

**Babcock Ranch Preserve
Non-Hunting User Group Workshop**

February 24, 2009

Attendees

Stuart T. Lewis, Peace River Audubon Society, Inc.
Nigel Morris, Quail Forever
Cathy Olson, Lee County Conservation 20/20
Steven Mitnick, Mudcutters Mountain Bike Club
Bill Wilcox, Babcock Ranch, Inc.
Mark Renz, Former Tour Manager
Jack Horner, Florida Trail Association
Pete Quasius, Audubon of Southwest Florida, Inc.
Fred Johnson, Lee County Parks
Connie Kurash, Mudcutters Mountain Bike Club
Byron Maharrey, Everglades Coordinating Council Florida Sportsmen Conservation Association
Mark Llewellyn, Genesis Group
Joe Petrich, Genesis Group
Marcus Carnegie, Genesis Group
Lora Silvanima, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Meeting Notes

1. Introduced the project.
2. Discussed the opportunity to tell the history.
 - a. Telegraph swamp
 - b. Ranching history
 - c. Forestry
 - d. Environment/Ecological history
3. Create an Ecotourism Center.
4. Mountain Bikes
 - a. Enjoy the disturbed areas
 - b. Curvy trails
 - c. Would drive some distance for a good trail
 - d. Should be at least ten (10) miles
 - e. Integrated loop system
 - f. Can generate volunteer hours
 - g. A twenty (20) mile trail would be great
 - h. Single track/one (1) directional
 - i. Hikers are not a conflict
 - j. Sugar sand or swamp (no good)

5. Extended bike rides with primitive camping work also.
6. Bicycle Events
 - a. Races
 - b. Social
7. Hiking and biking should be in the same direction.
8. Equestrians do conflict with bicycles.
9. Birding
 - a. Need to provide both experiences (from the car and on the trail).
 - b. Corkscrew has a 2½ mile boardwalk.
 - c. Pelican West – trail with golf carts.
10. Provide separate trails (FTA preferred).
11. Equestrian uses tear up the trail.
12. Butterfly watching.
13. Looped trails.
14. Recreational bicyclists are probably the majority.
15. Consider blinds for bird viewing.
16. Provide hose bibs for wash down.
17. Mountain bikers, recreation bikers (families), road bikes.
18. Trailhead – parking, bike wash, restroom, kiosk, maps.
19. Tampa flat woods, 7.5 mile circular trail (SWFWMD).
20. Eco Tour still runs – will be advertising.
21. Property could provide some level of seclusion.
22. There is a high demand for mountain biking trails.
23. Trail users
 - a. FTA – primitive camping
 - b. Long linear trail would also be nice
24. Birding trails fairly short (1 -2 miles). Focus on quality of birding (length does not matter).

25. Birders are also interested in plants and hiking.
26. Equestrians
 - a. Day rides
 - b. Overnight with camping
 - c. Cattle drive
 - d. Trailhead
27. Potential for Dude Ranch opportunity.
28. Concession opportunities.
29. Keep in mind how distracting shooting can be.
30. Slough Slogs are popular. Some liability associated with this.
 - a. Entertainment first
 - b. Teaching opportunity second
31. Telegraph Creek might be something to consider. Kayak clubs are using the Telegraph Creek.
32. Babcock Ranch will become a destination
 - a. Camping
 - b. Cabins
 - c. Hotel
 - d. Restaurant
 - e. Will need facilities to accommodate the uses
33. American Youth Hostile (AYH).
34. Palm Beach County, 900 acre park near the turnpike.
35. Parking Fees \$3 - \$5.
 - a. Annual pass.
 - b. User fee system
 - c. State family annual FEDP park is \$85.00
 - d. Be careful of the price point to avoid pricing out the locals
 - e. Consider volunteer passes
36. No state funds will be available to support the Ranch.
37. A good youth camp would be used.
 - a. There is a Boy Scout Camp on Web
 - b. Corbit Youth Camp
 - c. Corbit Wildlife Management Area
 - d. Long term?

