VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: RACHAEL AUGSPURG

FOOTPRINT
Magazine
Winter 2022 Volume 38 Issue 1

TRAIL MAINTENANCE EDITION
Florida Trail Association

Joining The Crew
A New Generation is Lacing Up Their Boots
Love it like you built it. Because you did.

In support of Florida’s vibrant outdoor community, since 2014 the co-op has been able to contribute over $85,000 to stewarding the Florida Trail and other natural spaces around the state.

Come by and see us at your local REI before heading out to enjoy the fresh air, or visit online at REI.com.
Contents

TRAIL TALK

@Marcelamcg1: My husband and I just discovered the trail at Big Cypress and hiked on the north side for a couple of hours. We plan to go back soon better equipped. Thanks to all the volunteers who maintain it.

@Jauntingjules: I had an amazing adventure into Big Cypress. ❤️ Thanks to all who maintain the trail in such amazing condition!🔥

@Gregariousred: Thank you for sharing my picture! This was my first work party and I had a lot of fun. I highly recommend volunteering with FTA.

@Yunidiazlezcano: What a beautiful trail to explore thank you.

Cover Image
OrangeGroveArtworks
by Megan Barry, FTA Next Generation leader

Our Mission
The Florida Trail Association builds, maintains, protects, and promotes the Florida National Scenic Trail (Florida Trail), and a network of hiking trails throughout the state of Florida.

The Footprint Magazine welcomes your comments. The editors are committed to providing balanced and objective perspectives. Not all letters received may be published. Letters may be edited for clarity or length.

communications@floridatrail.org

Footprint Editor
Florida Trail Association
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Gainesville, FL 32601

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OUR MAGAZINE
The Footprint is published by the Florida Trail Association, a volunteer-based nonprofit organization focused on Florida hiking and trail building. Since 1966, the primary mission of our organization has been the care and protection of the Florida Trail, a 1,500-mile footpath across the Sunshine State - Florida’s own National Scenic Trail.

OUR GOAL
To provide outreach to our readers through informative articles that express appreciation for and conservation of the natural beauty of Florida; to inform our readers of Florida Trail Association efforts; and to provide information on Florida hiking and outdoor recreation opportunities.

CONTRIBUTORS
Please contact the editor at communications@floridatrail.org to discuss ideas for feature stories prior to submission.

ADVERTISING
Reach a highly targeted demographic of Florida outdoor enthusiasts by advertising with us or becoming a regular sponsor. Your advertising dollars directly support production and publication of this magazine and assist the Florida Trail Association in fulfilling its mission. Call 877-HIKE-FLA or email communications@floridatrail.org for more details.
Happy New Year!
First, I want to say thank you to everyone who supported our year-end campaign. Your generosity is greatly appreciated. Your support enables the Florida Trail Association to do all the great work you will see highlighted in this issue.

In last year’s winter issue of the Footprint, I told you that in the year ahead we would be working on new tools for our members, volunteers, and supporters. Over the last year, we have introduced a new website, volunteer portal, member database and membership cards. In the coming year we will be fine tuning all these systems and introducing new ways to get involved.

Maintaining the Florida Trail is a daunting task that would not be possible without volunteers. I am grateful for all the volunteers who do an amazing job of keeping the trail passable, clean, and inspiring. You will find a sampling of their stories in the following pages. Perhaps they will inspire you to get involved, if you haven’t already.

Also, in this issue we are announcing the candidates for our open seats on the Board of Directors. We have six open seats and eight candidates. On December 8, 2021, after several months of work, the FTA Board amended the organization’s bylaws. The latest version of the FTA Bylaws can be found on our website. The number of officer positions was reduced from seven to four, and the officers will be selected from among the members of the Board of Directors, after each election. The membership will now select five at-large directors each election cycle. Voting will be conducted by electronic ballot only. Ballots will be emailed to all members in good standing as of February 25, 2022.

In other news, after a year with the FTA, our Communications and Outreach Manager, Chelsea Collison, is leaving sunny Florida for new opportunities abroad. Although she was only with us a short time, Chelsea has accomplished awesome work on this magazine and our social media. She was instrumental in standing up our new volunteer portal and training the chapters in its use. We will miss her.

Finally, to end on a happy note, February 18th will mark 20 years of employment for Janet Akerson, our tireless Administrative Director. Janet has been invaluable to me in my first year. We would not have been able to accomplish as much as we have without her commitment to FTA and her historical knowledge of the organization and why we do things the way we do. Happy Anniversary, Janet – here’s to 20 more!

Wishing everyone a safe, healthy, prosperous 2022,
CAST YOUR VOTE IN THE 2022 FTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

As a member of the Florida Trail Association, you have the privilege of casting your vote in the 2022 Board of Directors election.

Email ballots will be sent to all members in good standing as of February 25, 2022. Online voting will close March 27, 2022.

The new and returning Board Directors will be announced at the FTA Annual Membership Meeting April 2, 2022.

“You must be a current FTA member in order to vote. Note, only one vote per membership. The Florida Trail Association Nominating Committee has verified all applicant qualifications. To learn more about the 2022 candidates, please read the bios below.

You can read the candidates’ answers to the nominating Committee’s questionnaire at floridatrail.org/BOD2022

Check your address label on this magazine to verify your email address. If your email address is wrong or missing please send an update to membership@floridatrail.org

Florida Trail Association
Board of Directors Nominations 2022
“When it comes to the overall mission of building and maintaining the Florida National Scenic Trail, I am most passionate about…”

TOM DANIEL
Tom Daniel of Pensacola Beach, FL has been a trail maintainer for the FTA since 1999. In this time he has organized and led 100+ trail maintenance activities and routed over 100 miles of the FT in the Panhandle. Tom has also served as section leader, chapter trail coordinator, VP Membership and VP Trails. Tom enjoys working with like-minded volunteers to create and maintain a recreational trail system and if elected to 2022’s Board of Directors, he would like to serve on the Trails and Finance committee.

“…creating and maintaining a trail ownership mindset among FTA volunteers and increasing the FTA membership and volunteer involvement at the Chapter and State levels.”

PAM HALE
Pam Hale of Palm Bay, FL is a current board member and serves as the Association’s Treasurer. She has been an active member of FTA since 1978. She has also held chapter and state level positions including trail section leader, chapter officer, state VP Admin and Treasurer. Outside of the FTA, Pam has been employed with a US Defense contractor for over 40 years. If elected to 2022’s Board of Directors, Pam would like to continue serving on the Financial committee.

“…the sustainability of the FTA organization, both of funding and members/volunteers, to ensure its mission and goals are achieved.”

