with Activity Leader Guide.
    - b) Activity Leaders are nominated in accordance with Activity Leader Guide and approved by the FTA. They serve until they voluntarily resign, no longer meet the requirements of the Activity Leader Guide, or are removed for cause.
    - c) The Chapter annually reviews Activity Leaders and reports to the FTA the status of active Activity Leaders in accordance with the Activity Leader Guide.
- B. Trail Construction and Maintenance Leadership - If a Chapter has been assigned by the Board responsibility for the construction and/or maintenance of any Section of the Florida Trail, either FNST or non-FNST, or any other portion of the Florida Trail System the following leadership positions shall be required:
  - 1) Trail Coordinator - Organizes and supervises all Chapter trail maintenance activities in accordance with the Trail Manual. Trail Coordinators are nominated by the Chapter using the “**Trail Coordinator Nomination Form**” found in the Trail Manual and

approved by the FTA VP of Trails in accordance with the Trail Manual. Trail Coordinators serve until they voluntarily resign or are removed for cause

- 2) Trail Section Leaders - Develop and maintain a section of the FT or FTS in accordance with the Trail Manual. Section Leaders are nominated by the Chapter using the "Section Leader Nomination Form" found in the Trail Manual and approved by the FTA Vice President of Trails in accordance with the Trail Manual. Section Leaders serve until they voluntarily resign or are removed for cause.
- 3) Trailmasters (as needed) - Maintain a segment of the FT or FTS in accordance with the Trail Manual. Trailmasters are qualified and appointed in accordance with the Trail Manual and serve until they voluntarily resign or are removed for cause.
- 4) Trail Crew Leaders (as needed) - Organize and lead FTA-sponsored trail work activities in accordance with the Trail Manual. Trail Crew Leaders are qualified and appointed in accordance with the Trail Manual and serve until they voluntarily resign or are removed for cause.

## **Section 6. Additional Leadership Functions**

- A. In addition to the leadership positions identified in Section 4 and Section 5 above, the chapter may establish officers, committee chairs, coordinators, team leaders or other leadership positions to carry out Chapter functions listed in this Section. The recommended list below is not all inclusive and other positions may be added based on the needs of the Chapter and the FTA.
- B. Depending on the size of the Chapter and the number of people available, the functions in each area may be assigned to a single individual, a committee, or several individuals. One individual may have responsibility for functions from several areas.
  - 1) For instance, the Chapter may split secretarial functions and designate a "Recording Secretary" and a "Corresponding Secretary."
  - 2) Alternatively, no Secretary may be designated. The Chair or someone else may assume responsibility for maintaining required records. Available individuals may be assigned to take Meeting Minutes and to perform other tasks on an ad hoc basis. The provision of this flexibility in Chapter Organization does not relieve Chapter Leadership of the responsibility to ensure all functions are performed in a reasonably effective manner.
- C. The following list describes the leadership functions that a Chapter is expected to perform.
  - 1) Vice Chair
    - a) Perform function of Chair during absence or inability of the Chair to perform.
    - b) Perform functions of Chair as Chair may delegate

- c) Serve on the Chapter Executive Team.
- 2) Secretary
- a) Records the minutes of chapter business meetings. Includes:
    - (i) The time, date, place of the meeting
    - (ii) A list of attendees
    - (iii) A brief summary of the issues discussed
    - (iv) Motions, seconds, and the outcome of votes.
  - b) Distributes draft minutes of the previous meeting to the Leadership Team before the next meeting and posts draft minutes on the chapter website, if used, for review prior to each meeting.
  - c) Publishes and maintains record of approved minutes.
  - d) Responsible for Chapter Correspondence at the request of the Chair.
  - e) Prepares and distributes correspondence at the request of the Chair
  - f) Maintains record of important documents of the Chapter including:
    - (i) Minutes
    - (ii) Official documents such as Chapter Operating Procedures, Agreements or Contracts, Commendations, Chapter Awards, Chapter Newsletters
    - (iii) Any correspondence of the Chapter, including all records related to Regional Conferences sponsored by the Chapter.
    - (iv) Records may be maintained in paper files, electronically or some combination of both as determined by the Chapter.
    - (v) Records shall be retained for a minimum of seven (7) years or as designated by the Board.
- 3) Membership
- a) Maintains an accurate, current list of all chapter members. Receives from the FTA Office monthly the Chapter's roster of current members and a listing of new and dropped members.
  - b) Develops and implements procedures for welcoming new members, such as sending Welcome Packets with the latest chapter newsletter, a survey of the new member's interests, a personal note, information regarding chapter meetings time and location, and the contact information of the Membership Chair.
  - c) Contacts dropped members and encourages them to renew.
  - d) Reports new and dropped members to Chair, Newsletter Editor, Social Media Manager(s), and Chapter Leadership Team.
  - e) Promotes membership in the FTA and the Chapter.
  - f) Provides current membership lists upon request to other chapter leadership positions.
  - g) Assists chapter leadership with membership recruiting activities and aligns own chapter activities with FTA membership efforts.
- 4) Communications/Publicity
- a) Develops and maintains a comprehensive program of communication with members and with local communities through email, newsletters, press releases and an online presence as appropriate.

