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Scenic Watch is a free bi-monthly publication of Citizens for a Scenic Florida, Inc., dedicated to the preservation, protection and enhancement of Florida's scenic heritage. Individuals, organizations and government agencies are welcome as members. [Join Scenic Florida now](#) to protect our scenic qualities.

## National News:

It is often useful to remind ourselves of the underlying principles that drive organizations. Scenic America and its various affiliates around the country, like [Citizens for a Scenic Florida, Inc.](#), are motivated by a set of principles that are lofty and focused on the decision making processes of citizens as well as community, county, state and national authorities. They are useful guidelines. Hopefully they will instruct and inspire all of our decisions regarding our natural and built environments.

[Scenic America Seven Principles](#)

Ed Note: It seems that cell towers have dropped out of the news. Not much is reported on them. In spite of their affront to our aesthetic sensibilities, they represent a technology that has become ubiquitous. So they are accepted as a 'necessary evil'. We can only hope that we do not become so caught up with the convenience they contribute to our life that we overlook the need to exercise restraint over their infiltration into our visual landscape. Keep your local governments tuned to the need to make their approval process mindful of the aesthetic aspects of their positioning and scale. There are options available that many municipalities insist on that lessen their visual impact.

It is encouraging to see the continued and growing efforts to protect our scenic highways. This is a great program to establish criteria to enhance the visual landscape for citizens and tourists. Are there highways in your backyard that need protecting?

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## Land Use & Smart Growth

### Bill would ban Florida cities from having land-use elections

By [David DeCamp](#) and [Nick Johnson](#), Times Staff Writers

In print: Saturday, April 26, 2008

ALLAHASSEE — St. Pete Beach and other Florida cities wouldn't have the right to require elections to

approve changes to land-use plans under a provision introduced on the House floor Friday.

Authored by Rep. Dean Cannon, the House plan comes in response to a growing push to require such votes by residents fed up with rampant development. The angst has spawned a slow-growth statewide ballot initiative by Hometown Democracy. The measure, which could make the ballot in 2010, would require local governments statewide to hold votes on major development decisions.

St. Pete Beach officials who support the referendum process blasted Cannon's move for stripping the public's control, as did Lesley Blackner, president of Hometown Democracy.

But Cannon, R-Winter Park, said his bill provides other avenues for public input by requiring public meetings about a proposal before it is approved and reducing the number of times local government can amend its plan from twice to once a year.

He said using a referendum can cause problems, making it harder for projects such as affordable housing to be approved. Existing state law prohibits referendums on projects involving five or fewer parcels.

"We're not taking away any power of the residents to make a preference about their quality of life," Cannon said. "We're only saying ... these groups can't use the comp plan to do it."

St. Pete Beach Commissioners Harry Metz and Linda Chaney were both part of Citizens for Responsible Growth, a residents' group that petitioned for the right to vote in St. Pete Beach in 2005.

Yankeetown later joined the beach city, and places such as Treasure Island also allow votes on other changes, such as building height.

"The people have a right to vote on their comprehensive plans, and it has nothing to do with the county or the state," Metz said.

Cannon, in line to be House speaker in 2010, persuaded the House to add the prohibition in a major bill (HB 7129) heading for a vote before the session ends Friday. He has asked top lawmakers in the Senate to consider the same.

Times researcher Caryn Baird contributed to this report. David DeCamp can be reached at [ddecamp@sptimes.com](mailto:ddecamp@sptimes.com) or (850) 224-7263.

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## **Scenic Highways & Trails**

### **30-A to be designated Scenic Highway**

May 10, 2008 - 10:39PM

Nine years after beginning the designation process, Walton County's Scenic 30-A corridor has officially earned designation as a Florida Scenic Highway. With continuous support and assistance from local residents, state and local government representatives, business owners, and community organizations, this 28.5 mile corridor gained state recognition for its scenic and intrinsic resources. Hugging the Gulf of Mexico coastline in Northwest Florida's Walton County, Scenic 30-A takes you along a breath-taking drive where you will see sugar-white sand beaches and 11 globally rare coastal dune lakes. Scenic 30-A is a tourist attraction of major proportions. An exciting and eclectic mix of hot Caribbean colors and cool, soft pastels, complement a variety of architectural styles, giving each community a unique charm. Scenic 30-A travelers can also enjoy its miles of greenway trails connecting state parks and preserves to residential areas.

In celebration of this exceptional corridor the Friends of Scenic 30-A will be hosting a ceremony for the recent designation of Scenic 30-A as a Florida Scenic Highway. The event will be held at the Santa Rosa Golf & Beach Club, in Santa Rosa Beach on Thursday May 22, 2008 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m (CST). A brief press conference and a ribbon cutting ceremony will begin at 6:15 p.m. A ceremonial autographing will also take place prior to the catered reception. The dedication ceremony will celebrate

and recognize the people and institutions who have been involved in the efforts to achieve this important milestone. Florida Scenic Highway designation is an important step towards formally recognizing the natural and cultural heritage of this diverse region.