SHAWN NAUGLE, MPA
Shawn Naugle of the Tampa Bay area, is a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt and certified professional in Predictive Index and Leader of Leaders. While new to the FTA Board of Directors, he has led teams of 30 to 150+ towards strategic planning and execution while working to create a culture of performance, accountability, and collaboration in other professional roles. His passion is rooted in helping people and helping to find solutions to complex problems to improve others’ lives. If elected to 2022’s Board of Directors, Shawn would like to serve on the Finance, Process Development & Operations, or Strategic Planning committee.

“…enhancing the draw to the Trail and helping to plan for sustainability for years to come.”

JOSH “PACECAR” JOHNSON
Josh “Pacecar” Johnson of Saint Augustine, FL is a long distance hiker looking to join the FTA Board of Directors for the first time. Josh currently serves as a Certified Brand Advocate for Caterpillar and comes to FTA with communication, marketing, and leadership experience with his professional and volunteer roles. He has served the hiking community through his work in the 2019 Granite Gear Groundskeeper program promoting Leave No Trace principles and his personal “hike with heart” endeavor where he promotes and raises funds for non-profit organizations (Hike for Mental Health, Ability Tree First Coast) while hiking. If elected to 2022’s Board of Directors, Josh would like to serve on the Outreach committee.

“…conserving and promoting a backcountry experience along the trail corridor and sharing the Florida trail with others. I want to see Florida’s outdoor spaces grow; I’ve really enjoyed our Florida outdoors and love to share that with others and encourage them to get outside or come to FL and enjoy our unique outdoor experiences.”

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“…enhancing the draw to the Trail and helping to plan for sustainability for years to come.”
Rick Robbins of Gainesville, FL is a soil scientist who specializes in soil interpretations. He currently serves on the FTA Board of Directors. Using his geological expertise and hiking experience, he believes he can continue to impart professional opinions on trail routing, maintenance, and other “on the ground” experience. If elected to 2022’s Board of Directors, Rick would like to serve on the Trails Committee.

“I think that trails ‘connect people and places.’ This is the strong suit of the FTA, since it is a state-wide endeavor/entity and has involvement from chapters statewide. As a current Board member, I have connected with members from the Panhandle to the Glades….and this is the mission of the FTA…connecting people and places.”

Bill Turman of Oviedo, FL has been on the FTA board of Directors since 2017 and is currently the VP of Membership. He has also served as chair of the Central Florida Chapter for almost eight years.

As a member of the Florida Trail Association since 1991, he has backpacked and hiked many of the trails in central Florida and has also been awarded the John Weary Trail Worker and Special Service Awards for this work. Outside of the Florida Trail, Bill has worked as an engineer and engineering manager. If elected to 2022’s Board of Directors, Bill would like to serve on the Chapter Council, Advancement and Outreach committees.

“…ensuring that the outdoor experience is just as rewarding and fulfilling whether a Through-Hiker spending months on the trail or the many thousands of people who hike and explore our trail system for the day, weekend or longer.”

Bob Warren of Miami, FL has been interested in wildlife and nature for most of his life. He has PhD in Cell Biology and retired in 2015 from a research and administrative position in the Department of Cell Biology at University of Miami Medical School. He continues to teach as an Emeritus Professor. Previously, he served on the Board of the Florida Trail for a term in the 1970s and was activities coordinator for the Big Cypress region for a year. Currently, Bob is on the board of advisors to Jim Kern and The Friends of the Florida Trail. His other nonprofit experience includes work with Big City Mountaineers and the Peace River Wildlife Sanctuary. If elected to 2022’s Board of Directors, Bob would like to serve on committees most closely involved with the trail-specific activities.

“…bringing the Florida Trail to completion as a continuous and stable trail system for the length of the state. The Appalachian Trail is the aspirational goal for what I would like to see the Florida Trail become.”
SUBMIT YOUR PHOTOS FOR THE SECOND ANNUAL FLORIDA TRAIL CALENDAR

Have an awe-inspiring photo taken on the Florida Trail? Share it with us!

FTA is accepting submissions of digital images for the Official Calendar of the Florida Trail Association until March 15, 2022.

The photo should show the Florida Trail or a view from the Florida Trail. If people are visible in the photo they should be candid (posed shots will not be considered). Close-ups of flowers and insects that do not say “Florida Trail!” will be admired but not selected.

Winners of this contest will be notified by March 31, 2022. They will be featured in the Official Calendar of the Florida Trail Association, and will also receive a framed edition of their photograph and 5 copies of the calendar!

To submit a photo, go to floridatrail.org/photo-calendar-contest/

Members of the Florida Trail Association are eligible to join!

Learn more at nwfcu.org/membership

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Insured by NCUA
A Day In The Life Of A Regional Trail Manager

by Jeff Glenn, North Trail Program Manager

At volunteer events, people often see me with my hardhat, gloves, boots, and tool in hand, just like any other crew member, and assume I am a fellow volunteer. Just because I was up at 5:30AM to make coffee for the crew of twenty volunteers really doesn’t make me stand out as anything different than the rest of the tent bound sleepers or early rising coffee hounds. When I explain that I am a full time FTA staff member, the conversation generally heads towards, “so, this is what you do all year?” Slight chuckle here. “No, this is just a small part of what I do and only for part of the year,” I’ll reply. From there I can take as much time as my audience is willing to listen to accurately describe what my job entails.

I was hired in 2013 as FTA’s first Regional Representative, a position entirely mirrored off of the Pacific Crest Trail’s similarly titled regional staff members. The PCTA aptly calls their Regional Reps their “boots on the ground” for executing the mission of their organization. It is an accurate and broad description of my role at the FTA as well. Over the next few years, two more Regional Reps were hired to round out the whole Florida Trail. Around 2018, the FTA changed our titles to Regional Trail Managers (RTMs) to better embody the depth and breadth of the responsibilities of the position, and give the position a more appropriate professional sounding title.

“I love taking my children to work with me and they love it too.” ~Jeff Glenn
In a nutshell, here are the main responsibilities of a Florida Trail RTM:

- Build and improve volunteer stewardship programs on the FT by fostering partnerships between the Florida Trail Association, volunteers, and agency partners
- Engage volunteers and agency partners in construction, maintenance, and protection of the FT
- Monitor and participate in agency planning and management activities that affect the trail corridor
- Serve as a technical resource to agencies and volunteers in the areas of trail construction, protection, and project coordination
- Oversee planning, replacement, and construction of trail infrastructure
- Ensure volunteers have access to adequate training, certification, safety gear, tools, and equipment
- Oversee work plan development of seasonal staff and field crews

Now, let’s break open that hickory nut and explore just some of the specifics of what I and my fellow RTMs do on a daily basis, keeping in mind, there’s plenty that is not covered by this list. Of course, given the seasonal nature of trail work in Florida, on account of the sauna like conditions of our warmer months, our jobs are also rather seasonal in that we are primarily indoors from May thru September. I break my year into two seasons here: inside and outside.