- b) Develops and maintains an up-to-date online presence which may include:
    - (i) A Meetup.com group
    - (ii) An Internet website
    - (iii) A Facebook page
    - (iv) A Twitter account
    - (v) Other social media accounts as desired/appropriate.
  - c) Provides announcements of all regular Chapter meetings, and pertinent information before deadline, to local news publications and Social Media as appropriate
  - d) Disseminates additional information regarding chapter events when indicated, for example:
    - (i) Submits press releases for National Trail Days, Florida Hiking Trails month events
    - (ii) Invites press to certain chapter trail events, work hikes, etc.
    - (iii) Seeks out upcoming public events for chapter participation
  - e) Includes chapter events on local radio and television free Public Service Announcements (PSA's.)
  - f) Posts FTA posters in local parks, stores, etc. (with permission)
- 5) Program
- a) Schedules, organizes and introduces the general membership meeting programs.
  - b) Provides program schedule and information to other chapter leaders responsible for publicity, newsletters and related responsibilities.”
  - c) Arranges for recognition of and thanking guest speakers where appropriate.
- 6) Hospitality - Arranges for refreshments and clean-up at all Chapter meetings and events as needed.
- 7) Fundraising - Organizes and develops fundraising activities that meet the guidelines set forth by the Bylaws, FTA Fundraising policies (These procedures are under review by the Board, and revisions and/or additional information may be provided at a later date,) and Article IX of this document.
- 8) Nominating Committee
- a) The Nominating Committee is an Ad Hoc committee that meets in accordance with the procedures found in Article XI Section 6.
  - b) The Nominating Committee Chair will preside at meetings of the Committee and work with committee members to:
    - (i) Identify and encourage rising leadership
    - (ii) Present a slate of nominees for election of officers, or to fill vacancies
    - (iii) Provide descriptions of positions and candidates for chapter elections notifications
    - (iv) Nominating Committee members may not be nominated for an elected leadership position.



## **Article VII. INACTIVATION OR DISSOLUTION**

**Section 1. Basis for Board Action** - The Board may inactivate or dissolve a Chapter if it does not comply with the following documents, procedures or requirements:

- A. BYLAWS, Article IX, Chapters of the Association.
- B. Chapter Operating Procedures
- C. FTA Trail Manual
- D. FTA Activity Leader's Guide
- E. Chapter financial reporting requirements as specified in Article VIII Section 4
- F. An approved Remediation Plan

**Section 2. Required Board Votes** - Action to inactivate a chapter shall require a majority vote of the Board. Action to dissolve a chapter shall require a two-thirds vote of the Board.

**Section 3. Board Rehabilitation Efforts** - No such determination of inactivation or dissolution shall be made without a good faith effort by the Board or a Board designated FTA Staff or volunteer member to work with the Chapter's Leadership Team, which may include emerging or newly recruited leaders, to resolve identified issues of concern in a manner benefiting FTA and the Chapter.

**Section 4. Remediation Plan** - A chapter may pause the inactivation or dissolution process by submitting a remediation plan to the FTA Board for approval. The remediation process will include a timetable for completion that will be approved on a case-by-case basis.

- A. If a remediation plan is approved, the Board shall provide for supervision and regular reporting on the progress of a remediation plan by designated FTA Staff or Volunteer(s.)
- B. Upon the successful completion of the Plan and approval by the Board, the Board action to inactivate or dissolve the Chapter shall terminate.
- C. Failure of a Chapter to complete an approved Remediation Plan in a timely manner may result in the Board proceeding with the process for Chapter inactivation or dissolution.

