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Celebrating 13 years of The Happy Paddler!

The Happy Paddler

2021-2022 Paddling Season Announced

Today we are announcing our schedule for the upcoming 2021-2022 paddling season. You will find the new schedule in the right-hand column of this newsletter (for some of you) and on our website at PaddleFlorida.org. As is our custom, the schedule includes multi-day events in each of Florida's 5 water management districts and two weekend festivals. We are also proud to tell everyone that this newsletter makes 12 years of continuous monthly publication.

Below you will find Matt Keene's thoughtful and eloquent response to receiving Paddle Florida's 2021 Environmental Leadership award last month. Under that you will find Ryan Smart's report on the end of Florida's legislative session. We are privileged to have these two talented guys engaged in environmental issues here in the Sunshine State. They represent the future in the ongoing struggle for the protection of natural Florida.

Please join us next season for one or more of our outstanding waterborne adventures!

A few words from Matt Keene, Paddle Florida's 2021 Environmental Leadership Award winner:

"This past weekend, I found I was selected to receive Paddle Florida's 2021 Environmental Leadership Award. Covid has highlighted the despitful event to many of us have had to spend time in nature and it has also shown what a communal experience it is to be outdoors. I am encouraged by the people dropping foot on trails this year, and those pending their time to be beneath the shade of a tree, library environmental organizations and classes, however, are struggling to be cared about in today's world, and we see that the repercussions of continued ecological carelessness take a little harder with each year passed. Paddle Florida has consistently been a great ally in my work, helping them inspire people to explore our state's waters and to consider what it means to be stewards of them. My own path during the past year has had mountains to climb and headwords to push against, and I am humbly grateful for protected corridors and wild areas where I could find sanctuary. As your thoughts turn to summer picnics and difficult trails, spend some time (and some money) on the organizations making sure all that we love sticks around."

Florida Legislative Wrap-Up

By Ryan Smart

Executive Director, Florida Springs Council

Last week the 2021 Florida Legislative Session came to a close. Once again, the Florida Legislature balked on passing any meaningful legislation to protect Florida springs and waters. There was, however, good news on environmental funding largely thanks to federal Coronavirus recovery funding provided by President Biden and the United State Congress.

Below is a summary of three issues the Florida Springs Council tracked closely during the 2021 Session.

Legislation to Protect Florida's Springs and Waters

The Florida Legislature again failed to pass legislation to protect and restore Florida's springs and waters. This year the Florida Springs Council supported Senate Bill 1022, by Senator Linda Stewart, and HB 1225, by Sliter Representative Joy Goff-Marcil.

These Bills, aptly titled "Implementation of Governor DeSantis' Blue Green Algae Task Force Recommendations Act," would have put eight of the most important recommendations from the Blue-Green Algae Task Force into law. [Read more...]

Photo Credit: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Gov. DeSantis to decide fate of controversial toll road projects through sensitive lands in Florida

By Laura Cassera, *Florida Phoenix*

The state's plan to build three massive toll roads through rural swaths of Florida were scrapped Tuesday, when the House of Representatives cast the last vote needed to repeal the controversial projects and send the legislation to the governor for final review.

But the repeal isn't exactly a total repeal. The legislation still authorizes new toll roads and highways, including expansion and "road upgrades" along 130 miles of scenic U.S. 19 between Citrus County and I-10 in north Florida, which could impact sensitive parts of Florida.

It's now in Gov. Ron DeSantis' hands, following the Legislature's action on 330 miles of planned new construction in three Multi-Use Corridors of Economic Significance, or MCORES, which former Senate President Bill Galvano pushed through the 2019 Legislature.

If DeSantis approves the legislation, it will still authorize 330 miles of roads but not of the magnitude of MCORES. [Read more...]

Stand Up Paddleboard Safety Tips

By Mark Armstrong, *Kayak Guru*

Whether it's in a river, a lake or the sea, Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) is fast growing in popularity. This watersport is great for your core strength, and it's fun for people of all ages too. However, it's essential to think about safety when going out on the water, no matter whether you're tackling the rapids or paddling in a sheltered bay. Read on for our top on how to enjoy SUP safely and responsibly.