38. Other standard campground facilities – accommodate campers.
39. Separate the trailer campgrounds from the tent camping.
40. Be aware of the burning requirement.
41. Lee County will manage their property separate from the Ranch.
42. Southeast property is under negotiations with SFWMD that might be added to the property county. (Phil Flood at WMD)
43. Telegraph Trail on the west side of Telegraph Swamp.
44. Footprints Trail does not provide any “wow I want to go back”.
45. Consider using guided tours to avoid the issues of Ranch conflicts.

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Meeting Notes

1. Jerrie Lindsey
 - a. Overview rec Master Plan
 - b. Rec opportunities, public access, wildlife viewing, hunting, and trails
 - c. Working ranch shall remain – cost neutral goal
2. Activities Represented
 - a. Bikers
 - b. Hikers
 - c. Kayak
 - d. Bird watchers
3. Bikers, mudcutters – “the experience”
 - a. Like disturbed areas to create trails with challenge
 - b. 21% of Americans mountain bike
 - c. Trip ten miles in length
 - Time: one hour to four hour experience
 - Loop systems are good
 - 20 miles would be “awesome”

- d. Hiking and biking are compatible. Hikers and horses are compatible.
 - e. Bikers and equine prefer to be separate.
 - f. Sand trails are a problem and would need stabilization
 - g. IMBA – on internet (a bikers magazine) – lots of info on statistics
 - h. Bike and camping for extended day is a good experience.
 - i. Whoop-tee-do's" are good.
 - j. Bike events
 - Race events
 - Social events
 - Sponsors are great because they pay for event related needs.
4. Birding
- a. The experience caters to two groups
 - b. Noted, two miles of boardwalk in corkscrew generates income and there are many users
 - c. One group just wants to pull off and look
 - d. Others are okay walking a longer trail
 - e. Not the length, but the quality of the bird watching experiences
 - f. Noted, Pelican West a WCI community
 - g. Loops should not be too long +/- one mile
5. Florida Trail Associations – expressed that there is little or no interest for multi-use trails.
- a. But would be interested in primitive camping
 - b. Connectivity beyond should be considered
 - c. Habitat variety gained with loop trails
 - d. Need to be aware of length and time
 - e. Also, some butterfly watchers
6. Trail Heads
- a. Hose bibs for washing bikes and water for horses would be good
 - b. Parking
 - c. Site / Location / Info maps
 - d. Bike wash
 - e. Restroom
 - f. Example: Tampa flatwoods area has seven mile loop – circular in design.
 - g. Bike rider types:
 - Maintain bikes
 - Road riders
 - Family Recreation Riders
 - h. Ability to utilize trails in both directions gives dual experience
 - i. Horseman Trail Heads:
 - Water and enclosure area
 - Camping opportunity
 - Ref: Florida "Cracker Days"

7. Other experiences, other considerations
 - a. Slew Slogs – wading in mud bogs up to your neck. One at Six Mile Cypress considered to be entertaining and educational. \$25/per head.
 - b. Dude Ranch participation events, cattle drives
 - c. Trust Creek on Argo Ranch – some kayak experience there
 - d. Example: Alphia (sp.?) pulls people from everywhere
 - Need accommodations
 - e. AYH – American Youth Hostile
 - f. Fees – what is a nominal fee structure for opportunities?
 - Comment – fees for parking are normal on many sites.
 - Review state park tier of fees
 - g. Camping – what levels
 - Youth camps – none in South Florida
 - All sorts of youth education opportunities
 - Review Corbett Youth Camp – Corbett Recreation Area
 - Car Camping – need a bathhouse
 - Tent Camping – doesn’t mix well with motor homes or trailers with generator because of noise problems.
8. Noted: Should also involve Carol Newcomb Jones (newcombjones@aol.com)
 - a. Originally lobbied for the preserve
 - b. Worked on Kitson charettes
9. Also: Paul Holmes – used to be affiliated with “Friends of Babcock”

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Jerrie Lindsey, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Meeting Notes

