

# Apopka Loop Trail

The vision for the Lake Apopka Loop Trail is a 57-mile facility encircling Lake Apopka and linking parks, open space and communities with a paved multi-use trail. The trail will provide visual access to the lake in some places and physical access in others. It will serve communities within the basin and will help meet regional demand for outdoor recreation. It also will be a critical component for pursuing an eco-tourism strategy for the Lake Apopka Basin. Trails are tourist draws in their own right, and also function as important support facilities for other eco-tourism activities.

For attracting outside visitors, the most successful trails are those that are perceived to go somewhere. Whether individuals take advantage of this feature is less important than the feeling that they could. For basin residents, the longer the trail, the greater the number of people who would have access to it. A loop trail for Lake Apopka would offer all of these advantages and also would forge a link between basin communities.

In Orange County, a significant portion of the loop trail already exists by virtue of the West Orange Trail. To identify possible routes in Lake County that could link the West Orange Trail with Water Management District lands to the north, a series of public workshops was held around the basin. Workshop participants identified the old Tavares and Gulf (T&G) railroad corridor running parallel to CR 455 as the preferred route for the loop trail's western leg. This rail corridor extends from Tavares south to the Minneola/Clermont trail, with the segment needed for the western leg running south from the Water Management District lands north of Ferndale to the Clermont/Minneola trail.

As part of their management planning effort, the Water Management District has conceptually identified a series of trails on their lands, one of which could be used to connect the T&G railroad corridor to corridors in Orange County. This is the perimeter trail along the outer

edge of the proposed shallow marsh area and deepwater area. The perimeter trail could then be connected, through one of several alternative trail corridors, over to Magnolia Park and then on to the West Orange Trail.

Needs and Opportunities relating to the loop trail focus on those portions for which alternative corridors are severely limited. For the Apopka Loop Trail to be built, the greatest need is to ensure that sufficient land is available for the trail to continue from Magnolia Park in Orange County to the T & G rail corridor in Lake County. While the Water Management District continues to support the concept of a perimeter trail along the lake, they have noted that the configuration of the District's land ownership would make

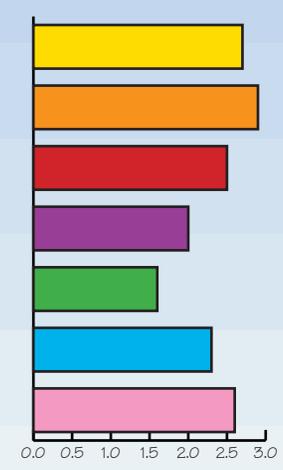
such a trail on District lands impossible. Lands at the outer boundary of District ownership do not comprise a continuous upland buffer surrounding the property, because the District purchased lands up to a specific elevation based on projected water levels after restoration. Some of the District's land may be only in the form of flowage easements over private property. Therefore, any continuous linear trail on the perimeter of District-owned property would not be physically possible. Additionally, purchasing land along the edge of the entire length of District lands would be financially impractical.

Using the levee located next to the McDonald Canal - when forms what will be the boundary of the shallow water marsh restoration area and the deepwater

## Lake Apopka Loop Proposed Trail Segments



TRAIL USE PRIORITY (High Ranking = 3, Low Ranking = 1)	
Yellow	Hiking
Orange	Bicycling
Red	In-line Skating
Purple	Equestrian
Green	Mt. Biking
Blue	Wheelchair
Pink	Nature Walking



