

2022 Florida Greenways and Trails Council

The Florida Greenways and Trails Council (FGTC) was established pursuant to 260.0142, Florida Statutes. Among its duties, the Council serves to advise the Florida Department of Environmental Protection on greenway and trail related issues, promote intergovernmental cooperation and private partnerships for developing the greenways and trails system, recommend priorities for critical links in the system, and provide funding recommendations for developing and managing the system.



Samantha Browne, Chief, Office of Greenways and Trails
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Florida Greenways and Trails Council- 260.0142 F.S.

Appointed by the Governor:

(2) Trail Users / (2) Greenway Users / Private Land Owner

Appointed by President of the Senate:

Trail User / (2) Greenway Users

Appointed by Speaker of the House:

(2) Trail Users / Greenway User

The 9 Remaining Council Members Include:

FL Dept. of Environmental Protection
FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
FL Dept. of Transportation
FL Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services
FL Dept. of State
Water Management District
Federal Land Management Agency
Regional Planning Council
Local Government

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Vacant

Trail User-Appointed by the Governor

Mike Stephens

Trail User-Appointed by the Governor

Senior Vice President-Commercial Banking

United Southern Bank

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Michael A. (Mike) Stephens is a Florida native and lifetime resident of Lake County. He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Stetson University and has worked in the financial services industry in Florida for over 34 years. Mr. Stephens is currently a Senior Vice President of Commercial Banking and a



Senior Lender for United Southern Bank, a local Community Bank, and has been with them for the past 18 years helping clients with all their Commercial Banking needs.

Mike has been an unofficial bike trail advocate since elementary school, riding his bike to school daily in the 70's. After enjoying several decades of competitive and recreational mountain biking, gravel biking, and trail riding, he helped form and became Chairman of the Lake 100 Trails Committee and The Friends of Lake County Trails in 2019 - advocating for regional paved multi-purpose trails within Lake County. He was awarded the Florida Bicycle Association's Trails Promoter of the Year Award in 2020, along with the Lake 100 President's Award in 2020 for Leadership and Dedication to Trails in Lake County, and the Eustis Area Chamber of Commerce's 2020 Community Service Award for Leadership advocating for Lake County Trails. Mike has also previously served on the Lake Sumter MPO Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee and

Citizens Advisory Committee, as well as the Lake County Parks and Trails Advisory Board.

Mike has a long history of volunteering in his community, including being a 30+ year member of Kiwanis and serving as an Officer and Board member of several local business and community organizations, including as a lifetime member of the Ocala Mountain Bike Association -- volunteering for the Office of Greenways and Trails on the Cross Florida Greenway and the US Forest Service on the Ocala National Forest.

He has been married to his wife Carla for 30 years and they have two beautiful daughters that also enjoy cycling and mountain biking together. In addition to cycling around the Southeast, Mike and his family also enjoy camping, fishing, boating, and road trips.

Scott Stryker

Greenway User-Appointed by the Governor

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Scott was born in New Jersey and came to Florida in 2002 for college at Florida Gulf Coast University where he studied Philosophy and Legal Studies. Currently a resident of Southwest Florida, Scott enjoys walking, jogging and biking around the area both for exercise and pleasure. Whether biking to the local ice-cream shop or gearing up for races, Scott enjoys all things biking and looks forward to expanding multimodal infrastructure across the state.

Stephanie Wardein

Private Land Owner-Appointed by the Governor

System Director – Community Affairs

Lee Health

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Stephanie Wardein is the System Director of Community Affairs at Lee Health in Southwest Florida where she is responsible for all community relations activities, community health strategies, outreach, education and collaboration with other community organizations to develop working solutions to address local health-related needs. Her responsibilities also include developing and expanding relationships with community leaders and supporting Lee Health’s ongoing community benefit activities and reporting.



Wardein has been with Lee Health since 2012, serving in various roles on community projects including Community Health Visioning 2017, now known as Healthy Lee, to improve the health status of Lee County residents. The collaborative community leader effort guides research and outreach efforts for community health. Many of the projects have received top tier recognition including the NOVA Award from American Hospital Association, the Gage Award from America’s Essential Hospitals, the Community Benefit Award from Florida Hospital Association, and the first Unite Award from our local United Way and Southwest Florida Community Foundation.

Results in Lee County include a 29% reduction in deaths from both heart disease and from stroke, 15% reduction in adult obesity, 34% reduction in childhood obesity, 22% increase in those who meet physical activity recommendations.

