

**Program Name:** Florida Panther NWR  
**Project Name:** Florida Keys Overseas Heritage State Trail  
**Project ID:** 3200  
**Lead Agency:** Division of Recreation and Parks, District 5  
**Authority:** Florida Department of Environmental Protection

**Strategic Plan Goal(s) Addressed:** 3.A.1

### **Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail Vision**

The Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail (FKOHT) is being developed by the FDEP, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and Monroe County as a world-class, multi-use bicycle and pedestrian facility that will traverse the Florida Keys from Key Largo to Key West. A recreational greenway, that upon completion, will include an integrated system of educational kiosks, roadside picnic areas, scenic overlooks, fishing piers, water access points, and bicycle and jogging paths serving both residents and visitors to the Florida Keys. The FKOHT will link communities by providing a safe and continuous multi-use path, offer an alternative form of transportation, help mitigate congestion, promote health opportunities, and provide a mechanism for the preservation and use of the historic Flagler Railroad Bridges. The trail will also provide outstanding educational opportunities for both residents and visitors to learn about the unique history of the Florida Keys and the importance of sustainable development, by offering cultural, historical and ecological interpretation, as users traverse the historical railroad bridges and the many conservation areas between Key Largo and Key West.

**Measurable Output(s):** Miles of trails: Existing 54.9 ocean side/37.5 bay side,

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### **Project Synopsis:**

Spurred by concerns in the community for the future of the Old Keys Bridges and under Executive Order, the "Old Keys Bridge Task Force" report was presented to then Governor Lawton Chiles in 1997, outlining recommendations for the old Flagler Railroad bridges as a linear greenway. A similar report had been presented in 1938, to then Governor Fred Cone by the Road and Toll Authority, the State Forestry Department and the National Park Service outlining the creation of a linear park from Key Largo to Key West. In 1998, Clean Florida Keys rallied enough local support to prepare a Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail Conceptual plan published in January 1999, and a Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail Action plan published in November 1999. With a combination of local citizen support, the Rails To Trails, National Park Service, Greenways and Trails, Monroe County, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Department of Transportation and many other agencies, the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail Master Plan was approved in August 2000. Monroe County passed a resolution in 2000, approving allocation of enhancement funding to the project and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed allowing the coordination, planning and implementation of the FKOHT as a joint effort between the FDEP, Monroe County, and the FDOT. Direct support for the 106-mile long multi-use recreational trail and facilities is one of the primary features of the Scenic Highway Corridor Management Plan Goals and Objectives, the Corridor Management Plan (CMP), the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail Master Plan, the Scenic Highway Interpretive Master Plan. In addition, the FKOHT was nominated as a National Recreational Trail in 1994 and has designated all 23 remaining historical Flagler Railroad Bridges on the National Registry of Historic Places. Recently completed signage plan and environmental plan provide a look and mechanism for reviewing the trail corridor as one entity rather than multiple separate segments.

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A Memorandum of Agreement was signed in August 2001, by the FDEP to maintain FDOT right-of-way where the trail will be designed and built. The FDEP maintains a 50-year lease on all 23 historical bridges from State of Florida, Division of State Lands.

The trail offers access to many [points of interest](#) and ecological resources throughout the Keys, including the Everglades National Park, Biscayne National Park, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, The Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge, Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge, Crocodile Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Key West National Marine Sanctuary, as well as 10 [state parks](#).

**Current Status:**

14.8 miles of new paved trail, improved trail, and historic bridge repair work were completed including Baypoint to Sugarloaf, Key Haven to Big Coppitt, Layton to Channel 5 Bridge, and Sugarloaf to Summerland Key.

11.3 miles of improved trail are bidding and approaching to commence construction including the following segments: Spanish Harbor to Seven-Mile Bridge, Windey Key Trail Segment, Kemp Channel Bridge Reconnection, and the Lower Sugarloaf Trail Extension;

There are several design projects also underway including the following segments: Grassy Key Trail, Knights Key Pedestrian Underpass, Old Spanish Harbor Bridge, and Key West Botanical Gardens and Trailhead.

**Cost:**

Total: TBD

**Project Development:**

The FDOT work program and the FDEP implementation plan outline a progression of design and build projects that will construct the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail over the next five years. Construction of the FKOHT is funded in the FDOT Five Year Work Program using enhancement funds for the segments between historic bridges. Additional funding is being sought to retrofit the remaining historical bridges and fishing platforms. The FDEP is certified by the FDOT to design and build projects under the Local Agency Program (LAP) using enhancement funds.

**Operations and maintenance**

There are currently 92.4 miles of existing bike path located along the ocean side and bay side. Some segments do have trail on both sides so there is some overlap. There are twenty-three bridges comprising fourteen miles of trail in various stages of completion and funding. The City of Key West currently maintains an agreement with the FDEP on maintenance of the existing sections throughout the City. The Village of Islamorada signed an agreement in 2003 and the City of Marathon is in the process of developing agreements for maintenance and trail planning. The FDEP is responsible for the maintenance of the trail in accordance with the agreement established between FDOT and the FDEP and currently maintains 92.4 miles of trail.

In 2012, approximately 1.8 million visitors utilized the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail. Records through October 2013 include over 1.5 million visitors.

<b>Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail Detailed Project Budget Information- (\$1000)</b>									
	2003-07	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	*2014	Total
State	23,903.6	2,875.5	1,640.1	1,343.0	9,383.3	2,181.2	11,500.5	\$3,400.5	56,227.7
Total									

\*Projected

Hyperlink: <http://www.floridastateparks.org/floridakeys/>

Contacts: Anthony Knott and Jim Post, Division of Recreation and Parks