Future corridor plans and opportunities include providing improved signage, pull offs, additional trail systems and enhanced resource education. Scenic Highway grants offer new funding sources that can improve opportunities for safe and convenient accesses to attractions along the trails and beaches. The corridor will offer information about the area's rich history and unique natural resources with a new wayfinding system, live demonstrations, festivals, museums and special events. The highway will provide access to beaches, green spaces, and opportunities for wildlife watching, boating, hunting, and fishing. Designation as a Florida Scenic Highway provides opportunity for Scenic 30-A to apply for National Scenic Highway designation as well.

For more information regarding Scenic 30-A, contact [Marker]Foor, District Scenic Highways Coordinator, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), District Three, District Environmental Management Office.

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## The Old Trails of Florida Meandered East to West

### Finding traces of Old Bellamy and St. Augustine roads across the state

By Patricia C. Behnke - April 2008

**Trails, roads and highways follow patterns established long ago. The traces of what remains fascinate more than historians. Anyone with a curiosity of place and destination wonders where the road ends or where it once led.**

Nearly 200 years ago, the people who traveled Florida mostly went east to west on the Old Spanish Trail. The trail, according to several sources, may never have been much of anything but foot paths used by the natives and trails made by animals to sources of water. Portions of this route can be traced from St. Augustine to the Apalachicola River. After Florida became a territory in 1821, interest in reviving, and in some places completely constructing, this road became a priority.

Prior to that time, there existed East Florida with its headquarters in St. Augustine and, 445 miles away, the seat of West Florida in Pensacola. Within a few years it became apparent a new capital between the two would have to be chosen.

According to "Florida, A Short History" by Michael Gannon, Florida's Legislative Council held its first session in 1822 in Pensacola. It took the delegation from St. Augustine 59 days to travel to West Florida via water. The next year at the session held in St. Augustine, delegates decided to select a halfway location for a capital that would "shorten the sea voyage and the twenty-eight-day overland crossing from St. Augustine to Pensacola."

Legend has it that two commissioners, one in Pensacola and one in St. Augustine, began walking toward one another and met in an area occupied by Creeks on old Apalachee land. Congress approved the site as the capital in the land known as Tallahassee.

Thus began the quest to revive the Old Spanish Trail, once used as the path the Spanish followed from mission to mission in Florida. However, much of this trail had not been used in hundreds of years, leaving a large task in an overgrown and lush land to build a road to the capital.

An article in Florida Living magazine in 1992, states that Captain Daniel Burch divided the route from Pensacola to St. Augustine via Tallahassee into three parts and then opened bidding to private entrepreneurs for constructing the roads.

"Section 1 ran from the Choctawhatchee River [near DeFuniak Springs] to the Apalachicola River; Section 2 from the latter to the Ochlockonee River [near Tallahassee]; and Section 3 eastward from that river to the St. Johns River," the article stated. "This third stretch was 212 miles long, twice the

length of either of the other two sections.”

Enter John Bellamy who offered to do the entire road for \$23,000. The state wanted to pay only \$20,000, according to Florida Living. Bellamy, who lived on the St. Johns River, decided to bid only on the longest section of road for \$13,500. He later built a mansion on a plantation near Monticello, and as a member of the first Florida Territorial Legislative Council, he entertained lavishly the rich and powerful of North Florida.

Federal troops constructed other sections of the road, according to the Tallahassee Democrat in an article from 1974. What remains of this road in Tallahassee is now called Old St. Augustine Road and has received the designation of one of Tallahassee’s “Canopy Roads” that run out from the capitol like the spokes on a wheel.

“Using slave labor, Bellamy was able to complete the eastern portion of the road in 1826,” the Democrat reported.

The road followed the plans Burch originally laid out which of course followed the ancient and neglected Old Spanish Trail. The contract with Bellamy brought the road to the St. Johns River, but St. Augustine lay another 18 miles east and the construction of that portion of the road proved troublesome. Bellamy finally agreed to complete it for \$2,500, according to Florida Living.

From the St. Johns River the road headed south toward Lake Santa Fe near present-day Melrose. From there it went to the capital of the Alachua region, in Newnansville and then to the natural land bridge over the Santa Fe River near High Springs. In 1980, Alachua County took action to preserve what remained of the old road, and named it “scenic.” Today the road remains unpaved and chopped up by I-75 and other roads that serve as arteries from the Interstate to High Springs, Alachua and Newberry.