**Section 5. Requirement for a Hearing** - No such determination of inactivation or dissolution shall be made by the Board without a hearing on the matter by the Board, to which identifiable Chapter leaders shall be invited and allowed to present a case for the Chapter. Such a case may include a remediation plan

submitted to the Board for consideration and approval, with or without amendment.

**Section 6. Disposition of Chapter-held Assets** - Upon inactivation or dissolution of a chapter by the Board, the FTA shall assume possession of the assets of the chapter including:

- A. All financial assets. Financial activity, if any, shall be managed by FTA. Financial assets shall not be comingled with other FTA funds or used for non-chapter related expenses unless so directed by the Board.
- B. All trail equipment and supplies shall be turned over to the Vice President of Trails for storage or redistribution.
- C. At the sole discretion of the Board, the assets, finances and equipment, or a portion thereof, may be returned if the Chapter is re-activated.

**Section 7. Reactivation** - If a Chapter has been inactivated by action of the Board, it may be re-activated by the Board if Members of the Chapter successfully complete a remediation plan or by following the procedures used to Charter new chapters as described in Article XII

**Section 8. Disposition of Members**

- A. When a Chapter within the State of Florida is dissolved, its geographical area, the Members residing therein, and its responsibilities for Trail construction and maintenance may be reassigned. The re-establishment of a dissolved Chapter shall follow the procedures used to charter new chapters.
- B. If a Chapter outside the State of Florida is dissolved it ceases to exist and its members become members-at-large of the FTA without Chapter affiliation unless they petition the FTA for assignment to a specific Chapter.

## **Article VIII. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

**Section 1. Financial Authority** - The FTA is a single entity corporation and designated by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt not-for-profit corporation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All monies generated, expended, or maintained by the organization, which includes its chapters must be treated as a single unit regardless of who within the organization has control of the funds. A Chapter is authorized by the FTA to raise funds and to accept monies on behalf of the FTA, to maintain these funds in a properly registered bank checking and/or savings account, and to expend funds in execution or support of FTA operations or objectives. A chapter remains entirely accountable to the FTA for that portion of FTA funds that it controls in Chapter accounts.

**Section 2. Responsibility for Solvency** - Each chapter must plan and control its revenue and expenditures to ensure it remains solvent.

**Section 3. Dues Rebate** - A portion of new membership dues may be distributed back to each Chapter and shall be placed in an account for Chapter use. Distribution will be on a regular basis established by the Board. The amount of Rebate is determined by the Board. All required financial reports must be submitted by a Chapter in order to receive their distribution of Dues Rebate.

**Section 4. Record Keeping and Reporting**

- A. Chapter financial records will be kept according to the FTA Treasurer's direction. The FTA will provide the form which is a simple Excel spreadsheet (a sample is available from the FTA office) on which all transactions are entered. The completed spreadsheet along with bank statements shall be submitted to the FTA as described below. All bank statements will be submitted for audit and storage. All paid bills and other financial documentation will be retained by the chapter for a period of seven years. Scanned images are acceptable in lieu of paper copies.
- B. The chapter financial report will be filed with the FTA office with a copy to the Chapter Chair quarterly by the end of the month following the close of the quarter. The FTA's fiscal year begins July 1st and ends on June 30th of each year. Quarter endings are Sept. 30, Dec. 31, Mar. 31, June 30. Therefore, chapter financial reports are due no later than October 31st, January 31st, April 30th, and July 31st. All chapter revenue and expense transactions submitted are reported on the FTA annual Form 990 tax return. Therefore, accurate and timely reporting is mandatory.
- C. If a chapter fails to file their quarterly financial report (whether or not any transactions occurred during that period) for three consecutive quarters, that chapter may thereby be subject to possible inactivation procedures under Article VII herein.
- D. Chapter financial records (bank statements, officer elections, business meeting minutes) will be retained by the Chapter in either hard copy or electronic form for a minimum of seven years (7) or as designated by the FTA Board and must be made available for audit when required.

**Section 5. Checking Account Signatories**

- A. The FTA Treasurer will be a signatory on each Chapter checking account
- B. Each chapter will designate two local checking account signatories (usually the Chapter Chair and Chapter Treasurer.) Chapter checks will require only one signature.