What To Bring

This is your checklist for what to take on your next SUP trip to ensure safety:

- **Flotation device:** Even if you're an experienced swimmer, a personal flotation device (PFD) is necessary. In fact, it's mandatory. Under the US Coast Guard regulations, Stand Up Paddleboards fall into the vessels category, meaning that children under 12 must wear a flotation device at all times, and individuals 13 and over must have one on board. This could be a life jacket or a buoyancy aid.
- **Whistle:** A whistle is small and easy to carry, but it can save your life in an emergency, so do not leave this behind.
- **Leash:** Make sure you always connect your SUP to your ankle by a leash. Your board can easily get swept away from you if the current is strong.
- **Water:** Stand Up Paddleboarding is exercise, and particularly if you're out in the sun for an extended period, dehydration is a risk. Always bring water with you and remember to drink it regularly.
- **Phone:** Not only will you be happy to have your phone for taking pictures, but it can make all the difference if you end up swept out of safety, and need to call for help. Just make sure you keep your phone in a completely waterproof pouch.
- **Quick-fix kit:** In case of punctures if you have an inflatable SUP, a puncture repair kit or some duct tape at the very least can really come in handy.
- **Dry bag:** Make sure you have a dry bag to keep all the above nice and dry. Pack a few dry clothes in case of getting wet, and some snacks too if you're going to be out for a while. [Read more...]

Algae Blooms, Seagrass Loss, and Manatee Deaths

From Save the Manatee Club

Photo: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Save the Manatee Club (SMC) has received many calls, comments and questions in regard to the loss of seagrass, algae blooms, and increased manatee mortalities in Florida. We encourage you to share your stories and your photographs with your online network of contacts and with your elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels (see contact information below). Please ask for their help in healing our waters.

Trouble for Manatees in the Indian River Lagoon

As the direct result of human derelictions over many decades, the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) on the East Coast of Florida has suffered a series of harmful algae blooms, leading to massive losses in seagrass coverage and, in turn, the recent deaths of a heart-rending number of manatees.

Manatees gathering at warm water locations such as powerplants along the IRL have faced an additional threat during the 2020-2021 winter season as there has been very little seagrass or vegetation for them to eat in the immediate vicinity. Traveling further for forage would mean deadly exposure to cold water, so the manatees ultimately choose to forgo feeding over dying from the cold. [Learn more...]

Flora & Fauna Spotlight: Swallow-tailed kite (*Elanoides forficatus*)

From the National Audubon Society

Photo Credit: Andy Morffew

Our most beautiful bird of prey: striking in its shape, its pattern, and its extraordinarily graceful flight. Hanging motionless in the air, swooping and gliding, riding upside down and then zooming high in the air with scarcely a motion of its wings, the Swallow-tailed Kite is a joy to watch. At one time it was common in summer over much of the southeast, but today it is found mostly in Florida and a few other areas of the deep south. [Learn more...]

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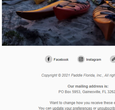
You can select Paddle Florida as your AmazonSmile charity at this link or in the Amazon App. **Amazon will then donate 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to Paddle Florida!**



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It's Safer Outdoors

paddle Florida

Inspiring Stewardship Adventures

Place-based Learning in the Great Outdoors

Paddle Florida welcomes paddlers from all races, gender, and sexual orientations. We will continue to foster a community of learning among the paddling community and work to create a safe space for all to enjoy our paddling adventures.

2021-22 Paddle Florida Season

Suwannee River Wilderness Trail
October 15-20, 2021
Celebrate Florida's version of autumn on its most famous river. The trip spans 65 miles of the Suwannee River and is partner of the northern Withlacoochee, from Madison Blue Spring to Branford. This section features dozens of springs, great fall foliage, camping and counseling.
Register by: October 1, 2021

Treasure Coast Paddling Adventure (NEW)
November 3-6, 2021
Come explore the Treasure Coast of Florida for the profusion of shipwrecks and treasure hunters who have been searching for gold, silver and other valuable and historic items from the wreck of the 1715 Spanish Fleet. Pierce Inlet State Park and Vero Beach will be our home bases for our three days of paddling. Sebastian Inlet's speed two nights at state parks, two nights at Indian River Lagoon Inn, and one night at the Environmental Learning Center. This will be an excellent example of what we try to achieve on every trip: a place-based experience in the Great Outdoors.
Register by: October 22, 2021

