

Nature trails threatened by expansion

Terry Strickland
Contributing Writer

Scott Grubbs and three other members of the Pensacola Off-Road Cyclists were building a new bike trail on a recent morning in the University of West Florida's forested west campus. The area is home to about 20 miles of trails.

They labored under the threat of rain. It seemed symbolic, for as the cyclists worked, University administrators were finalizing plans that could eliminate the trails. Director of Facilities, Planning, Maintenance, and Construction Ken Klindt looks at the area differently. He doesn't see U.W.F.'s brightly colored trails. He sees a way to cope with \$11.9 million in budget cuts.

"We're gonna have to make adjustments," Klindt said. "Other states have gone through this, and they get into these public-private partnerships. They're moneymakers," he said.

Several acres of woods have already been cleared on east campus to make way for a hotel and restaurants. The nearby Baars-Fristone wildlife area, home to several miles of nature trails, faces a similar fate.

Now, Business Enterprises Inc., the nonprofit arm of the University, is seeking to partner with a private developer to build on west campus. Matt Altier, CEO of the corporation, said a request for proposals would be issued in early May. Altier said the tentative plan for west campus was a retirement village.

Opponents of the plan say it does not consider the current use of the land. The west campus trails are enjoyed by hikers, joggers, equestrians, birdwatchers and dog walkers, but the builders and custodians of the system are the cyclists.

"P.O.R.C. right now are really the informal stewards of those trails," Shaun Boren, assistant director of outdoor adventures at UWF, said.

Grubbs estimated that the group had contributed between 6,000 and 8,000 hours to improving and maintaining the trails since being formed in 2000.

A portion of the system may be saved. About 190 acres of west campus are designated a "conservation area." However, the area still has no legal protection and is subject to the designs of University administrators.

"It could change in the future," Klindt said, "but this plan does go to the Board of Trustees, and they vote on it. So that would be the intent of this University, to keep that as conservation unless it's addressed again."

UWF biology professor Richard Snyder has reservations. "The fact that they've labeled (that as) conservation area is just because they have no immediate plans for it," he said. "They want to show that we're a 'nature preserve,' but you know, philosophically, I think they've given that up a long time ago."

Ryan Savage, who has biked the trails for 11 years, said he was concerned about the University's plans. He said the University property had the highest concentration of elevation changes in the area. It is this that makes the land so much fun to bike. Savage said he would have to drive to at least Mobile, and perhaps Birmingham, to replicate the experience.

"If it goes away, it'll be a significant disappointment," Altier had a different view of the situation.

"Change is difficult for some people," he said, "especially when they've been used to something for a long time, but what I've found is that once we start these things, they get excited."

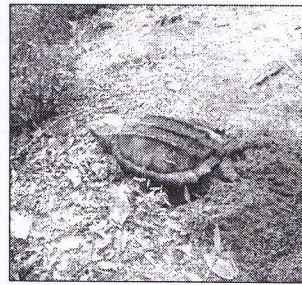


Photo by Friedrich Langerfeld

An alligator snapping turtle begins laying her eggs on the UWF nature trail. The expansion described in the master plan could disturb this species.

"It's getting over the hump of the change that's the most difficult, but once you do that, a year later, people won't even remember the way it used to be, especially if whatever you're doing is better."

Six parking garages proposed to accommodate student growth

Amanda Nelson
Contributing Writer

The University of West Florida is growing, and changing in many different ways, from the number of students to the activities on campus, but the one thing that hasn't changed is that students are still complaining about the number of parking spaces that are available on campus.

"Currently, there are 5,800 parking spaces on campus," said Chip Chism, manager of the Parking and Transportation Services.

Many students who commute complain about finding a good place to park on campus, and if they park illegally, they complain about having to pay the fee for the offense.

"I think [parking officials] should be a little bit more lenient on the ticket giving," said Becca Hill, a sophomore chemistry and pre-med major. "Especially when it's time for classes to start and people are running late and can't find a parking space, so they're going to park wherever they can find a parking spot."

"I know that a lot of students try to park close to their classes but when I walk through the parking lots between classes I hardly see an open spot unless it is faculty and staff parking," Hill added. "I

The University of West Florida master plan includes a proposal for six parking garages to be built in the next 10 years. The garages are meant to be built alongside the future population growth of the University.

know a lot of resident parking spots stay empty most of the time. Those empty spots could be used for commuters because the commuter spots fill up pretty fast."

Not all of the spaces are being used, and students are still complaining.

Chism also has a bet for any student that has a problem finding a spot to park on campus.

"I have a standing bet with anyone, and you can put this on your blog," he said. "If there's ever a time I can't find the person making that claim a place to park on this campus, I'll take them to lunch anywhere in the state of Florida because we simply have more parking than we need right now. It just isn't where people want it to be."

The University of West Florida plans to build six parking garages to help with student parking because of the increase in the number of students.