**Section 6. Checking Account Title** - Chapter bank accounts shall include the FTA in their account title as follows:

Florida Trail Association  
\_\_\_\_\_ Chapter

**Section 7. Authorized Expenditures** Expenditure of Chapter funds must support the Purposes, Objectives and Mission of the FTA. If there are questions regarding the appropriateness of an expenditure the Chapter may consult the FTA Office or the FTA Treasurer. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- A. Trails construction and maintenance to include purchase and repair of equipment, materials, and related administrative support. All equipment and materials acquired by a Chapter whether by purchase, gift, or issue by the USDA-FS becomes property of the FTA and the Chapter is accountable to the FTA for its maintenance and disposition.
- B. Communications with Chapter members and supporters such as newsletters, new and dropped member notices, and social media site fees.
- C. Public relations activities and events, local promotional materials, and volunteer recognition.
- D. Donations to events, activities and organizations that are consistent with Authorized Expenditures.
- E. Facility fees and/or speaker honorariums, expenses, or recognition in support of official Chapter events.
- F. Reasonable awards and recognition for Chapter members.
- G. Trails maintenance of the FNST may be reimbursed by USDA-FS. See the Trail Manual for reimbursement procedure and form.

**Section 8. Expenditures Approval Process**

- A. Chapters must adopt a procedure for authorizing chapter expenditures in advance of payment and are encouraged to adopt an annual operating budget.
- B. Chapters shall follow the procedures in the Trail Manual for reimbursement of FNST or other Trail expenses.
- C. Cash receipts should be separately counted by two persons, one of which may be the Chapter Treasurer with the total amount written down and signed off by each person. The receipts and total notation are turned into the treasurer for deposit; the total notation becomes part of the financial documents retained by the treasurer.

**Article IX. FUNDRAISING** - Chapters are authorized to raise funds on behalf of the FTA. Detailed fundraising procedures are under review by the Board and will be provided at a later date.

**Section 1. Charitable Organization Status** -The FTA is registered with the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services as a charitable organization

under Chapter 496 of the Florida Statutes to solicit funds under Registration No. CH13754

**Section 2. Solicitation of Funds** - A solicitation is a request for funds for which no goods or services are expected in exchange. All printed solicitations must contain the following statement, which must be in all caps and at least font size 8:

*A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL FREE (800-435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. CERTIFICATE NUMBER CH13754.*

**Section 3. Authorized Use of Logos** - Chapters may use the FT and FNST logos and names on items for sale but first must submit a request in advance along with a sample or mock-up to the VP of Development for review and approval.

**Section 4. Fundraising Profits Accrue to the FTA Only** - All profits from the sale of goods and/or services shall benefit the Chapter or the FTA, and no profits are to accrue to any individual.

## **Article X. ACTIVITIES**

**Section 1. Scope of Chapter Activities** - As described in the FTA Activity Leaders Guide (ALG) activities organized by authorized FTA Activity Leaders include not only trail maintenance and hiking, but also any activities that bring people into nature and the outdoor world. Chapter activities may also include educational and/or social activities that are held either indoors or outdoors.

**Section 2. Activity Coordinator/Chair** - Each Chapter will have an Activity Coordinator/Chair whose duties are described in Article VI.

**Section 3. Activity Leader Qualification** - Activity Leaders for Chapter activities must be qualified in accordance with the procedure outlined in the ALG.

**Section 4. Activity Guidelines** - All activities shall follow the guidelines of the ALG.

## **Article XI. ADMINISTRATION & OPERATION**

**Section 1. Requirements and Authority** - Chapters shall establish policies and procedures for chapter decision making. Chapter decisions, policies and procedures will not infringe on the responsibilities, or authority of the FTA or its Board, and shall be consistent with the Bylaws, FTA Trail Manual, the FTA Activity Leader Guide, and these Chapter Operating Procedures

**Section 2. Scope** - Policies and procedures may pertain to: Chapter Meetings and activities; organization and operation of the chapter; nominations and elections; elected and appointed positions, adoption of budgets, approval of expenditures, and other financial matters; and the amendment of chapter policies, guidelines and procedures.

