

ON THE WATER

Marine News:

Florida Keys 115-Mile Paddle to mark Over-Sea Railroad Centennial

Sharing Henry Flagler's vision of the Florida Keys as a remarkable and accessible destination, up to 100 nature-loving kayakers are to embark on a 115-mile, 10-day Paddle Florida Keys Challenge Thursday, Jan. 12, to celebrate the centennial of the Florida Keys Over-Sea Railroad.

Starting at Key Largo's John Pennkamp Coral Reef State Park, the challenge is suited for experienced paddlers and includes overnight stays throughout the Keys. Daily paddles average 6 to 20 miles in both protected and open-water environments.

Highlights of the paddling itinerary include visits and stopovers at historic Tavernier, Indian Key State Park, Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park and other Florida state parks including Long Key and Curry Hammock. A two-night layover at the Lower Keys' Bahia Honda State Park provides an opportunity for exploration and snorkeling at Looe Key Reef.

An opening-night slideshow is planned for Thursday, Jan. 12. Illustrating Flagler's historic and developmental influence on the Florida Keys, it is to be presented by Monica Woll of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Greenways and Trails. A presentation by environmental photographer Mac Stone is scheduled Sunday, Jan. 15.

Tuesday, Jan. 17, paddlers can meet travel authors and professional paddling guides Bill and Mary Burnham for a book signing, slide show and campfire talk at Knight's Key Campground.

Other attractions include live Americana-style music performances on the journey's final nights.

Event organizers expect the kayakers to end their journey at Key West's Fort Zachary Taylor State Park by noon Sunday, Jan. 22, the 100th anniversary of Henry Flagler's arrival on the railroad's inaugural train from Miami. A cookout for pad-

dlers is to follow.

Paddlers interested in joining the group for the final day can put in at Boyd's Key West Campground, 6401 Maloney Ave. There is no fee, but paddlers must provide their own kayaks for the six-mile trek to Key West.

Registration for the 10-day trip is \$800 per person including overnight accommodations and meals. Paddlers also can participate on a daily basis for \$90 per day including meals.

Participants must bring camping gear, kayak and paddle(s) and a personal flotation device. Rental gear is available at Florida Bay Outfitters, MM 104 bayside in Key Largo. Contact 305-451-3018 or visit www.kayak-floridakeys.com/.

Limited space remains for the trip, and paddlers must be registered no later than Friday, Dec. 30.

For more information, see www.paddleflorida.org/keys12/keys.htm or contact Bill Richards at 352-377-8342.

All Aboard:

If you have an outstanding catch or fishing news to report:

- Fax: 305-295-8016
- Write: Daily Fishing Report, P.O. Box 1800, Key West, FL 33041
- Drop it off at The Key West Citizen building
- Email: rmorrow@keysnews.com

Weekly Tides:

See the map, Page 2A

Fish Bites:

The winds continue to challenge fishermen who are anxious to get out and pursue their favorite pastime. The nearby patch reefs offer the safest option for oceanside fishing, with a variety of snapper and mackerel available. The flats and back country are pretty chummed up. Lucky fishermen may spot a permit or two feeding on the incoming tides. Sharks and cudas love to cruise the flats in the winter.

—Capt Pete Peterson