1. Joe – Need to understand user interest. What types of trails are bikers interested in?
2. Jerrie – spoke to attendees about interpretive themes.
3. Pete – create a book. Put people on a narrow grade rail system through the whole area. This area could be used to tell the history of Florida. Start on one end of the area and travel around to the other.
4. Connie – mountain bikers like disturbed pieces of land but also like scenic trails. Want to have obstacles, down and up. Like curved trails that go around trees and such. Mountain biking is a growing sport, at least 30% of populations. Worth driving an hour or two for a trail that is at least 10 miles in length. International Mountain Bike Association recommends a tiered system, beginner, intermediate and advanced. You don't want bikers to leave the trail. 20 miles loop would be awesome. Don't like multi-directional trails, better if they are one way. If it is a wide trail then multi-direction would work but most bikers like the single track trail that is no wider than a deer trail. Sugar sand doesn't work well. Don't let the work

needed to create these trail make you scared. Bikers are very willing to volunteer to improve or make trails.

5. Jerrie – do you members enjoy scenic riding that is not for exercise?
6. Connie – yes. Also extended biking trail along with camping would be extremely exciting. Would still work even if it wasn't a highly technical trail. Primitive camping would suffice. If you have events, it would be useful to have an area that has camper camping. Events include: races and social events. Racing promoters do all the work and liability. The host (BRP) makes money from the promoter and the promoter makes money from the fees.
7. Joe – the need for one-way trails is a density issue?
8. Connie – ideally you would have bikes and horses parking and trails set up separately because the bikes spook the horses.
9. Pete – large segment of birders enjoy birding from their cars or just a short distance walk. Need to provide for both the folks who want to walk and folks who want to bird from their car.
10. Stew – At Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, there is a 2 miles board walk, \$15 a person, tremendous demand for this and a good potential for revenue.
11. Kathy – strategically placed picnic tables are also useful.
12. Stew – mountain bikers and hikers can be a problem with narrow trails in terms of user conflicts. Not all that compatible.
13. Jack - Florida trail association is not interested in multi use trails. There's enough room here for all user to not have multi-use trails. Need to separate bikes, horses, and hikers.
14. Connie – this would be a lot safer.
15. Fred – don't like hikers on the biker trails.
16. Steven – good to have the different users on different trails. Separate trail heads for horses and hikers.
17. Pete – enhance a natural habitat so that butterflies are condensed near a trail. This will cater to the growing group of folks who view butterflies.
18. Stew – different habitats is the key to good birding.
19. Pete – you want to trails to be new. Not go up and then back on the same trail. Loop trails would be good.

20. Kathy – better to go through different communities, then you see different species.
21. Stew – also another group of bikers that are the recreational bike group that would be fine on multi-use trails.
22. Pete – dog legs off of trail can increase the experience tremendously
23. Kathy – wash places to keep down the transfer of invasive exotics.
24. Steven – don't exclude the popularity of paved trails. Like rails to trails paved trails. Whole different riding experience.
25. Jerrie – this type of trail is envisioned on the Kitson property.
26. Fred – trail head minimum requirement – parking, kiosk with map, restroom.
27. Steve – property near Tampa – 7 ½ mile circular trail. Very popular. Multi – use trail.
28. Mark – are the eco-tour still going? They are good opportunity for arm chair birders etc... What was nice about the trips was that you didn't see other people when you were leading the tour. Other recreationist can scare off the wildlife if they are around where the tour is going.
29. Jerrie – some people come out for the natural experience not to be with other people. Issue of capacity for the property.
30. Steven – have bikers in the biker areas and horses in the horse area.
31. Stew – people who are out to enjoy nature don't want to run into other recreationists. Would be good if this could be separated for other recreationist.
32. Pete – paved road for multi use with spurs for different recreation types. Parking areas (how many spaces) is what limits the use at that area.
33. Connie – bikers don't mind if the trails move locations as long as there are signed properly so they can find the new trail.
34. Jack – Florida Trail association interested in primitive camping. They are interested in side trails, not just the solid trail the length of the state. FL trail staff maintain the trail. Right now there are no trail islands in Lee or Charlotte County. This is a good opportunity for someone from FTA to adopt a trail on the area. Gulf to Lake Trail is on the list of trails to develop.
35. Stew – hiking trails are very compatible with birding. 1 mile trails are good, or not more than 2 mile trails, various habitats, loop trails.