**SUMMER - INSIDE**
The summer months are when I take the majority of my time off. Since I tend to work extreme hours and extra weekend days for many months in the fall and winter, I bank days off to use in the summer when my family gets to travel for long periods of time. Summer is an indoor work time as my northern blood is still not fully acclimated to the climate here and I can only handle about 50 chigger bites at a time. I am behind a desk at least 4 days a week doing a lot of planning for the fall and other administrative work, some of which you’ll see below:

1. Trainings such as wilderness first aid and multiple chainsaw courses around the state, and the many Volunteer Work Parties that I will host in the coming months are planned. Curriculum is developed, campsites are booked, registration pages created, work plans fine tuned, and a lot more logistics that go into planning week long work events for 15-20 volunteers. I also manage our regional equipment caches and equip our local chapters with the tools and equipment they need to successfully maintain their sections of trail.

2. Summer is when FTA updates our maps and RTMs spend a lot of time working with volunteers on getting data collected, vetted, and eventually printed.

3. It is during this time that I search for opportunities to close gaps in the trail. I tend to scour the regional real estate listings and property appraiser websites for changes in land use and ownership. Florida’s landscape is changing so rapidly that it almost always seems that land ownership along the trail is a revolving door of buyers, sellers, and developers. In 2021 alone I researched and contacted six families or land agents with the goal of protection of the trail corridor through the means of acquisition, easements, and agreements. For me this is one of my favorite parts of the job and, when projects are successful, by far the most rewarding.

4. Planning for infrastructure work such as staff led projects like puncheon work, kiosks, and signage as well as larger, partner-constructed bridges and boardwalks.

**FALL THRU SPRING - OUTSIDE**
September through December are hands down the busiest months of the entire year for me and the other RTMs. By mid September the season is in full swing, and from there on it is a mad sprint to get the trail cleaned up for the coming hikers.

1. Abe Christian (FTA Technical Advisor) and myself are FTA’s chainsaw instructors and our goal is to host one saw training per region in both the fall and spring. Cramming the planning, travel, teaching, and regrouping that it takes to put on a single class into an already busy season of work events is a challenge, but we rise to the occasion.

2. In 2021, I hosted five Volunteer Work Parties in various sections of the trail. These events take a lot of logistical planning and coordination. Registrations, meal planning, tool preparation, camp set up, daily crew management, and post project clean up; all to start back up again in a matter of days, somewhere else. If you have ever been to one of my work parties you will know that we are a well oiled machine and that we eat like trail royalty.

3. In most years there are large construction projects happening around the state, often in the north region. Many of these projects are not solely done by the FTA and I usually have a large hand in the setup and logistics of their completion. This is generally centered on a lot of communication between land managers, the US Forest Service, and the construction crew. Oftentimes I am the materials purchaser as well.

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**Here are the trail boundaries of the Florida Trail RTMs:**

**CENTRAL AND SOUTH FL:** Jenna Taylor - Oasis Visitor Center (southern terminus) to Blackwater Creek in Seminole State Forest (east) and CR 471 in Green Swamp. (west)

**NORTH FL:** Jeff Glenn - CR 471 in Green Swamp (west) and Blackwater Creek in Seminole State Forest (east) to Gibson Park

**PANHANDLE FL:** Adam Fryska - Gibson Park to Fort Pickens (northern terminus)**
Starting mid-September, Jeff’s work keeps him busy in the field.
4. If you’ve ever wondered where trail kiosks, signage, campsite infrastructure, and other trailside hardgoods come from, you can thank an RTM. Of course a lot of this requires the help of our trail volunteers, but most of it starts with us in the way of data collection, project planning, materials purchasing, and construction/installation.

5. Being a liaison between the FTA, the US Forest Service, and all of the various land management agencies, and land owners that we partner with to ensure a safe and working Florida Trail is a massive component of the job. We are at the center of a wheel with many spokes.

Similar to the other ten National Scenic Trails, we partner with a federal agency to steward the Florida Trail. The FTA trail team works hand in hand with the US Forest Service, National Forests in Florida, to manage the trail, and we work closely off of our strategic plan to determine responsibilities, goals and deliverables. We meet with the USFS team weekly to check in on projects and our mutual goals.

In any given day or week the three RTMs are doing a lot more than the list provided above, but that is a start to give our Footprint readers a sneak peak. Needless to say, we wear a lot of hats! I personally consider myself extremely grateful for this position with the FTA. I’m here for the long haul, so come say hi to me sometime!

Favorite parts of the job, in no particular order: Camp cooking, fireside camaraderie, trail gap closures, chainsaw work, having the opportunity to travel throughout the state to amazing places, great co-workers, construction projects, teaching others.

Least favorite parts of the job: "\(⁄(_\_)⁄\)" Not a whole lot.

Plan your next day hike or overnight trip on a hike that puts the “scenic” in Florida National Scenic Trail. Featuring 30 major destinations, this 376-page full color guidebook provides step-by-step details and maps for 52 distinct hikes along the Florida Trail. Each chapter includes multiple options to extend or shrink your hiking mileage.

This new book includes many of the best day hiking loops along the Florida Trail, and a few loops made up by using connecting trails. Hike mileages range from a half-mile accessible boardwalk to a 42-mile backpacking trip.

Order online at FloridaHikes.com or by check for $34.45 (includes shipping and sales tax) to:

Florida Hikes
PO Box 93
Mims FL 32754
Prior to volunteering with the Florida Trail Association I was always fond of cooking. I never really cooked for large groups of people but when I was in middle school I really enjoyed Home Economics class. It was there that I learned how to bake by following recipe directions and being accurate with my measurements. I enjoyed it so much that I started baking muffins a couple times a month for my family. I would wake up very early and prepare everything and clean up all the dishes so when my Mom, Pop and little sister got up they would have a beautifully presented baked goods feast. At this young age, I learned that it felt amazing getting up early to prepare warm meals to serve people. While I do not wake up to make muffins on the trail, I am known for being one of the first ones up to make large batches of cowboy coffee (simple way to make bulk coffee) for all the hard working trail maintainers.

When you come out to a FTA staff lead volunteer work party we provide all the food for our hard working trail maintainers. A well-planned menu is the cornerstone of a successful food service during a FTA volunteer work party. The menu must offer a varied selection of nutritious foods that are satisfying to the volunteers. The constraints of the physical location with prep and cooking equipment available must be taken into consideration, as well as the number of people to be served, food budget, distribution of meal prep tasks, pre-cooked food on hand, meal patterns and finally, tried and true recipes. Everyday I wake up at 4am without an alarm ready to attack the day and serve others, it is usually hours before the rest of the crew. I spend that time preparing the kitchen for the day, planning out the trail work and just generally getting myself in the right mindset to have a safe and successful day. Typically, out of a group of 25 volunteers I will have two or three that also are early risers and this is a great opportunity for them to help out with preparing the morning meal.