Black Creek Paddling Festival
December 10-12, 2021
Our 2nd Black Creek Paddling Festival will be based out of Camp Chowsenowa Park in Green Cove Springs. Join us an we explore the scenic waters of Black Creek and its tributaries. We will have segments on Saturday and Sunday. One of Paddle Florida's favorite entertainers will perform a benefit concert on Friday evening to support continuing our programs at Paddle Florida. This weekend will also feature a Friday dinner and a Saturday morning opportunity to hear from local experts dedicated to preserving North Florida's rivers, springs and water shreds. Our price includes camping for the weekend, the Treehouse and Squirrel Run Cabins have been reserved exclusively paddlers (at their own cost) for our event.
Register by: November 26, 2021

Ten Thousand Islands Expedition (NEW)
January 3, 2022
Southwest Florida's answer to paradise features five days of exploring the magic kingdom of the Ten Thousand Islands. Paddlers will have the experience a Collier Seminole State Park, one of the best state parks in the region. It is within driving distance of Naples and Marco Island, and unlerates. This is a first time event in our January time slot. We have hired a local guide to provide a fantastic experience an annual event in this paddlers' paradise.
Register by: January 3, 2022

Hole Hearted Withlacoochee
February 1-6, 2022
Beginning at Lake Panasoffkee, paddlers will thread their way through hardwood swamps and tannic rivers on a 65-mile journey to the Gulf of Mexico. The adventure includes a side trip to the colorful Rainbow River and the Dunnellon 7 magnitude spring.
Register by: February 1, 2022

Springtime at the Cheoaw
March 18-20, 2022
This will be our 4th different trip in Florida's panhandle, joining the Ochlockonee, the C-Spring Suwannee and the Perdido. Given the sight conditions, this event is ideal for all paddlers and paddleboard Florida Cheoaw State Park is the starting point for staging this event each March, when the dogwoods are blooming in the panhandle. This is going to be a great experience!
Register by: March 4, 2022

Suwannee River Paddling Festival
April 1-2, 2022
Our festival will grace the bluff overlooking two beautiful rivers, our season-capping festival takes place at Suwannee River State Park in Fanning Springs. Festivities will offer supported 6-12 mile paddling options on both the Suwannee and Withlacoochee Rivers, a Saturday night dinner featuring Florida's favorite musicians, and educational presentations from regional waterway experts.
Register by: March 18, 2022

Note: Many of Paddle Florida's trips are limited in capacity and sell out before the registration deadline, so to ensure you have a spot, please register early.

How To: 18 Tips For Paddling With A Group

Paddling group dynamics are very interesting and they vary from group to group. I thought I'd compile a bunch of tips that have worked for me in the past and some that I've seen other groups put along and how each group enjoyed being on the water. [Read more...]

Like us on Facebook

36,481+ followers and counting!

Reconnect with paddling friends, and find new ones on Paddle Florida's Facebook page. Our daily feeds provide updates on the news impacting Florida's paddling community as well as our upcoming trips. Send us your favorite photo depicting paddling in Florida and it might be selected as our "Picture of the Day!"

Support Paddle Florida

During this challenging time, we are all changing our habits to keep our relatives and shorten the impact of this awful virus. To continue our programs of place-based learning in the Great Outdoors, we are counting on the Paddle Florida Community to help us through this difficult time.

Please consider making a donation to show your support of our mission of connecting people to nature and each other.

In appreciation of your donation, you will receive a special gift.

Make a $25 donation HERE **and receive a Paddle Florida Kitchen Towel.**

Make a $50 donation HERE **and receive a Paddle Florida dry bag.**

Make a $75 donation HERE **and receive a a long-sleeved, dri fit Paddle Florida shirt.**

Make a $100 donation HERE **and receive a TEVA waterproof open-pickle pose "A Story of Paddlers" painted by one of our own paddlers, Peggy Perry.**

Click on the photo to enlarge

We are all in this together.

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To donate by check, please send an email with your name and address to info@paddleflorida.org.

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