36. Pete – its not the length of the trail, it's the quality of the birding. Trails that gets you to the prime birding is what is important.
37. Kathy – three typical things for horsemen. Day trips, camping, re-enact and cattle drive with chuck wagon.
38. Pete – consider a concessionaire that would lead a “dude ranch” type of activities. Great opportunities for any numbers of concessionaires. Shooting range potential.
39. Stew – distracting when they are shooting in Webb.
40. Kathy – horses need to have water but not troughs.
41. Pete – sloggin through the water waste deep, good type of tour. Good potential for revenue. Could be \$50 a head for tour.
42. Stew – liability for taking people out in the swamp due to alligators.
43. Pete – might not be able to kayak all the time, but in high water this is a good potential.
44. Steve – useful to have places for people to stay so this could be a destination. Cabins or hotels.
45. Jack – American Youth Hostel. You can only get to it by hiking, bike, or horse.
46. Steven – 900 acre park in Palm Beach, integrated all types of recreation. Useful to learn from how they integrated the recreation.
47. Mark – can a university satellite office be placed here?
48. Mark L. – there will be a scientific center on Kitson property.
49. Connie – how were we planning on earning money from recreation?
50. Mark – what are user willing to pay?
51. Connie – you can use a parking fee not trail fee. If you use a trail fee that affects the liability. \$5.00 for parking fee would be a reasonable fee for a good trail.
52. Annual fee?
 - a. Pete - \$500
 - b. Jerrie - \$85 for state parks
 - c. Pete – different fees for driving through than for doing other recreation. Should pay nominal fee for driving through.

53. Kathy – rather pay one high fee than pay separately for each recreation type or stop.
54. Jerrie – does the fee for park (\$85) seem reasonable? Most folks thought this was reasonable.
55. Stew – most of the birding places in the state are free. Most birders don't want to pay to come in to bird.
56. Steven – folks who volunteer can get free pass.
57. Kathy – Look at Lee County park fees because they are higher. Might want to use these fees.
58. Stew – but this is not close to where people live.
59. Pete – don't have a good youth camp near by. Huge opportunity here.
60. Jerrie – what about boy scout camp at webb?
61. Nigel – always seems to be something going on at the boy scout camp.
62. Pete – youth facility, fixed shower, kitchen facilities, bunk houses. One step more comfortable than tents.
63. Bryon – There is a youth camp in Corbett WMA. Summer camped booked and weekends booked up.
64. Various comments - Camp type facilities could be used for a lot more than just the youth camping.
65. Connie – camping with trailers?
66. Byron – need to place where you can use a pop-up trailer. Bathhouse, shower and toilet, one place for potable water. Separate tent camping from trailers. Don't need electricity.
67. Pete – camping that is available for hikers.
68. Cathy – area is either wet or needs to be burned. Can't have everything all spread out because then you would not be able to burn.
69. Nigel – good to have camps separated out for the natural experience. Like how the hunts camps are currently placed on the area.

Map Discussion

1. Pete – the birder is looking for the unique bird like burrowing owl, RCW, caracara. Unique birds would be more interesting than the many wading birds you might see in the swamp.

2. Pete – water management district in negotiations for potential property purchase to help with hydrology for the area.
3. Bill – west side of Telegraph trail is an historic area that is an important site.
4. Pete – the two existing trails do not encourage people to come back to the area.
5. Pete – In south Florida trails are wet. Either build boardwalks or let people know they're going to get wet which is acceptable to a large cliental.
6. Jack – citizen support organization?
7. Jerrie – not currently, but there is some interest.
8. Pete – amenable to private contractor and concessionaires?
9. Jerrie – that's on the table if the partners can see a win/win situation.
10. Bill – conflicts between the ranching and recreation activities can be lessened or avoided altogether if the activities are guided.
11. Mark – no fossiling on this area because it would be opening a big can of worms you don't want opened.