As the menu planner considers the number of volunteers to be served, they must also consider their nutritional needs and individual preferences. People today have become more aware of new and different foods, such as vegetarian, vegan and regionally ethnic foods. Over the years of preparing large meals I have gotten some great feedback on how much the volunteers appreciate the time we take to custom make menu items around their preferences. Our Gateway Community Coordinator, Jane Pollack says, “I really appreciated having vegan-friendly options at the first work party I attended. Jeff made sure we had hearty and filling meals to fuel us through the weekend.”
Planning out menus requires that the menu planner be aware of these food preferences and periodically re-evaluate the acceptance of the foods to be offered. Before a staff-led FTA volunteer work party, we poll the volunteers regarding their food preferences so that we can build a menu that caters to them. As shared by one of our volunteers, Lee Smith, “when there is a vegetarian preference, keep the meat separate from the final mix of the meal to give the volunteers an option on how much, if any, is being added to their plate.”

The number of volunteers to be served also influences the method of preparing it. Preparing suitable meals with the available equipment in any given length of time presents one of the major challenges of those responsible for planning meals. Special attention will be given to cooler capacity, burner availability and limited number of pans, cooking tools and dishes. Keeping meals to a one pot solution can reduce any obstacles or difficulties that may come up on the trail. As one volunteer, JoAnn Rodkey says, “keep your meals simple: one pot/pan meals are preferred because they are easier to cook, as well as to clean up after.” My favorite meal is Chicken Pesto Pasta because it is easy and it is not a typical meal I make at home. I usually schedule this for the first day since the first day setup and getting situated can be a little chaotic. Having a simple meal that is tasty and filling is great, plus if there are leftovers, I have my meal for the next day’s lunch already prepared!

FTA staff and crew leaders always try to minimize food costs while maximizing flavor and nutrition. Many foods can be purchased more economically in bulk from places such as Sam’s Club or Costco. However, certain types of food, such as meat proteins, can definitely impact the budget. Coming up with other ways of adding protein into a meal plan more affordably such as offering different varieties of beans, hummus, nuts, gorp and protein bars can be more cost effective. Volunteer trail maintainer Lee Smith says, “you can save money by buying less premium cuts of meat such as chicken thighs and legs instead of chicken breast.” This practice also gives the trail volunteers an added benefit by consuming the higher fat content found in dark meat which is nutritionally replenishing after a hard physical work day. Another way to economically increase the amount of food to be served is to prepare a large mixed salad and bread to be eaten with the meal or by adding more vegetables to the main dish. Linda Taylor says, “to keep meals affordable, choose recipes that include pasta, rice or beans to enhance the...
meat.” Achieving a balance of affordability, quality and ease of preparation is the key to a successful food service.

The distribution of meal prep tasks is important to keep a time schedule that will help sustain the strength and morale of the team of trail volunteers. After the initial food service, a best practice for meal conversation is to talk about the next meal and start assigning tasks. Our Trail Program Director, Kelly Van Patten shared some best practices, “If we know we are making green beans with a meal, I’ll ask if anyone has a great method for cooking them, and let them take ownership. Once when I did that I found a great new way of preparing them that I use at home often—sautéing them in cast iron with chopped up bacon and sliced onion.” Having a back-up plan for getting a meal started, should a group working in the field not get back to camp at the same time, is a necessity. Tasks for meal prep should be easy for volunteers to proactively “step-in” as needed. Most FTA kitchen kits consist of a few pots and pans, large cast iron skillets and a large double burner camp stove to make cooking for the meal service...
and clean-up after meal service easy. The clean-up crew is an integral part of mealtime. Not everyone strives to be a Gordon Ramsy of the Forest. If cooking isn't your favorite task, you can always help out in the kitchen by joining the clean up crew.

Some meals that have been prepared on the trail consist of appetizers or “trail tapas” such as chips & salsa, sliced cheese with crackers, pita & hummus, cut up fruits and vegetables. Breakfasts that are filling and easy such as eggs, pancakes, bacon or sausage, and oatmeal are some favorites and of course, coffee. Making sure that water and other drink choices are always readily available and accessible is extremely important for the health and endurance of each volunteer. A best practice for lunch service is to set it out as soon as breakfast has been cleared away. Having many options available for do-it-yourself sandwiches or a salad bar can be attractively presented and ingredients kept cold. Variety of choices keeps volunteers happy and healthy. With dinner we make meals like spaghetti, burritos, stir fry and pad thai. One of the favorite experiences in the Big Cypress for the volunteers is taking the long bumpy trek on the swamp buggy to camp from the Oasis that is rewarded with a large steak dinner deep in the swamp. I personally always tend to make a gigantic salad with each dinner service and it seems to be a crowd pleaser. Plus, salad and garlic bread are easy to prepare with each meal.

Well in advance, I take the time with each of my volunteer events to plan out a nutritious and satisfying menu that I have learned will work with the team. My main focus in doing this is to help create an amazing volunteer experience while helping to maintain volunteer motivation as well as a high output of trail work. I have learned that full and happy stomachs are key to this success. I look forward to many more early mornings making cowboy coffee and eating huge meals around the campfire with the team after a long day’s hard work.

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**CHICKEN PESTO PASTA**

Serving 20 Hungry Volunteers

**Ingredients**

- 48 oz cheese tortellini
- 5 tablespoons olive oil
- 10 lbs skinless chicken breast
- 24 oz basil pesto
- 2 lbs halved grape tomatoes
- 1 cup pine nuts
- Salt
- Crushed garlic
- Butter
- Parmesan cheese
- Bread hoagie rolls
- Mixed salad greens

**Directions**

- Bring large pot of water to boil and cook tortellini according to package directions.
- Meanwhile cook chicken: Heat olive oil in large skillet and chop meat to bite size pieces. Cook until brown and just cooked through and salt to taste.
- Mix pesto and chicken into large pot with tortellini.
- Toast pine nuts until brown and add to pot with half of halved tomatoes, stirring lightly.
- Cut garlic bread into single serving sizes and toast on flat top grill and paint each with a mix of butter and garlic
- Serve meal sprinkled with parmesan cheese along with mixed salad with other half of tomato halves.

