



East Coast  
Greenway®  
ALLIANCE

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## **PRESS ADVISORY**

### **National Trail Movement Leaders to Visit Nassau County March 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>**

Leaders in a national movement to connect cities and towns from Maine and Florida with an off-road trail, known as the East Coast Greenway, will meet to review potential routes through Nassau County. The group arrives March 8<sup>th</sup> for the start of five days of meetings on the First Coast.

Executive Director Karen Votava and staff of the East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA) will meet March 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> with Nassau officials and trail advocates to consider alternate routes across the St. Marys River. Two options under consideration are the U.S. Highway 17 bridge and water taxi between St. Marys and Fernandina Beach.

Mike Pikula of Nassau Community Trails will lead the on-the-ground route review, with Florida's Office of Greenways & Trails participating as well. Following the route review, the group will meet at the Surf Restaurant with elected officials, county and city staff and others to discuss ways to advance Nassau trails.

Trail groups throughout the First Coast are excited to bring the East Coast Greenway through their region. Mike Pikula of Nassau Community Trails states, "Americans love trails. They offer a special form of recreation that everyone can enjoy and add real value to communities. While the ECG as a whole is a national project, the actual work of building trails segment by segment is a local community project. Nassau County and Amelia Island offer some incredible opportunities for building trails. I believe the East Coast Greenway coming through will help generate real interest among our residents, our business community and our many visitors. This meeting will kick-off the planning to start these community efforts."

On March 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, ECGA Trail Council and Board of Trustees will meet in Jacksonville and continue their review of the Nassau County route south through Amelia Island, and on through Duval and St. Johns counties.

ECGA is a non-profit corporation formed in 1991 and based in Wakefield, Rhode Island. Its purpose is to create a 3,000-mile, off-road, multi-use, city-to-city trail that links Calais, Maine with Key West. Florida will contain more than 600 miles of the route, by far the largest portion of any state.

While the ECGA itself does not build trail, it supplies vision for connecting local trails and provides strategic assistance for states, counties and municipal jurisdictions that do build trail. The entire route will be publicly owned and operated and free to all to use.

Nationally, about 21% of the 3,000 miles are currently in place and designated as official *off-road* greenway. This includes over 70 miles in Flagler, Palm Beach and Monroe counties.

ECGA aims to have 80 percent of the Greenway off-road by the end of 2010. First Coast Florida portions that have potential for completion by this date include the Amelia Island Parkway in Nassau County; the Timucuan Trail and St. Johns River Ferry in Jacksonville; and portions through Ponte Vedra Beach, St. Augustine Beach and Crescent Beach

At the end of 2006, ECGA engaged long-time Florida writer Herb Hiller as Southeast Region Program Consultant. Hiller and Paul Haydt, Florida's statewide volunteer coordinator from Flagler County, are helping integrate the Greenway with transportation, recreation and tourism planning by the Florida Department of Transportation, the Office of Greenways & Trails, Florida Park Service, Visit Florida and other statewide and regional organizations. Hiller and Haydt are in close communication with political leadership, technical staff, local organizations and advocates in each of the 13 counties the East Coast Greenway will traverse.

The March ECGA meetings in Jacksonville will introduce volunteer and staff leaders to the opportunities and challenges of trail building in First Coast Florida. The region figures prominently because it's where most long-distance Greenway users will enter the state.

"The Alliance expects the Greenway in Florida to advance faster than anywhere else. Florida can benefit greatly from the kind of alternative transportation facility the Greenway promises and from the significant new travel market it can help spur. That's what we're coming to First Coast Florida to talk about," says ECGA's Karen Votava.

Meetings will take place at the Jacksonville Hyatt and at the First Coast Metropolitan Planning Organization.

For more information about the East Coast Greenway, please visit: [www.greenway.org](http://www.greenway.org)

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