Wardein is current Chair of Tobacco Free Florida – Lee County; Chair of the American Heart Association Chairman’s Board of Directors; member of the LARC (Lee Association for Remarkable Citizens) Board of Directors; member of the SWFL Economic Development Advisory Committee; Co-Chair, Lee County Action Team with SWFL FutureMakers; member of the Ave Maria University School of Nursing Advisory Committee, member of the School Advisory Committee at Babcock Neighborhood School; and an active community volunteer.

In 2018, she was named one of Southwest Florida’s “40 under 40” by Gulfshore Business magazine. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Arts – Theology from Franciscan University and a master’s degree in Theological Studies from the Institute for Pastoral Theology at Madonna University and earned Lean Six Sigma Advanced Yellow Belt Certification from the Florida Sterling Council.

Wardein is passionate about equitable health care and collaborating for impact. She is committed to fostering the Lee Health mission of being a trusted partner, empowering healthier lives through care and compassion. When she is not at work, Wardein enjoys spending time with her husband and six children, ages 14, 12, 11, 8, 3 & 2.

Sarrah Glassner

Greenway User-Appointed by the Governor

Florida Sheriffs Association

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Sarrah was appointed to the Greenways and Trails Council in 2015 because of her love of Florida's trails! Ever since she moved to Tallahassee in 2003, she has loved



running and hiking the trails in Leon County.

Over the years, she has started mountain biking and trying to run as many trail races throughout the state as possible. She's a local triathlete and is committed to introducing people to exercising and showing them Florida's secret treasure: our trails.

Steve Bowler

Trail User-Appointed by the President of the Senate

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Jason Lauritsen

Greenway User-Appointed by the President of the Senate

Executive Director
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Jason Lauritsen implements the vision and mission of the organization to connect, protect and restore essential conservation habitat statewide. Jason's expertise includes environmental conservation and restoration, land management science, wetland protection, and Wood Stork recovery in the Western Everglades. He is an experienced speaker, educator, and writer who has authored numerous papers, publications, and presentations throughout his more than 20-year career in conservation and natural resources management.



Lauritsen has served on the Estero Bay Agency for Bay Management, SWFL Watershed Council, Wood Stork Monitoring and Recovery Group and the Lee County Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource Advisory Committee. At the crossroads of science and policy, Jason developed tools and refined regulatory approaches to improve impact assessment and mitigation for wetlands and listed species for State and Federal agencies. He has provided consultation to agencies and private land owners on

preserve design and configuration to maximize local and landscape level benefits to wildlife. In 2016, he served as a delegate to China on a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) exchange program to share expertise in wetland restoration and mitigation.

Lauritsen has a Master's in Science Education from the University of Iowa and a Bachelor's in Animal Ecology from Iowa State University. He worked as a rainforest guide in Ecuador in 1992. In 2001, he joined Audubon at the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary as the Natural Resources Manager and prescribed burn boss. Continuing his career with Audubon he became the Big Cypress Ecosystem Science Coordinator in 2005 before being promoted to Assistant Sanctuary Director in 2007 and Sanctuary Director in 2012 where he led the crown jewel of Audubon's Sanctuary network until Dec of 2018.

Lauritsen is committed to landscape level conservation and long planning horizons to achieve sustainability. He advocates the pursuit of a deep science-based understanding of our complex and often fragile ecosystem that undergirds the quality of life for both people and wildlife. If future generations are to enjoy the beauty and diversity of a healthy natural world, Jason believes it will require broad stakeholder support and partnerships that are central to effective land stewardship.

Wesley Stalnaker

Greenway User- Appointed by the President of the Senate

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Wesley Stalnaker was appointed to the Florida Greenways and Trails Council in 2021 and is ecstatic to be a member of the group. As a Florida Native, early on



Wesley developed a passion for the outdoor activities that the state has to offer such as hunting, fishing, kayaking, and swimming in the breathtaking springs. Upon attending Santa Fe College in Gainesville, FL Wesley began to take advantage of the several trails and nature parks that Alachua County has to offer. His experiences in Alachua County piqued his interest in a new activity he hadn't considered previously and enhanced his appreciation for the states' nature and wildlife. Now, he is constantly trying to explore new parks and trails across the state of Florida.

