

# NOTICE TO HIKERS

**Title of Notice:** Big Cypress Hiker Report

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**Region:** All

**FTA Map No.** 41-42

**Perm. Change?** No

**Effective Date:** 12/5/21

**Ending Date:** Until removed

## **Description/Map:**

The following is a report produced for the local chapter after a group of members section hiked Big Cypress from the Southern Terminus to I-75. Please note that this hike took place 12/4 and 12/5. Water levels and conditions can change quickly in Big Cypress but this was the hike they encountered at that time. Maintenance in the backcountry is scheduled for the first week in February and the last week in March but all areas of the trail were maintained at similar times in 2021.

*Thanks to our Alligator Amblers backpackers who completed this section Dec 4th,5th and worked together to provide this update !  
Sharon Shuhar, Wes Walker, Sloan Kinnard, Joann Walker*

Four FTA Alligator Amblers Backpackers hiked the FNST 30 miles from the southern terminus at Oasis at RT41 to MM63 I75 in 2 Days - December 4-5, 2021.

All are experienced backpackers in excellent physical condition. Three had just finished a northern FNST 120 mile backpack. Two had hiked this section before. All knew that a December hike guarantees very wet conditions with fewer daylight hours which make this challenging two day section hike arduous.

Start time Dec 4th 7:15 a.m. End Time Dec 5th 7:15 p.m. in the dark.

Section hike time was approximately 25-26 hours. Excluding breaks and camp time.

Overall Comments: Start as early as possible each day. You will need the day light hours. A general hike time pace to plan the section is 1.5 mph.

Day 1 - Water levels were low enough to allow a pace up to 2 – 2 ½ mph.

Day 2 - Expect a much slower pace, with some areas approximately 1.0 mph due to higher water levels; more karst solution holes; slippery marl and being more fatigued. Areas of most concern mile 22.9 to 'Thank God Island' took 4 hours at 1mi/hr through water with no place to rest. There is no dry spot between Thank God Island and Oak Hill Camp. Therefore, be prepared to be in fairly deep water pretty much all day long which is very slow going. Deep Lagoon is the deepest part of the trail. At this time Deep Lagoon is thigh to waist deep depending on your height and which karst solution hole you stepped in.

The last 10 miles to MM63 on 75 are the most difficult of the section. Plan accordingly.

Three of the four hikers fell at least once during the hike despite efforts to be extremely careful. The water, solution holes and slippery marl zap energy levels and slow the pace of even the best of hikers. Cypress are not needed out this time of year - you will be exposed for long sections.

Blazing - Most of the trail is well blazed with a few exceptions where fire, and/or vegetation growth have either removed. (Feb/Mar FTA annual Vol Work Maintenance Parties are planned in these back country areas.) Be alert.

A few tenths south and at the coordinate 26.00700° N, 81.02730° W

Also- 26.00688° N, 81.02716° W

A few tips:

- Foot wear - trail runners of some sort that allow for water and marl silt to run out as much as possible.

- Be sure to take appropriate fuel for your body since you are expending alot of energy with little rest at this pace.

- Hydrate with electrolytes as needed. Due to the highwater situation, it was very easy to obtain drinking water and therefore, not necessary to carry much water weight. A plus for sure.

- Two trekking poles are necessary and be sure to include the smaller mud baskets. The larger baskets would likely catch too much vegetation.
- Be sure to have a high lumens headlamp for seeing blazes in the dark.
- Head Netting a must. Mosquitos are alive and thriving in the hammocks, so a Thermacell Rechargeable Mosquito Repeller for camp use is highly recommended as well (perhaps worth the weight). Your sun protection clothing will double as mosquito protection.
- Poison Ivy - Hammock higher ground camp spots have poison ivy. Be alert when hiking through these areas as well.
- Good sun protection is necessary, so gloves, hat and/or sun umbrella, long sleeves, long pants, are all recommended. Pants will be wet constantly, so quick drying material is recommended as well as camp shoes to give feet an opportunity to dry during breaks.