It is easy to follow the path of the road but not to drive it. Beginning near the Newnansville Cemetery — the only remnant left of the old capital — and traveling to County Road 241, a section of the road can still be found. At the crossroads of Bellamy Road and Providence Road an old building thought to once house a way station on the major thoroughfare of the day, still stands as testament to the days when traffic galloped by at a much slower pace. This section dead ends into Country Road 235A and heading north on that road leads to a very short section of Bellamy Road ending in another town that is no longer: Traxler. The road is interrupted there by I-75.

Crossing over I-75, headed west on CR 236, travelers can pick up the old road once again where it heads toward the Santa Fe, but the road ends before its destination. However, it is possible to hike a portion of Bellamy inside O’Leno State Park where the river goes underground.

Today the road holds the romance of a different time. It also holds a fascination for some people. Phil Lambert of Gainesville read an account of the road several years ago in a local paper and became interested in it, often dreaming of old Florida.

“I began researching on the Web,” Lambert said, “and found old maps and archives. I was interested in Newnansville and the discovery that it was a town that just disappeared when the railroad came through present-day Alachua instead of there.”

He began to study the maps and discovered the paths that may have been used hundreds of years ago.

“As economies changed over the years,” Lambert said, “these towns disappeared. The road tells that tale of our history.”

And it provides a glimpse into an old Florida filled with trees and Spanish moss hanging down low over the paths that followed the water.

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**Other Scenic News**

## Water Wars: Ocklawaha, Rodman dam are flash points

### Tearing down the Rodman Reservoir is at the center of the river water removal debate

By DEIRDRE CONNER, The Times-Union

**EUREKA - Here, deep in the heart of Florida and miles away from anything, the Ocklawaha River meets an abandoned dam.**

There's a history lesson, but the history is ebbing from memory. And the lesson couldn't be more relevant.

The Ocklawaha used to be one of Florida's biggest tourist attractions, and then one of its most ambitious economic projects, and then, some say, one of its most disgraceful environmental tragedies.

Now, this tributary of the St. Johns River has become a flash point in the debate over Central Florida's plans to withdraw river water to accommodate population growth.

You may have never seen the Ocklawaha River, or pronounced its name, or even heard of it.

But if you're concerned about the St. Johns River, you can't look away. The Ocklawaha (pronounced OCK-la-WA-ha) makes up a major portion of the St. Johns' flow - as much as a third, some say.

Water managers have identified both rivers as potential sources of drinking water for Central Florida, where development is outstripping the supply of water from underground aquifers. Upstream counties could siphon as much as 107 million gallons per day from the Ocklawaha and 155 million gallons per day from the St. Johns.

As the plans have taken shape, the St. Johns River Water Management District has taken heavy criticism from environmentalists who say the withdrawals could seriously harm the St. Johns, especially downstream in Northeast Florida. With the Ocklawaha flowing through a less populated area, it has almost seemed like an afterthought.

But Robin Lewis, a wetlands scientist and one of the directors of the Putnam County Environmental Council, said you can't talk about the issue without looking at the St. Johns River ecosystem as a whole.

"They're trying to pretend like the Ocklawaha isn't part of the St. Johns," he said of the district, which oversees water use in north and central Florida.

Officials responded to the concern that erupted in Northeast Florida with a new impact study to research further the effects, this time factoring in potential withdrawals in the Ocklawaha, among other issues.

"We might determine that ... there is not one iota of water to take," the district's Hal Wilkening said. But "if you ask us what our gut feeling is, we think there's some water that is available."

The most recent district studies - from the 1990s - say the Ocklawaha south of the Rodman Reservoir could yield as much as 100 million gallons per day of drinking water, which some utilities have proposed piping over 100 miles away to Central Florida. The district says that number will likely change after a minimum flows and levels study is complete in 2009.

The idea that the Ocklawaha has any water to spare is absurd, say advocates with the Putnam County Environmental Council, the group leading the fight to tear down the Kirkpatrick Dam, drain the Rodman and restore the river to its natural state.

They point to drying wetlands that surround the river, and degradation of the lands around the river caused by the dam.

"We ought to be in recovery mode for the Ocklawaha," Lewis said.

## A split in time

Few people live on the middle Ocklawaha, because the government owns much of the land around it.

To the south, development and muck farms along the chain of lakes that make up its headwaters have kept water from the river and dumped pollutants into it and the Silver River, which contributes much of the Ocklawaha's flow.

To the north, for a 16-mile stretch from Eureka to Palatka, the Ocklawaha is dammed for a failed federal project that became the rallying cry for a national environmental movement and poster child for critics of government waste.