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**Leave No Trace**

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From Hikers to Trail Stewards
by Jane Pollack, Gateway Communities Coordinator

Gaining Perspective Through Trail Work

We rarely see trail maintainers while we hike, but we tread across their labor of love. You don’t see them as you weave through a palm hammock. You won’t see them as you meander around a bend along the river as you catch a gorgeous view. If you look for them while you cross a narrow wooden bridge over a swamp, you may lose your footing. Yet, the trail maintainers who plan where you will step and what you will encounter, the people responsible for making our outdoor excursions possible—they keep hikers in mind. Trail workers build the physical path we stride, and hikers who recognize that have an enhanced sense of appreciation on the trail, sometimes taking on the role of trail maintainers themselves in an effort to pay it forward.

While it’s natural to lose yourself and let your mind wander on the trail (in fact, that’s the whole point), it’s also important to remember that trails are more than sweeping paths through beautiful landscapes. Trails represent a coordinated effort by many to maintain and protect the lands we all enjoy. Working on the trail has certainly cast a different light on my hiking experience. I recognize and appreciate a well-built segment of trail, and I can see the hard work behind it as well as the necessary planning to make maintenance possible. If you’re an all-season Florida Trail hiker willing to venture out in summer or even early fall, you may encounter sections of trail that maintainers haven’t reached yet. That’s because trail crews juggle a variety of safety considerations before they head out to work, from waiting for the temperatures to cool down, to working around hunt schedules, and securing adequate camping for volunteers and staff during multi-day work events. On a recent day hike on the remote Roberts Lake Trail in Big Cypress, my hiking buddy remarked that those rugged, overgrown sections help you realize what we’d have to endure without the hard work of maintainers.

Other trail users who moonlight as maintainers have remarked upon this renewed sense of recognition. In Fall 2021, I attended a staff led volunteer work party on the Suwannee river and met Amy Ansbaugh, a native Floridian and avid ultra runner who is attempting to set the women’s Fastest Known Time (FKT) on the Florida Trail in 2022. Amy will run between 30-40 miles a day, and while she’s no stranger to the grind of long-distance running, the Florida Trail remained uncharted territory for her until recently. In fact, Amy discovered trail running amidst the Covid-19 pandemic to avoid the congested paved trails in the Oviedo area where she lives and operates a small business. “The first time I saw

Thru-hiker Manimal (Chris Snyder) has a deep respect for the work that trail maintainers do. Here he stands at the highest point of elevation on the Florida Trail. “My thru-hike of the Florida Trail was an unforgettable experience made entirely possible by the work of trail maintainers,” he shared. “Specifically, I would like to show my gratitude for the work done in the Econfina section of the trail that was impacted by Hurricane Michael. You all are the backbone of our home trail!”
Alongside extensive research and training to prepare for this epic adventure, Amy dedicated hours of her free time laboring on trail crews throughout the state in an effort to learn what to expect from Florida’s varied landscapes, their challenges, and their beauty. Amy admitted that prior to doing trail maintenance, she gave little thought to how much work goes into keeping the path clear. She recalled the moment where everything clicked:

“On my first day at a work party, I ran one of those Kee mowers. I had ear protection on and all I could hear were my thoughts about how freaking cool it is to be cleaning up the path for others to enjoy. Before learning about volunteering with the FTA, I took all of this for granted while running on the trail.”

Trail builders and maintainers weigh a lot of variables when considering a trail. Not only do they aim for a clear path, they ensure hikers have enjoyable views and an immersive nature experience, meandering around natural features like sinkholes and swamps, while minimizing the environmental impact of the trail. Before engaging in trail work, I was unaware of this aspect, as was Amy. “My perspective of how to look at the obstacles

**Before and after: a blaze gets a fresh coat of paint in Three Lakes WMA.**

an orange blaze and followed it to the sandy white banks of the Econolatchee river, I was hooked - head over heels (sometimes literally because I trip a lot). I did some research about these orange blazes and the FT and was baffled at the fact that as a 4th generation Florida Native - I had no idea something like this existed. At some point in this new-found love, I decided I wanted to attempt to run the length of it.”

Amy and her running partner kicking off her FKT attempt in Big Cypress National Preserve.

Photo courtesy of The Sunshine State Seekers

Photo courtesy of Jane Pollack
runners face went from the narrow tunnel vision of roots and clump grass, to ‘Oh wow, this is a forest and we don’t have to jump over fallen trees and dodge palmetto fronds because these volunteers are out here.’” Amy noted that this helped her gain a sense of ownership and responsibility for the trails she runs. Indeed, once a trail is built, maintainers mitigate issues like erosion caused by hikers who wander off trail to avoid obstacles or wet sections. Armed with an understanding of the challenges behind protecting trails and wild spaces, hikers advance into the role of environmental stewardship.

There are countless valuable sentiments within the challenge of trail work. For one, joining a maintenance crew is a meaningful way to make a difference on the trails we enjoy. It is my belief that more hikers participating in trail maintenance activities would lead to a more environmentally conscious community with a strong dedication to protecting trails. Imagine a trail you love – have you benefited from hiking that trail? If so, consider giving back as a volunteer. The hiking community continues to grow, and FTA chapters enjoy having hikers in their ranks to pitch in with maintenance, build camaraderie, and share stories from the trail. With a shared vision, hikers and maintainers can work together to keep our trails pristine.

“I see the trail more from the eyes of a relentless landscaper rather than a runner now,” said Amy. Trail maintainers lugging equipment down the soggy trail in Osceola National Forest.

Photo courtesy of Amy Ansbaugh
For many, getting out on the trail offers a way to step away from the stresses of everyday life. The air feels fuller, colors are more vibrant, and there’s even beauty in the sound of crunching leaves. A reminder of the vastness of life away from the concrete jungle, it nurtures a sense of wonder – the natural world offers much that teaches and surprises. And while being outdoors can feel wild and secluded, the ways in which we access it are often heavily influenced by people.

In Florida especially, a lot of effort goes into making trails passable. With vegetation growing year-round, opportunistic non-native species making themselves feel at home, and the prevalence of hurricanes and other natural disasters, there is always work to be done. While it may seem intimidating to join a crew of trail maintainers in unfamiliar wilderness, each season a lot of new volunteers join in, driven by their own passions and curiosities to see what it’s all about. "I originally got involved during a call for volunteers after Hurricane Irma," said FTA Next Generation leader Michael Spagnolo. "As a meteorologist involved in the forecasting for Irma, Michael, and Sally, the trail maintenance has been a unique way to help the trail and these communities recover from these historic disasters."

"I love hiking and spending time outdoors and realize much of that would be impossible to do without the help of volunteers," shared Next Gen leader Sam Szatyari, who participated in her first volunteer work party in the fall of 2020. "The trail maintenance community is full of people from many different backgrounds from all over the state. Everyone has been incredibly welcoming and friendly at every event I have been to, and I can’t wait to continue volunteering throughout this new year."