## west orange trail

## McDonald Canal Levee Trail

## T & G RAILROAD TRAIL

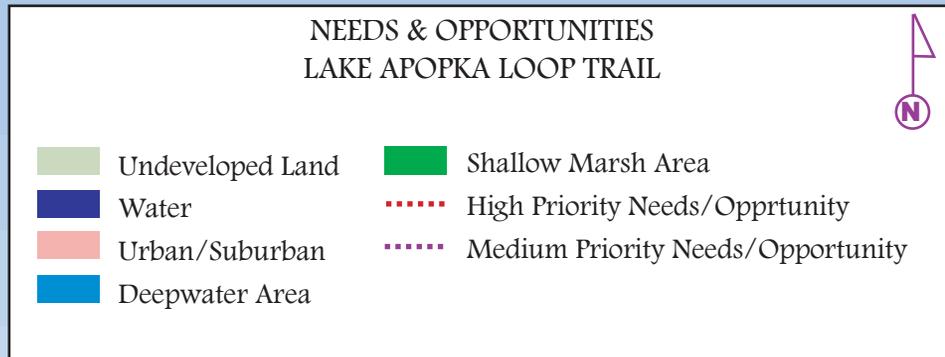
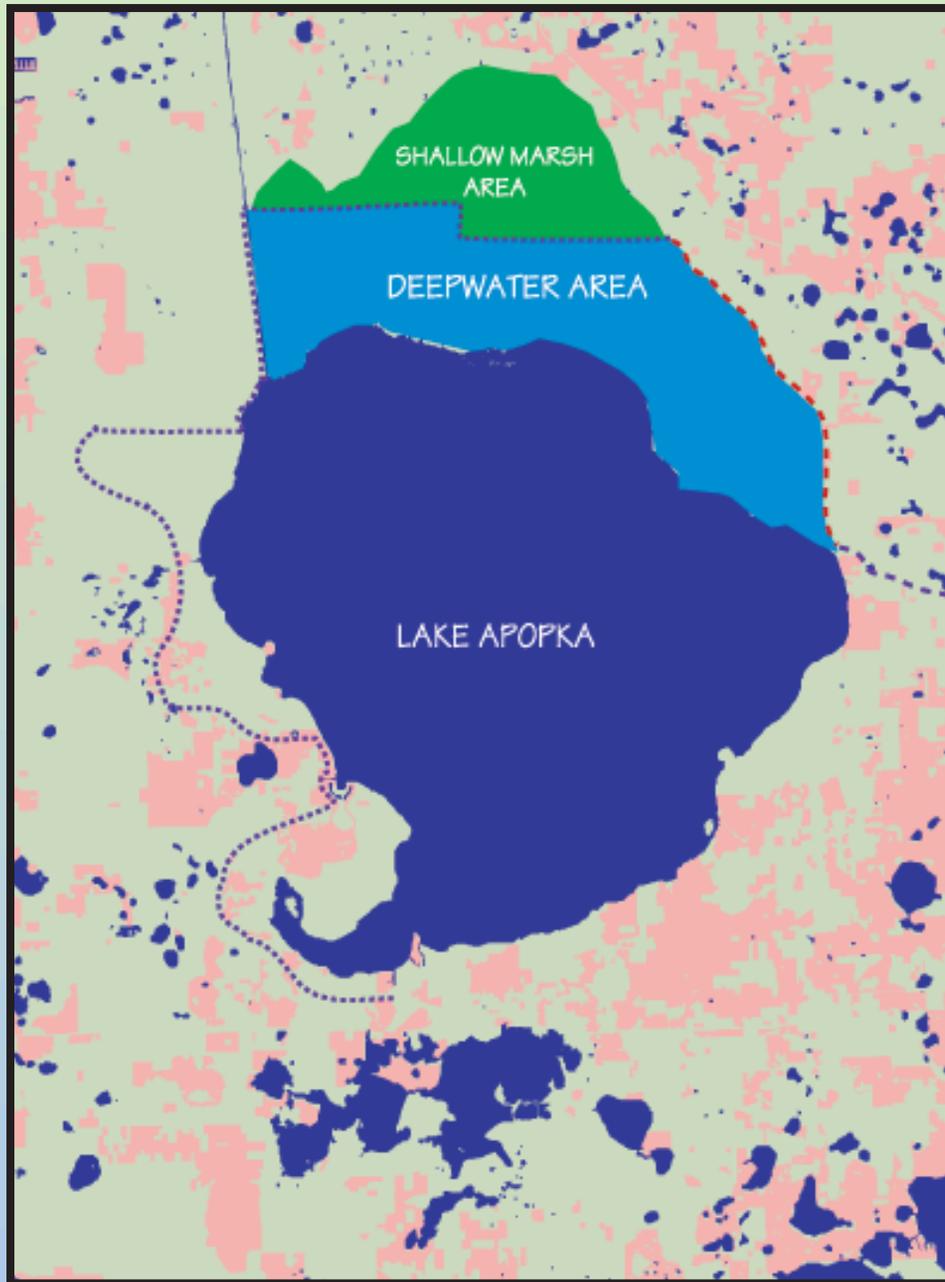


section can solve part of this problem. Kept intact, the levee will provide a means for crossing District lands and eliminate the need to purchase property along the northern perimeter of the restoration area. The trail surface for this section will likely be limestone instead of asphalt.

An alternative corridor for connecting the McDonald Canal Levee trail with Magnolia Park does not exist. Consequently, it is critical to establishing a loop trail that sufficient land be secured adjacent to the District-owned property on the northeastern shore. For that reason, directing resources toward this segment is of the highest priority.

In Orange County, several alternative routes are available to link the West Orange Trail to Magnolia Park on the eastern shore of Lake Apopka, but currently there are no preferred routes for establishing this link. Given that there are several options open for trail connections, this trail link is not as critical as others for trail development, but building the link will be important to the overall loop.

In Lake County, the T&G rail corridor makes an ideal route for the western leg. However, Lake County needs to be opportunistic. While other routes might be found, the T&G corridor is the best route for the trail due to the relatively low number of owners. Once fragmented by development, it will be much harder and considerably more expensive to secure this trail link.



# Apopka Loop Trail



**clay island trail**

**NORTHEAST SHORE TRAIL**

