



Trail Tales

The Newsletter of

RAILS TO TRAILS OF THE WITHLACOOCHEE, INC. (RTW)

The Citizen Support Organization (CSO) for the Withlacoochee State Trail (WST)

The Friendliest Trail in the Country

GERALD CLARK MEMORIAL AWARD

The Gerald Clark Memorial Award is given each year in honor of Gerald Clark, who showed personal dedication and courage in striving to help fulfill the goals and dreams of the Rails to Trails of the Withlacoochee. Gerald Clark's extraordinary efforts on behalf of Rails to Trails were instrumental in meeting many of its earliest goals.

The award is given to an individual, company, or entity whose dedication and volunteer service to the Withlacoochee State Trail exemplifies the example set by Gerald Clark during his lifetime.

This year's award was presented to our Wednesday Work Crew for their exceptional efforts repairing our trail from the damage caused by Hurricane Irma. While these men do outstanding work at all times, their efforts after Irma were phenomenal: clearing the trail; pushing the cut trees; branches, brush, and grasses away from the trail; rolling it back to ensure cyclists have a safe place to pull off the trail; and keeping their eyes on unstable trees were beyond anyone's expectations.



Congratulations to, from the left, Rich Roussel, John Stahl, John Shire, Don Zutaut, Ken Kraut, Jim McLean, Al Cairns, Dave Sullivan, and Harris Floyd. Some of these men drive up from the Villages to keep our trail safe – and gorgeous – with no reward except the occasional licorice ice cream.

The Lifetime Achievement Award winner was not able to attend the meeting, and so we will announce his win after he's received it.



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VANDALS STRIKE

During the late night of Saturday, April 7 and/or early morning of Sunday, April 8, vandals damaged one of the restrooms and the drinking fountain at the Floral City rest stop on the Withlacoochee State Trail.



As you can see from the photos here, the vandals (at this time the assumption is there were at least two individuals based on the damage done) pulled a sign from the trail and

stuck it in one of the toilets.

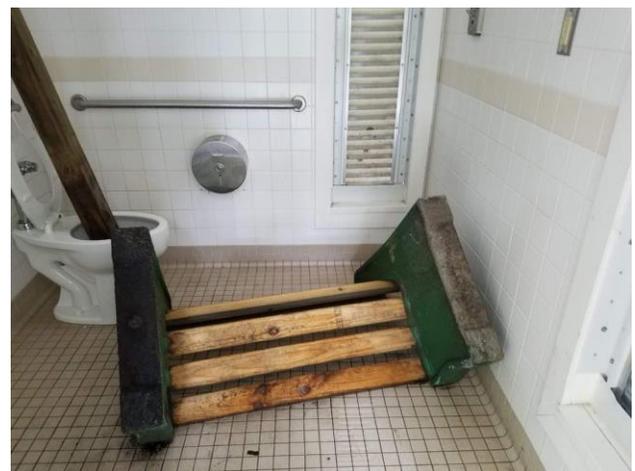
They also upended a bench, partially constructed of concrete, and dragged it into the restroom. They broke the sink faucet and the toilet seat.



Outside they broke the fittings on the drinking fountain, which gushed water until the trail was flooded.



Anyone with information regarding these thoughtless crimes is urged to contact the Citrus County Sheriff's Office at 352-726-1121. While the rest area is property of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks, and so the state of Florida, the Citrus County Sheriff's office is handing the investigation.





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GOOD NEIGHBOR TRAIL

Clearing for the last segment of the Good Neighbor Trail finally reached the Withlacoochee State Trail in mid-April!

You can see the work for yourself if you head south from the northernmost Croom-Rital crossing.



The crushed limestone base is moving along, and now reaches more than half way from the end of Richbarn Road in Brooksville to the intersection with the Withlacoochee State Trail, about 1.5 miles.

The two trails will be linked by November. The completed trail will allow WST users to go into Brooksville via multi-use trail.

The Good Neighbor Trail will be about 10 miles long.

GOPHER TORTOISE BREEDING SEASON

It's gopher tortoise breeding season! The females are busy laying clutches of 3-15 ping-pong ball sized eggs in nests they dig in the sand outside their burrows. They will carefully cover the eggs to protect them from predators like raccoons, skunks, dogs, bobcats, and coyotes – but the sand won't protect the eggs from the weight of a human. With a little good fortune, the eggs will hatch into walnut-sized, yellow tortoise babies in 80 to 100 days, and the babies will move into the main burrow or stay safe under logs and leaf litter until they are big enough to dig their own burrows. Please give them a fighting chance and stay off the burrow aprons!

NEW JERSEYS!

No, not the Garden State, but our cycling jerseys!



Keep your eye on our [website](#), and very soon you'll see not only our 200th Anniversary of the bicycle design, but our new purple and green jersey, too.



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LOOKING FOR A FEW VOLUNTEERS

We are always looking to add folks to our lists of members and volunteers, and thought perhaps you might like to know what it is we do.

Our signature event, the annual bike ride on the Withlacoochee State Trail, is the first Sunday in October. Many of our volunteers work only this event – and we are so grateful for their help! This event is the trail’s only fundraiser and 100% of the proceeds go back into maintaining and improving the trail. Due to the efforts of all of our dedicated volunteers, the Rails to Trails of the Withlacoochee, Inc. has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars over the years for the “care and feeding” of the trail – a recent, very visual example of how we use the funds are the new trees being planted along the trail, and the patching being done to keep the trail as safe and pothole free as possible.

Our volunteers help to maintain and groom the trail; build and maintain trail structures and amenities; and promote the trail. Some of the jobs our volunteers handle include building picnic tables, benches, and pavilions; blowing debris from the trail; trimming the encroaching trees and branches; and controlling invasive exotic plants.

Don’t live locally? Volunteers also manage social media accounts and produce our newsletter. You can help with these tasks no matter where you live!

If you’re considering joining us, please head over to the volunteer page on our website, <http://www.rttwst.org/volunteer-rails-to-trails.php>. From there, complete the [Volunteer Form](#).

VOLUNTEERS:

Just a quick reminder for all volunteers to be sure to log your hours by the 5th of each month!

RTW TRAIL TALES	www.rttwst.org
Sherry Bechtel	President president@rttwst.org
Rich Roussel	Vice President vice-president@rttwst.org
Lyn Floyd	Treasurer treasurer@rttwst.org
Nancy Keefer	Secretary njnkefer@yahoo.com
Jamie Roussel	Membership Chair member-donor@rttwst.org
Al Cairns Steve Diez Mike Dolan Jim McLean Dennis Reiland Ken Spilios Don Zutaut	Board of Directors
All board members can be reached at director@rttwst.org	
Nancy Keefer	Newsletter Editor njnkefer@yahoo.com