**Section 3. Addendum to Chapter Operating Procedures.**

- A. Each Chapter shall set forth its individual plans, policies, schedule, and procedures on the Addendum to this document. See Exhibit B attached to this document.
  - 1) This addendum and future revisions shall be approved by a majority vote of the Chapter Members at a duly called Chapter Business Meeting.
  - 2) The Addendum or revision, along with a copy of these Chapter Operating Procedures, shall be made available to members for review at the time of the notice of the business meeting during which a vote is to be held.
  - 3) Chapters shall complete, date, and submit this Addendum to the FTA office either in written or digital format for review and information purposes where it will be kept on file.
  - 4) Chapter Leadership may have access to it at any time by requesting a copy from FTA office.
- B. A Chapter's Chapter Operating Procedures Addendum shall be made available to the Chapter members by physical and/or by an accessible electronic storage site(s) such as a chapter website, Facebook, Meet-up, Google Drive or similar electronic means.
- C. Chapters shall amend the information contained in the Addendum whenever changes in procedures and policies are made. The revised Addendum shall be submitted to the FTA office and marked clearly with the date of the revision. The amendment may be submitted in either written or digital format and no later than 30 days after changes have been made by the Chapter.

**Section 4. Terms of Office**

- A. The Chapter shall determine and state in the Addendum the terms of office for each elected position.
- B. Terms of office may be one, two, or more years as specified by the Chapter.
  - 1) If terms of two or more years are specified, it is recommended that a Chapter arrange to elect approximately one half of the elected officers be elected each year in order to assure continuity.
  - 2) Unless otherwise specifically prohibited by the Chapter, re-election to multiple sequential terms is permitted.
- C. It is recommended for the purpose of continuity that the number of terms of the Chapter Secretary and Chapter Treasurer be unlimited.

**Section 5. Election of Officers/Procedures** - The positions of Chapter Chair, Chapter Vice Chair (if used by the Chapter,) and Chapter Treasurer shall be elected. The Chapter may specify in the Addendum other leadership positions that will be elected. It is recommended that:

- A. The Chapter should determine a standard month to hold elections.
- B. At least thirty days prior to the election, the date and location of the election should be determined and announced to the Membership. At that time, members should be invited to submit to the Nominating Committee names of candidates or offers to volunteer for leadership positions.
- C. Not later than thirty days prior to the date of the election:
  - 1) Determine if online voting will be offered or if members must be present at the election meeting to vote
  - 2) Determine if write-in candidates or nominations from the floors will be accepted.
  - 3) Publish notice of the election procedures.
- D. Only FTA Chapter Members in good standing may vote in an election.
- E. It is not required to offer online voting or to use secret ballots at the election meeting. If so determined and published by the Chapter, election by show of hands or voice vote may be permitted. A motion to accept an entire slate by acclamation may be permitted
- F. Vacancies occurring between elections may be filled by appointment by the Chapter Chair with the advice of the Chapter Executive Leadership Team until the next regularly scheduled election except for the Chapter Chair itself, for which a special election must be called. A minimum of fourteen days' notice of a special election must be given to members.

**Section 6. Nomination Procedures**

- A. A Nominating Committee should be established with sufficient time to complete all nominating duties.
  - 1) The Chapter Chair, with the advice of the Executive Leadership Team, appoints the committee.
  - 2) Members of the Nominating Committee should be chapter members familiar with as many other members as possible.
  - 3) Nominating Committee members should not hold or anticipate holding elected Chapter office. If circumstances require, however, a Nominating Committee member may accept nomination for position upon their resignation from the committee.
- B. When an election is scheduled, the Committee issues a notice to the full

chapter membership, a notice and call for nominations and for volunteers who are willing to serve in leadership positions.

- C. The committee evaluates the potential candidates, confirms they are members of the FTA in good standing, and interviews them as necessary
- D. The recommended slate of nominees should be announced to the full chapter membership not less than fourteen days prior to a regular election or seven days prior to a special election.
- E. The nominating committee may also recruit, evaluate, and recommend candidates for appointment to non-elected positions to the Chapter Chair.

#### **Section 7. Communications and Publicity**

- A. Communications with chapter members is critical to keeping a chapter viable and retaining its membership. Each chapter needs to determine what the most effective methods are for its own members. Chapters are also encouraged to utilize social media to attract interested people to attend meetings and/or activities.
- B. Assistance in learning how to utilize social media can often be found within a Chapter's membership, other Chapters, by requesting Chapter Council assistance, or by contacting the FTA Community Outreach Manager.
- C. Chapters are responsible for monitoring their social media sites and may remove material that is negative, derogatory or inappropriate such as non-FTA sanctioned activities.