Trail maintenance crews can become like family, bonding over the challenges that maintaining the trail presents. Sometimes things don’t always go as planned, but you figure it out as a team, and there’s a job for
Cody Peacock picking up some trash while out on the trail.
everyone – cooking, blazing, mowing, scouting, lopping, and picking up trash, to name a few. You can meet interesting people who bring their own experiences and what they love to the table, be it storytelling, stargazing, or some tunes on the guitar. “It has always been so much fun getting to talk to more experienced volunteers, meeting new people, and also eating some delicious food after a hard day’s work!”, said Szatyari.

For those who have never used a brush cutter or chainsaw, the work may seem intimidating, but you’re surrounded by folks with decades of experience who can teach you along the way. There are ways to contribute no matter your comfort level, and you’re amongst a community that’s all working towards the same goal.

“Attending the work parties has also been a great way to see all of the top spots on the Florida Trail. The leadership at these events is very knowledgeable about their trail region and make sure you see the well-known spots but also the hidden gems,” said Spagnolo.

Even when you’re not at a designated event, there’s always ways to try to leave the trail better than you found it. “Even the smallest piece of trash can have a snowball effect into the largest of problems for our wild spaces,” said Next Gen leader Cody Peacock. In 2021, Peacock committed to picking up trash along 1000 miles of trails and waterways, collecting more than 355 pounds over the course of the year.

When you become an active steward of the land, you never quite look at things the same. You gain a greater appreciation for the care and labor that goes into being able to experience the environment around you. When you’re next out walking on a puncheon or enjoying a trail that doesn’t require bushwhacking your way through saw palmettos, think about the hands that worked that land. Maybe next time you can join in.

Hurricane Michael brought a new meaning to clearing blow downs, as large, old, and otherwise healthy trees had to be tediously cleared from the trail. Here, trail volunteer Michael Spagnolo holds pieces of a recent cut while working on the Chipola Tract with the Panhandle Chapter.

HATTIE SPRING

I grew up in Central Florida and my day hikes kept bringing me past the signs that say, “This trail is maintained by volunteers.” After finding out information on the FTA website and (unsuccessfully) trying to convince any friends to join me, I nervously showed up to my first trail maintenance event without knowing anyone or exactly what to expect. That was three years ago, and I am so glad I made the decision to go. Staff and volunteers were so welcoming and helpful, it was easy to figure out where to jump in and start assisting. Each trail maintenance season I look forward to reuniting with people I have met at previous events, seeing new parts of the trail, and revisiting others. In fact, one major benefit of participating in these events is meeting people with common interests. I have made great friends through trail maintenance who I have gone hiking and paddling with across the state.

One of the best parts about trail maintenance is when you are lucky enough to be on a crew with volunteers who have been helping for decades. It is so special to walk through sections and hear the stories and history of that particular area. You learn of hopeful reroutes, challenges faced in getting the trail through in the first place, and the story behind every campsite nickname or specially named section. The Florida Trail simply would not be what it is today without these volunteers that literally blazed the way.

After helping to maintain trails for several years, I have found myself pondering the logistics of maintaining any trail that I am hiking. How long does it take to make each rough-hewn stone step on the way up to McAfee Knob? What tools does that require? As I dodge an army of pointy plants in New Mexico, I think about the awareness needed to carefully cut back the vegetation from the trail. I consider the different climates and how that may impact the frequency and amount of maintenance required. In putting in my own time maintaining sections of the Florida Trail, I have come to have a deeper appreciation for all hiking trails and the effort required for them to exist.

KALEY DEAL

When I signed up for my first work party, I was a little intimidated. I didn’t know anyone who would be there, and I wasn’t quite sure what it would be like. I remember receiving an email saying that we were going to cover about 40 miles that weekend, and I was skeptical – Florida wilderness can be thick.

But, upon arriving, things quickly fell into place. We were broken up into teams, each bringing some knowledge, experience, and muscle to the group. When there were questions, we figured them out together. When someone got tired, we shared the load. And it was easy to make conversation and friendships – there’s something magic about the combination of working hard, eating well, and sleeping under the stars.

You never know what you might learn from the folks you’ll meet, and it’s the people, alongside the work, that’ll keep you coming back.
THE FLORIDA TRAIL ASSOCIATION
APALACHEE CHAPTER PRESENTS:

**IDIDAHIKE 2022**
**FEBRUARY 26 & 27**

AN OUTDOOR EVENT TO BENEFIT THE FLORIDA TRAIL ASSOCIATION AND OUR FLORIDA NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

**CITY OF ST. MARKS, FL**

The historic city of St. Marks is one of the Florida National Scenic Trail’s Gateway Communities. The area offers a variety of hikes along the Florida Trail. For more info about the area including accommodations, restaurants, and things to do - check out cityofstmarks.com and visitwakulla.com.

AS PLANNING CONTINUES INFORMATION & UPDATES CAN BE FOUND AT: FLORIDATRAIL.ORG/IDIDAHIKE OR APALACHEE.FLORIDATRAIL.ORG/IDIDAHIKE/

QUESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT US AT: FTAIDIDAHIKE2022@GMAIL.COM
“A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” - Howard Zahniser

These lines, taken from the Wilderness Act of 1964, described a groundbreaking vision for the conservation of our ever-diminishing wild places. The resulting law created a National Wilderness Preservation System that has designated millions of acres of the most protected public lands in America. These lands are managed with restraint, allowing nature to take its course. Land managers are directed to pursue certain specific goals: examples include protecting watersheds, maintaining native plant and animal species, and providing the public with opportunities to experience a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. To achieve these goals, the Wilderness Act prohibits any motorized equipment or other forms of mechanical transport within protected areas, including the use of power tools for trail construction or maintenance.

Here in Florida we have 17 federally-designated wilderness areas totaling an area of 1,421,393 acres. These wilderness areas are exactly the types of natural and scenic landmarks that National Scenic Trails seek to highlight. The Florida Trail passes through several of them, including a swampy 12 mile section in the Apalachicola National Forest’s Bradwell Bay Wilderness, an 8 mile section in the Ocala National Forest’s Juniper Prairie Wilderness, and a 2 mile section along the Port Leon area of the St. Marks Wilderness. Together these areas encompass some of the most interesting and difficult sections of the Florida Trail. Keeping them open and accessible is an ongoing challenge that requires some unique tools and strategies.