Kevin Sweeney

Trail User-Appointed by the Speaker of the House

Long Run Strategies

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Kevin was born and raised in St. Augustine, FL. He graduated from St. Augustine High School in 1987 and the University of Florida in 1992. He currently serves on the Board of Trustees of the St. Augustine Lighthouse and the ARC of St. Johns



County and is Chair of the Code Enforcement Board for the city of St. Augustine Beach. An avid runner, Kevin has qualified for the prestigious Boston Marathon every year since 2003. He also is a trail runner and has won many trail races throughout the state and the south, including running nonstop across the Grand Canyon, as well as, the Presidential Traverse Trail in New Hampshire. He has also hiked and climbed multiple “14ers” in Colorado. He is a Greenway User Speaker’s selection to the Florida Greenways and Trails Council. When not running or hiking, he enjoys hanging out at the beach with his wife, Beth (a running superstar herself) and daughter Wellesley, as well as plotting with his cat, Tallulah.

Faron Boggs

Trail User-Appointed by the Speaker of the House

Faron Boggs Consulting

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Growing up in St. Augustine, Faron developed a love of the outdoors while hiking, camping, and paddling in northeast Florida and the Panhandle. Whether it was trips



with his family or the Boy Scouts, he spent countless weekends enjoying and witnessing the "real" Florida. As a student at FSU and a resident of Tallahassee, Faron took up biking and mountain biking which furthered his appreciation of our natural resources and the importance of our trail system. "Being on the Florida Greenways and Trails Council will allow me to play an active role in protecting and expanding our trail system and ensuring it's use by my children and all future Floridians," he said.

Ralph Lair – Chair

Greenway User-Appointed by the Speaker of the House

Pasco County- Government Affairs Officer

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Ralph Lair is the Government Affairs Officer for Pasco County, Florida. He communicates information about programs and services provided by Pasco County



government to the county's citizens, members of the U.S. Congress, the Florida Legislature, and other local elected and appointed officials. The Government Affairs Officer also develops and coordinates State and Federal Legislative Programs on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners and the County Administrator, and represents the Board of County Commissioners and the County Administrator to the Governor, the Cabinet, the Florida Legislature, and the United States Congress.

With over 22 years in state and local government, Ralph previously was the Chief Legislative

Assistant to Florida Speaker Will Weatherford. Mr. Lair was also the Chief Legislative Assistant to Representative Ken Littlefield, Speaker pro tempore Sandra Murman, and Senior Legislative Assistant to Representative Carl Littlefield. Ralph has also worked for the Southwest Florida Water Management District as a Senior Community Affairs Coordinator, the Florida Public Service Commission as a Senior Analyst and Chief Advisor to a Commissioner, and Florida-Stop Lawsuit Abuse as the Executive Director.

Ralph is a native Floridian, and holds a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from Florida State University. He enjoys geocaching, hiking, biking and experiencing the real Florida the state park system has to offer.

PARKS SMALL

FL Department of Environmental Protection

Division of Recreation and Parks-Assistant Director

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Jerrie Lindsey

FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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Jerrie Lindsey is the Director of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation



Commission's Office of Recreation Services where she is responsible for developing wildlife viewing-related recreation opportunities on Florida's wildlife management area system and facilitating wildlife-viewing tourism on public lands statewide. During her career, Ms. Lindsey has worked in environmental education and recreation programs for the Legislature, Florida Department of Natural Resources and the Florida Recreation and Park Association. Her professional interests focus on developing recreational learning experiences that lead participants to take positive actions for fish and wildlife habitat. She is an avid paddler and enjoys hiking and birding.

Robin Birdsong

FL Department of Transportation

Shared Use Non-motorized (SUN) Trail Program- Statewide Coordinator

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Robin joined the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) team in August 2015 as the Trail Program Manager for the Shared-Use Nonmotorized (SUN) Trail



Program. In this capacity, she is working with stakeholders to implement the SUN Trail Program and further FDOT's mission. SUN Trail projects will improve the intermodal connectors by closing gaps in the statewide paved trail system to increase the reliability of Florida's transportation system.

Previously, Robin worked for 11 years as a Regional Trail Coordinator with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (FDEP) Office of Greenways and Trails. For approximately a year, she worked as Florida's Recreational Trails Program Coordinator in DEP's Office of Operations. Prior to joining the FDEP she worked

with the Florida Department of State. She has extensive experience in team collaboration and advocacy. She moved to Tallahassee from Virginia to attend Florida State University. In her spare time, Robin enjoys exploring cultural and historical sites, bicycling and hiking, and relaxing at the beach with her husband.