#### **Section 8. Newsletter**

- A. If a chapter desires to publish either a print or online Newsletter the Chapter shall select an Editor to publish and distribute their newsletter at chapter cost.
- B. Purpose of the chapter newsletter is to communicate with chapter members and local community contacts and inform the public of Florida Trail activities and endeavors.
- C. The content may include topics and information such as:
  - 1) An educational component whenever possible
  - 2) Articles that encourage people to explore and experience Florida wilderness and natural area responsibility
  - 3) Articles and commentary that reflect positive outdoor experience
  - 4) Promote the FT and FTS.
  - 5) Reflect positively on the FTA organization, its objectives, and trails
  - 6) Current version of the FTA mission statement adopted by the FTA Board.
  - 7) Include contact information for the Chapter's Leadership Team
  - 8) The latest version of the FTA membership application if included



- D. The content should not include:
  - 1) Articles, notices or advertising that reflects poorly on the Florida Trail or the Association or is detrimental to FTA objectives
  - 2) Articles or features that promote partisan, political, religious/theological, or personal agendas and themes.
- E. In lieu of, or in addition to, a chapter newsletter, Chapters may submit information or articles to the FTA “Footprint” magazine or the online eBlaze with news of Chapter activities and announcements of meetings and events. The Footprint Editor reserves the right to accept or reject submitted articles, and to edit material, if accepted.

**Section 9. Committees** Chapters are encouraged to establish the following committees to accomplish Chapter business:

- A. Standing Committees: Membership and Public Relations.
- B. Ad Hoc Committees: Nominating.
- C. Other committees may be established to serve the operations and functions of the chapter.

**Section 10. Business Approval Process**

- A. A Chapter shall establish a process to approve chapter official business. i.e. expenditures of funds, removal of chapter leadership team, appointment of Trail Coordinator, appointment of members of the leadership team, etc.
- B. The process may be managed by the Executive Team. In order to ensure transparency, significant actions taken by the Executive Team should be communicated to the Chapter’s membership.
- C. The Chapter determines what constitutes a quorum required in order to conduct and approve any official chapter business.

**Section 11. Meetings** - Chapters may establish one or more types of meetings to be held throughout the year and title them as they deem appropriate. Two or more types of meetings may be combined into one. Example: a chapter meeting may include business and annual elections. All meetings shall be conducted under the Roberts Rules of Order.

- A. Annual meeting: The chapter annual meeting shall include the election of the officers. The Annual meeting shall be held the same month each year
- B. Business Meetings: Chapter shall schedule business meetings to discuss the operation of the chapter i.e. finances, FTA issues, Chapter issues, membership, etc.
- C. General Membership, Programs and Special Event Meetings: The chapter

membership meetings may include programs on various topics regarding the outdoor environment.

- D. There shall be a minimum of three (3) chapter meetings per year including the Annual Meeting and at least one other business meeting.
- E. The announcement of the Annual Meeting and any business meetings should be distributed at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting to the full chapter membership
- F. Executive Team: The Chapter may schedule Executive Team meetings as required.
  - 1) These meetings are open to the chapter membership and should be announced at least seven (7) days in advance of the meetings. The announcement of these meeting shall be made to the full chapter membership.
  - 2) The Chapter should determine in its Addendum the frequency, quorum, and attendance policy for Executive Team meetings.

## **Article XII. CHARTERING PROCEDURE**

**Section 1. Basis for Chartering** - Chapters are generally developed along geographical boundaries in groupings of one or more counties. However, there is no limit as to the number of chapters that can be established. Groups meeting all requirements for chartering as specified in Section 2 below may apply to the Board for Chartering as a Chapter. Out-of-state Chapters can also be formed if they meet all requirements as specified in Section 2 below. If more than one group of Members seeks to establish a Chapter within an area, the Board will resolve the conflict.

**Section 2. Standards for Chartering** - A group must meet the minimum standards below and present an application for charter to the Board. The application will include:

- A. A statement of adherence to the purpose and functions of FTA Chapters as stated in Article II and III and agreement to act in accordance with the Bylaws.
- B. The names of two officers (Chapter Chair and Chapter Treasurer) who will be responsible for communicating with the state organization.
- C. The names of at least twelve members of the FTA who will be active in the Chapter.
- D. A statement to indicate that the group has been active as a subchapter for at least two years, unless the Board determines there to be extenuating circumstances to warrant their being considered a chapter sooner.
- E. An Addendum to these Chapter Operating Procedures

**Section 3. Charter Approval** - Chartering will be subject to approval by two-thirds of the Board.

**Section 4. Notification** - Chapter Chairs will be notified when the Board has received a complete application and when it will be reviewed. The Chapter Chair will be informed of the Board's decision and given guidance to remedy any deficiencies.