Even outside of wilderness areas, trail maintenance along the FT can be very different from the work required on hiking trails in other parts of the country. With its hot and wet subtropical climate, Florida has an almost year-round growing season. In other parts of the world, well-designed hiking trails can go years without requiring dedicated attention from a trail crew; clearing blow-downs and opening drainage features is often the only regular work required. The same approach doesn’t work in our environment. FTA’s volunteers strive to thoroughly maintain every single mile of the Florida Trail, every year. If we miss a season, hikers will be stuck pushing through thick saw palmetto and waist-high weeds, struggling to make out the next blaze behind overgrown thickets of tiri. If maintenance lapses even longer, the trail tread may disappear completely, swallowed up by the expanding forest. The growth simply never stops. Because of these challenges, we are also uniquely reliant on motorized equipment: mowers, brush cutters, and chainsaws are...
For another wilderness opportunity, consider participating in this year’s IDIDAHIKE event, hosted by the Apalachee Chapter in St. Marks, FL. IDIDAHIKE is an annual outdoor event and fundraiser for the Florida Trail Association designed to showcase the wonderful and abundant trails in the North Florida Big Bend area; many past events took place along the Suwannee River. Scheduled for February 26 & 27, the event features five hikes (including a trip into the St. Marks Wilderness), a silent auction, education and environment booths, and the chance to connect with hikers and volunteers from all over Florida. FTA volunteers are also needed to help setup and coordinate the event! For more information, see: floridatrail.org/IDIDAHIKE
The Bradwell Bay Wilderness in the Apalachicola National Forest.

(Top) The Florida Trail in Bradwell Bay.

(Bottom) The entrance to the St. Marks Wilderness, with a warning about primitive trail conditions.

Follow the blaze! The primitive trails conditions of a wilderness footpath.

(Top) Wilderness areas require proficiency with hand tools.

(Bottom) Hikers travel through deep water in the Bradwell Bay Wilderness.

Water levels in Bradwell Bay fluctuate from ankle to waist deep.

Crews work to cut back the encroaching titi in Bradwell Bay.
Hiking in Big Cypress is unlike anywhere else along the Florida Trail, so it should be no surprise that maintaining Big Cypress is unlike anywhere else along the Florida Trail. Running a brushcutter becomes an entirely different experience when you are trying to keep it out of knee-deep water. Utilizing a chainsaw is a lot harder when you have to hike the chainsaw, a tool kit, wedges, chaps, sawyer helmet and fuel out five miles to remove one tree and then hike it all back. Even lopping takes on a new artistic form as maintainers groom the cypress trees instead of adopting a “more is better” approach to thick areas. That’s why, when the three chapters responsible for the Big Cypress region of the trail approached the Florida Trail Association with their need for more skilled maintenance workers in their region, an idea began to form.

The three chapters, Big Cypress, Alligator Amblers, and the Happy Hoofers cover the Florida Trail from the Southern Terminus at Oasis Visitor’s Center to John Stretch Park at the bottom of Lake Okeechobee (maps 40-42). This stretch of trail includes six official campsites, three blue, a yellow, and a red trails and endless wide open views of South Florida. Additionally, the chapters maintain other trails in their communities including the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park and Collier Seminole State Park.

These trails range wildly from dry hardwood hammocks to cypress swamps. Depending on the time of year, a hiker or maintainer can have an entirely different experience as they cross the Preserve. Footing along this section of trail can range from submerged, to shoe sucking marl and slippery mud, to firm footing.

Typically, Big Cypress is maintained through several events led solely by the chapters or with the FTA team for support. These events are advertised on the FTA website and through the chapters individually. In November and December, the Happy Hoofers tackle the entire section north of I-75 to the levees south of Lake Okeechobee. Volunteers are able to access these work parties by their own vehicles and sometimes use those vehicles to get the work done on long stretches of trail on the levees.

In December, a Big Cypress Chapter work party based at Oasis Visitor’s Center covers the first 5 miles of the Florida Trail. This popular section gets a great deal of foot traffic and often sees many visitors from the general public on recreational hikes and guided tours. At the end of the 2022 season, we will have accurate statistics on just how many users this section gets thanks to a new trail counter near the first mile marker provided by the visitor usage study with the University of Florida. Work on the blue trail and Roberts Lake trail (the former southern terminus for the Florida Trail) begins during this time as well.

Then, in the Spring, the Big Cypress chapter takes on the section of trail between mile 5 and Oak Hill Campsite during two work parties. This backcountry experience requires the volunteer crew to take a swamp buggy in and be completely self-sufficient for 5 days. Frequently, volunteers have needed...
to hike in and out of this work party to free up space on the buggy.

Finally, the Alligator Amblers wrap up the trail maintenance season with a late Spring work party to maintain Oak Hill to I-75. This section tends to be the wettest and waiting a little longer can help maintainers to have a bit of firmer footing. They often have to work to eradicate poison ivy that has crept into their three campsites, Oak Hill, Thank God Island and, appropriately named, Ivy Camp.

The first Southern Trail Skills Regional Training took place the first weekend in November 2021 at the Everglades National Park Institute. Everglades National Park Institute is a unique partnership between Everglades National Park and an official nonprofit partner, Florida National Parks Association. The Institute provides immersive, educational experiences for visitors. Their facility allows groups who serve the region, to host events utilizing their bunkhouses, camping area and classrooms.

The class was offered to active members, volunteers and activity leaders within the three chapters. Friday evening opened with introductions and dinner. Then, we got right to work. Small groups, armed with the Florida Trail Association’s Trail Manual began hunting down the answers to trivia questions.

On Saturday morning, participants were split into two groups. One crew headed outdoors with Abe Christian, FTA’s Technical Advisor, for a hands-on tool maintenance and usage class. With safety and efficiency at the forefront of each tool presented, Abe shared the best practices for loppers, brush cutters, mowers and more. Everyone had the chance to practice what they were learning and spent time sharpening, cleaning and tuning up equipment.

Inside, representatives from each chapter shared about the sections they maintained in detail. Then they led participants through planning and promoting a work party to vetting, selecting and informing volunteers about service opportunities. Kay Ferrara and Richard Warren put on their acting hats and

**Q: How large should a blaze be?**

**A: 2 inches wide and 6 inches long (about the size of a dollar bill).**

**Abe Christian leads a class on tool maintenance.**

**Participants hunt in the Trail Manual.**
gave the group “volunteers” to consider. The class then discussed and voted to select or redirect for the maintenance opportunity presented. Finally, the paperwork and safety considerations were reviewed.

After lunch, participants swapped classes. While cooking dinner, we demonstrated and discussed best practices for a camp kitchen. To close out the eventful day, the group gathered around a campfire for another beautiful Big Cypress sunset.