Marti Miller

FL Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Florida Forest Service- State Recreation Coordinator

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Marti Miller is a fourth generation Floridian that has combined family heritage and education to develop a career in Natural Resource Management. Currently employed as a Recreation Specialist for the Florida Forest Service, Marti has 20 plus years of experience in Nature Based Recreation and recently completed the University of Florida's Graduate Certification in Natural Resource Policy and Administration. Past employment has included ten years with the Florida Park Service and ten plus years with the Florida Forest Service. An additional responsibility includes Deputy Finance Section Chief on the FFS Wildfire/All Hazard Incident Management Gold Team.

Outdoor adventures are a priority in her personal life also. Camping, horseback riding, water sports, hiking and biking are all a part of family and friend activities balanced with a goal of being a lifelong learner.

Timothy Parsons, Ph.D., RPA

FL Department of State

Division of Historical Resources- Director

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Dr. Timothy Parsons is a cultural resources management professional and archaeologist who has worked in the field since 2003. He completed his Ph.D. and M.A. in Anthropology at Florida State University, and received an undergraduate degree in Sociology and Anthropology at Millsaps College. Dr. Parsons is a Registered Professional Archaeologist and a member of the Society for American Archaeology and the Southeastern Archaeological Conference. Before his appointment as Division Director and State Historic Preservation Officer, he served as the Division's Deputy SHPO and Supervisor of Federal and State Compliance and Review. Prior

to joining the Division, he spent six years with the National Park Service Southeast Archaeological Center, and previously worked as the cultural and historical programs manager for the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship in northern Virginia.

Vacant

Water Management District: Southwest FL Water Management District

Shawn Thomas

Federal Land Management Agency: United States Department of Agriculture.
(USDA) U.S. Forest Service

FL National Scenic Trail- Program Manager

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Shawn Thomas manages the congressionally designated Florida National Scenic Trail which spans 1,300 miles from Big Cypress National Preserve in the Everglades to Gulf Islands National Seashore in Pensacola. Shawn has a degree in Natural Resource Management from Ohio State University and served 3 ½ years as a Protected Areas Resource Specialist in the U.S. Peace Corps. Prior to joining the National Forests in Florida, Shawn was a Wildlife Biologist with the U.S. Air Force, managing a Fish and Wildlife Program in Central Florida. An avid hiker and outdoor enthusiast, he enjoys spending his free time exploring Florida's natural areas with his wife, daughter and son.

Chris Rietow

Regional Planning Council: Apalachee Regional Planning Council

Executive Director

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Chris Rietow has served as the Executive Director of the ARPC since October of 2013. The ARPC's nine-county region includes Jackson, Calhoun, Gulf, Gadsden,



Liberty, Franklin, Leon, Wakulla and Jefferson along with 27 municipalities. Chris has lived in Tallahassee since 1992. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology (1997) and a Master of Science in Planning from Florida State University (2000). He began at the ARPC as an economic development/growth management planner before transitioning to emergency management planning. He currently serves on the Board of the Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency (CRTPA) and the National Association of Development

Organizations (NADO). When away from work, he enjoys camping, mountain biking, kayak fishing, hiking and spending time with his wife and two daughters.

Jim Couillard, PLA, ASLA – (Vice-Chair)

Local Government: Marion County Parks and Recreation

Director

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Jim Couillard serves as Director of the Marion County Parks and Recreation Department and the county's landscape architect overseeing the management of 50



unique parks and trailheads. Marion County covers 1,652 square miles with 36-percent of the county classified as Conservation (380,621 acres) and is home of the Cross Florida Greenway, state forests, water management lands and the largest portion of the Ocala National Forest. Jim has a robust vision for outdoor recreation with a goal of making Marion County the ecotourism hub of the southeast through partnerships with federal, state and local land managing agencies and the private sector. Jim

works closely with FDEP and FDOT in a joint effort to close gaps and find ideal alignments for shared-use trails in Marion County as part of the state-wide paved trail vision. Jim's experience with these agencies and his park design expertise will be beneficial to the Greenways and Trails Council. When he is not working, Jim enjoys spending time with his family, long distance backpacking, camping, fishing and watching his son play baseball.