### **Article XIII. SUBCHAPTERS**

**Section 1. Purpose of Subchapters** - Subchapters shall subscribe to the Chapter purpose and functions set out in Articles III and IV of these Chapter Operating Procedures

#### **Section 2. Requirements for a Subchapter**

- A. Approval of the local parent chapter governing body.
- B. After approval by the local parent chapter, a petition shall be presented to the Board requesting official status as a subchapter.
- C. If all finances will be handled through the parent Chapter, local subchapter officers need only include a subchapter chair.

#### **Section 3. Administrative structure**

- A. All finances should be handled through the parent Chapter Treasurer. If a separate checking account is requested by the subchapter, the approval of the Board is required.
- B. All Subchapter finances are subject to the procedures set out in Article VIII Financial Management of these Chapter Operating Procedures and all funds will flow through the parent Chapter treasury unless otherwise approved by the Board.
- C. Subchapters shall be given space in the local chapter newsletter.
- D. The local parent Chapter shall provide the Subchapter with copies of the parent Chapter Operating Procedures addendum, and the Bylaws.
- E. To progress from a Subchapter to a separate Chapter, it shall meet all the requirements set forth in "Chapter Chartering Procedure" Article XII above.

### **APPROVAL**

Adopted by the Florida Trail Association, Inc. Board of Directors October 19, 2019

This document supersedes and replaces the Florida Trail Association, Inc. Chapter Operating Procedures Revised September 2008

## EXHIBIT A: CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP AFFILIATION CHART

### Chapter and Counties

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Alligator Amblers:          | Charlotte, Collier, Lee  |
| Apalachee:                  | Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Wakulla               |
| Big Cypress:                | Dade, Monroe   |
| Black Bear:                 | Flagler, Putnam, Volusia   |
| Central Florida:            | Orange, Osceola, Seminole  |
| Choctawhatchee:             | Okaloosa, Walton   |
| Fisheating Creek:           | Glades, Hendry   |
| Happy Hoofers:              | Broward  |
| Heartland:                  | DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, Polk                                    |
| Highlanders:                | Lake, Sumter   |
| Indian River:               | Brevard, Indian River  |
| Loxahatchee:                | Palm Beach   |
| North Florida Trailblazers: | Baker, Bradford, Clay, Duval, Nassau, St. Johns, Union             |
| Panhandle:                  | Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Washington                    |
| Sandhill:                   | Alachua, Gilchrist, Levy, Marion                                   |
| Suncoast:                   | Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Sarasota |
| Suwannee:                   | Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor    |
| Tropical Trekkers:          | Martin, Okeechobee, St. Lucie                                      |
| Western Gate:               | Escambia, Santa Rosa   |

**EXHIBIT B: CHAPTER OPERATING PROCEDURES ADDENDUM**

**Chapter Name** *(Article II):*

*Section 2: Membership Jurisdiction (List Counties):*

**Executive Team Name & Positions** *(Article VI Section 1.B.)*

*Section 1.B.2: title of Executive Team:*

**Leaders Elected & Terms of Office** *(Article VI. Section 2; Article XI, Section 4 & 5)*

**Month of Elections:** *(Article XI, Section 5):*

**Chapter Standing Committees:** *(Article XI, Section 9):*

**Additional Chapter Leadership Functions & Chapter Variations:** *(Article VI, Section 6 identifies leadership functions that a chapter is expected to perform...it also identifies those which may be performed in a unique way to the chapter):*

**Chapter Business Approval Process(es):** *(Article XI)*

*Expenditure of funds (Article VII, Section 9*

*Appointments of Leadership Team positions (Article VI, Section 2; Article XI, Section 10):*

*Quorum for Voting (membership, executive team, other) (Article XI, Section 10):*

*Amendment of Chapter Addendum to COP(Article XI, Section 3):*

*Other Chapter Approvals (Article XI, Section 1 & 2):*

**Chapter Meetings:** *(Article XI, Section 11) (Executive Team Meeting, Business Meetings, Annual Meeting, Membership Meetings)*

**Other Chapter Specific Policies and Procedures:**

**Chapter Chair Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Print*

**Chapter Chair Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Approved** \_\_\_\_\_