Then, it was time to practice what they’d learned. Gathering after breakfast, all volunteers participated in a Tailgate Safety Briefing. Three crews were established. The first would be working with mowers and brushcutters along the airstrip at the beginning of the trail at Oasis Visitors Center. Since this section is a raised berm with disturbed soil, invasive species grow abundantly. Led by Abe, a crew took turns using all the equipment and discussing frequent problems that come up in the field and how to solve them.

The other two crews traveled to Gator Hook Trail off of Loop Road in the Preserve. This five mile trail offers a challenging hike but offers incredible views in exchange for your efforts. Logging took place in this section of the Preserve, and railroad ties from the logging trams are visible below the water.

Crews worked for several hours on this trail, confronted first with a half-mile trek through solution holes and deep water. Coached by the facilitators and each other, participants worked with a variety of tools including brushcutters, hand saws and loppers. New blazes shown in canary yellow throughout the trail and the entrance on Loop Road was cleared back to provide a more welcoming trailhead.

This training opportunity was a wonderful experience and now 40 volunteers from the region are ready to maintain it safely and efficiently. The three chapters in the region provided a great model for cooperation in the name of effectively meeting the goals of the Florida Trail Association. Many thanks to the leadership of the Big Cypress, Alligator Amblers and Happy Hoofer chapters whose vision created something that can be repeated and replicated around the state for years to come.

For more information on how to get involved maintaining the southern sections of the trail be sure to check out the Big Cypress, Alligator Ambler and Happy Hoofer pages on www.floridatrail.org or on their social media pages. As always, you can find more information about training opportunities like this one and volunteer opportunities throughout the state on the FTA website as well.
LOGGING IN BIG CYPRESS

Logging took place in Big Cypress in the late 1920s until the late 1950s. According to the National Park Service, “with the advent of power saws in the 1950s, the logging rates increased dramatically. Between 1944 and 1956, a single sawmill shipped out 360 million board feet of cypress lumber from the Big Cypress Swamp.” The preserve was established in 1974 to protect the region, but evidence of the logging damage is still apparent today.

Revealed along its trails
A footstep at a time
A paddlesroke away
A ride into the unknown:
Florida, naturally.

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In Seminole State Forest, a sign now reads “Rachael’s Blueberry Cross-Trail.” It stands as a testament to the 31 years that Rachael Augspurg has dedicated to the Florida Trail Association and the trails of central Florida. In November 2021, a group of Central Florida chapter members and FTA partners gathered to rename the trail and toast to Rachael’s FTA legacy. Rachael began as a trail maintenance volunteer in 1990 and would find herself supporting the Central Florida Chapter for decades to come.

“I joined FTA in 1990 and immediately became involved in trail maintenance with Wiley Dykes Sr. and helped build the trails in Seminole State Forest Central Chapter’s trail maintenance activities so Wiley, the Trail Coordinator, could focus on the planning and building of new trails in Little Big Econ State Forest. When Wiley retired in 2005, I became the Trail Coordinator,” Rachael said.

Over her 31 years, Rachael served in a variety of roles, most for many years. Most notably, she was the Trail Coordinator for 16 years. In addition to the day to day responsibilities that role entails, she was instrumental in planning new trails in Little Big Econ, Mills Creeks, Chuluota, Bronson State Forest and Savage Christmas Creek Preserve. She also served as chapter chair, activity leader, trailmaster, section leader, crew leader, program coordinator and on the FTA Board of Directors. Rachael has been recognized for her service as the winner of the John Weary, Lifetime, Cornelia Burge and Special Service awards through the FTA. She also received multiple awards at the chapter level. As an activity leader, Rachael’s Winter Wednesday hikes have always drawn a large crowd for the 27 years she has been leading them.

I first met Rachael in this role as Trail Coordinator in 2020. I was a new Regional Trail Manager and I had heard from volunteers throughout the organization that I needed to witness how Rachael ran a trail crew. As we gathered one morning at Bronson State Forest, it was obvious that Rachel’s events and trail crews operated like a well-oiled machine. Everyone immediately knew their crew ...
and gathered silently in small groups while Rachael reviewed the plan. With a large map, she explained exactly where each crew would begin and end, who would perform each task, and when and where they would go when they finished. Safety was paramount and everyone knew the expectations. Overwhelmingly though, there was a pervasive sense of respect for Rachael and the role she played. It was the same respect that she gave the lands she was there to serve. We are eternally grateful for her contributions. Many thanks to Seminole State Forest for allowing the FTA to honor her in this way.

To visit Rachael’s Blueberry Trail, park at the Bear Pond Trailhead at Seminole State Forest. Use the orange blazed Florida Trail north until you reach the yellow trail. Head north on the yellow trail until you reach Rachael’s cross-trail blazed in blue.
PHOTOS

38 (Bottom) Rachael leads volunteers through the plan for the day.

39 (Top) Rachael’s Augspurg and Joe Bishop, Florida Forestry Supervisor at Rachael’s Blueberry Trail.

39 (Bottom) Wednesday Winter Hike! (Photo taken in 2018)

40 (Top) Rachel at Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve

40 (Bottom) Recognizing Rachael at a chapter meeting.

41 (Right) Get out and visit Rachael’s Blueberry Trail in Seminole State Forest.
The historic city of St. Marks is one of the Florida National Scenic Trail’s Gateway Communities. The area offers a variety of hikes along the Florida Trail. For more information including accommodations, restaurants, and things to do - check out cityofstmarks.com and visitwalkla.com.

IDIDAHIKE 2022
FEBRUARY 26 & 27

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Florida Trail Association

Introducing the Florida Trail Passport

Info & updates can be found at Floridatrail.org/ididahike or by scanning the QR code below
When you join the state-wide Florida Trail Association you automatically become a member of your local chapter based upon your zip code. However, members may attend the activities of any chapter and may transfer to any chapter they wish simply by informing the FTA Office.

Florida Trail activities are organized by our local chapters and are led by authorized volunteer activity leaders. Many of our activities are open to the general public so you can get to know us before you join. Activities can be found online at floridatrail.org. Click on “About Us” then click on the “Upcoming Events” button on the left. Local activities are usually also listed on the chapter websites, Facebook pages and Meetups. Click on “About Us” then “Our Chapters” for links to local chapter sites.

Participants in activities must sign an Assumption of Risk form and agree to accept personal responsibility for their safety and the safety of accompanying minors. Always contact the activity leader in advance for more information, to let them know you are attending, to find out any special requirements or equipment for the activity, and to check for any last minute changes.

For more information about chapters and links to websites/meetups/photos go online to FloridaTrail.org/about-us/chapters/ then select the chapter
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1022 NW 2nd Street, Gainesville, FL 32601.
Submit your photos to the Florida Trail Photo Contest! Instructions inside.

Photo by 2021 Photo Contest Winner Landon Ohlinger