

First Ribbon-Cutting for the East Central Regional Rail-Trail

Volusia County launches inaugural segment.



News from FDEP - The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Volusia County and other partners as well as area citizens, representatives from state and regional agencies and city and county officials celebrated the grand opening of the initial segment of the *East Coast Regional Rail-Trail* on Feb. 25, 2012. Among the speakers for the ribbon cutting event were Volusia County Commissioner Pat Northey, Keith Laughlin, President of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and Paul Haydt, Vice Chair of

the East Coast Greenway Board of Trustees.

Accessible from Green Spring Park, the newly opened trail segment is 5.7 miles long, 12-foot-wide, paved and landscaped and includes a scenic boardwalk. "*Volusia County has taken a significant first step toward realizing this corridor's potential as a regional economic engine,*" said Jim Wood, Chief, DEP Office of Greenways and Trails, Division of Recreation and Parks. "*As reflected in the marketing approach of Titusville's Chamber of Commerce, there is great value in nature-based tourism and Brevard County plans to take the next step in developing this regional resource.*"

Three additional segments are scheduled to be under construction this summer: one in the city of Edgewater, one in Titusville and the other will connect to the existing segment in Volusia County and feature a pedestrian bridge crossing State Road 415.

The ECRRT, a 51 mile corridor located in Volusia and Brevard counties, is the longest rail parcel ever purchased by the state. The funding was provided by the Florida Forever Program. This acquisition was a collaborative effort by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the East Central Regional Planning Council, the counties and the state. Volusia and Brevard counties are developing and managing the ECRRT on behalf of the state.

The ECRRT forms part of two major long-distance trail corridors, the 260-mile St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop and the East Coast Greenway. The ECRRT was also recently selected by the U.S. Department of Interior for inclusion in the America's Great Outdoors

initiative which targets 100 (two per state) of the country's most promising projects designed to protect special places and increase access to outdoor spaces.

2012 Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan

The first phase of the state trails system update is underway.

The Florida Greenways and Trails Council (FGTC) met in Tallahassee on March 1, 2012 and approved the schedule and process for developing the 2012 Florida Greenways and Trails System (FGTS) Plan. Over the coming months, the DEP Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) will be moving forward with the FGTS plan in coordination with the FGTC, federal, state and regional agencies; counties and cities; non-profit organizations; the private sector; and the citizens of Florida.

The FGTS Plan establishes the vision for implementing a connected statewide system of greenways and trails for recreation, conservation, alternative transportation, healthy lifestyles, a vibrant economy and a high quality of life. The original FGTS Plan was completed in 1998 and adopted by the Florida Legislature in 1999, laying the groundwork for many programs, projects and initiatives that exist today. For background and an overview of the schedule for developing the current plan, visit the OGT website and view the [2012 Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan](#). There will be opportunities for public input, including a series of public workshops planned for Fall 2012 (dates and locations to be announced).