The Rodman and the dam were part of the final incarnation of the Cross-Florida Barge Canal, conceived as a way to link Jacksonville to the Gulf of Mexico and ports in the Midwest by cutting a path through the state. Plans for the "Ditch of Dreams," as University of Florida history professor Steven Noll describes it in an upcoming book, began as early as the 1800s.

Just three years after the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flooded the Rodman for the first time, work on the canal ground to a halt in 1971.

The Rodman, with its shallow waters and otherworldly clusters of tree stumps, has become exceedingly popular with bass fishermen. Recreation and the area's economy became its champion, so a handful of powerful state lawmakers from Ocala to Jacksonville have blocked efforts to tear down the dam.

The parallels - scientific, political, economic - to today's fight over the dam and the rivers are inevitable, Noll said.

And as in the past, he said, both sides use science to their advantage.

Both the Ocklawaha and the St. Johns flow through small but politically influential Putnam County, which is itself in the delicate position of seeking to drink out of the Ocklawaha but fighting to protect the St. Johns, which is seen as the key to the economic revival of Palatka.

Perhaps that's why the county is so divided over the Rodman. Some see the Rodman as an accidental but valuable asset; for others, it's a lingering affront to a unique and important ecosystem.

Ed Taylor, president of Save Rodman Reservoir and a Putnam County commissioner, is among the former. "What they done was wrong, but it's turned into a good system for the citizens, [so] leave it alone."

Karen Ahlers, president of the Putnam Environmental Council, said that's a fallacy. "Every environmental study that's been done has recommended removal of Rodman dam."

There are some benefits to the pool, supporters say. The largemouth bass fishing is second to none, Taylor said.

But migratory fish species - such as mullet and catfish - have all but disappeared from the river, despite its booming bass population, Ahlers said. Biologists with the U.S. Forest Service believe the fishing there will decline over the years.

Supporters point to the question of how much Rodman filters pollution that would otherwise contaminate the St. Johns River. If you ask state officials, it's the chief issue keeping the Rodman intact. Scientists with the St. Johns River Water Management District and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection are worried that tearing down the dam would permanently send more damaging nutrients into the St. Johns River, which has restrictions on such toxins.

But no one is sure of the precise impact. And the DEP may be forced to figure that out, because lawsuits are forcing it to pursue a long-dormant permit to remove the dam.

One of the lawsuits deals with manatees, one of many species that suffered because of the Rodman dam. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supports removing the dam, said Dave Hankla, field supervisor in the Jacksonville office, because that would reopen wintering sites, such as Silver Springs, to manatees.

But the most incendiary debate is over the dam's impact on the availability of water to take from the river.

How much water is there?

Taylor claims that keeping the pool could provide drinking water to Putnam without adverse effects - he said district staff told him up to 150 million gallons per day. A district spokeswoman denies that and says the figure is scientifically unsupportable.

Ahlers compared the Rodman to a backyard birdbath - as the shallow water heats up, it evaporates - and said her group's science committee has estimated the pool could lose 30 million gallons per day, more than what would be lost when water evaporates through river-side wetlands.

Mark Brown, director of the Wetlands Center at the University of Florida, said it's likely that some amount of water is lost in the Rodman vs. a restored river.

The question is how much, Brown said.

No one's sure, because the water management district hasn't studied that issue.

Wilkening, of the water management district, said he believes that removing the dam and restoring the river wouldn't affect how much water is available from the Ocklawaha. If it was pumped, it would happen south, or upstream, of the reservoir.

What isn't in dispute is that the Ocklawaha's flow into the St. Johns has already faltered. The amount of fresh water it puts into the slightly salty St. Johns has declined by more than 40 percent over the past six decades.

Again, no one agrees on why. A district analysis of the loss conducted in March says two-thirds of the loss can be explained by drought.

Lewis said even if that figure is correct, it still leaves a third unexplained. He pointed to another of the district's studies, completed in 2004, that attributed a reduced flow to declining groundwater levels caused by development, and flood control structures in Central Florida that kept lakes artificially high to the detriment of the river.

A fight to the end

Both sides have pledged to fight - or fight for - the dam and the water withdrawals until the end of the road.

What's yet to be determined is whether the recent skirmishes over the health of the St. Johns and Ocklawaha are unfolding as final chapters or merely cycles in the centuries-long sweep of the Ocklawaha's history.

Noll pointed out that the canal was halted twice - in the 1930s and the 1960s - at the precipice of environmental catastrophe. Had it not been, a vast swath of Florida could have been a wasteland.

"In the '30s, what stops the ship canal is South and Central Florida citrus growers, who assume it's going to cut into the aquifer [and contaminate it with salt water]. Scientists from the corps and the state geological survey say no, but they've got a vested interest," Noll said.

"Now, they say taking water from the river won't hurt it. I think there are definitely lessons from history."

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