The parking garage will be built over the next 10 years. The parking garages will be located in popular

sections on campus.

Many students are in favor of having parking garages added in the future.

"I do believe that it would help," said Tanner Itherington, a sophomore marine biology major. "Yeah, I think it would make it more convenient for most people, faculty and students alike."

It would cost millions of dollars and take years to build. "Just funding to build would mean that the money would have to come from the students' pockets in the form of paying more for parking passes and ticket offenses."

One student agrees on building a parking garage but is worried about UWF wildlife.

"One of the things we brand ourselves as is a wildlife preservation, and I feel like if we tear it down to build a parking garage, then we either should not build it or we shouldn't call ourselves a wildlife preservation because obviously it's not high on our agenda," said Joe Napier, a junior public relations major.

»» RUNDOWN

Spirit: Volunteers educate attendees about local history

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"Lola Lee Bruington was one of the original documenters of St. Michael's Cemetery," he said. "She was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and, in 1938, did one of the most important surveys of St. Michael's Cemetery, documenting all the different tombstones, funerary motifs — including iron fencing — and other things which have subsequently disappeared through erosion and looting."

Norma Harris, anthropology instructor at UWF, spoke to visitors about the ancient Native Americans who resided in the area in years predating ceramics.

Archaeologists find mostly arrow and spearheads and sometimes find beads and beading tools, she said.

They have not yet found an ancient burial mound, which they suspect may be covered by the many buildings in the downtown area — possibly even

hidden by the Pensacola Civic Center.

A group of musicians at the event pleased visitors with folksy-bluegrass, and yet another musician played recorder music that reflected the period in which Pensacola was settled.

Ron Hanenck, recorder player, dressed up for the occasion and played his music at the entrance to get visitors excited about the historical day ahead of them.

"I play historical music, mostly from the Renaissance and Medieval periods," Hanenck said. "A lot of people don't realize that the music existed here in Pensacola from the 1500s on, and people that come to the event today at the cemetery might appreciate hearing music that might have been played here in Pensacola during that time."

"I'll be playing at the entrance to inspire people as they walk through the gate."

Assault: Volunteers aim to educate

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"They're just trying to get men to stand up and say, 'I don't like this image of women. This isn't a positive image of women.'"

The Vaginologues was another part of the "Get Down Series" that was completely run by the UWF club "Everyone's Issues," and the turnout was at highest capacity at about 350 attendees.

All of these events led up to the main event of sexual assault awareness, Take Back the Night.

Take Back the Night is an annual event that is held in 40 countries throughout the world and serves as a supportive event for sexual assault

survivors. It raises awareness of this issue and delivers the message of prevention, while hoping to bring an end to violence toward women.

In the article "National Sexual Assault Awareness Month," Mica Harrell, associate director of Wellness Services at UWF, comments on the importance of Take Back the Night.

"One in four college women will experience an attempted or a completed sexual assault," said Harrell. "It's not just a women's issue, it's everyone's issue. This event and others like it on campus help unify both men and women in ending sexual violence."

The added benefit to these events is the messages of knowing your limits with alcohol, using the buddy system, getting sober consent and communicating sexual limits.

Even though UWF is an active participant in advocating against sexual assault, there are plans to do more to raise awareness in the future.

In an email, Lindsey Greeson, a health educator at counseling and wellness services and a UWF Peer Educator advisor, said the Men for Violence Prevention program would be an addition to the University.

"Counseling and

Wellness Services is beginning the MVP program for men dedicated to increasing the awareness and knowledge of men concerning sexual violence, and defining the role men play in preventing sexual violence," Greeson said.

"This group will be the brother group to the UWF Peer Educators and will host programs throughout the year to reach out to different men's groups on campus."

Next year, instead of only having Take Back the Night during Sexual Awareness month, Donovan said there are plans to have small events throughout the month that leads up to it.

Coast: Snyder conducts research on pollution

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"We can alter bacteria in the lab," he said. "But it's difficult to get these domestic bacteria to perform the same way in the wild."

The only real drawback to bioremediation, Snyder said, is speed.

"Bioremediation can be a relatively slow process," he said. "But we can supply the microbes with necessary nutrients, such as phosphorus, nitrogen and oxygen, that

can help accelerate the process of a graduate study in oceanography degradation."

Born in Chestertown, Md., Snyder said he has been an outdoorsman his whole life.

"Growing up in the country with miles of woods, fields and water to get lost in is the reason I became a biologist," he said.

He earned a bachelor's degree in biology from the College of Charleston. He then completed



Snyder

and salt marsh ecology for Virginia Institute of Marine Science at College of William & Mary.

He earned a master's degree and a doctorate in zoology at the University of Maryland. Snyder said he still enjoys fishing, hiking and boating. He is also training a boykin spaniel to assist him during the next duck season.

UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

BISTRO BLUE

GRAND OPENING

The University of West Florida's Bistro Blue is a mobile outdoor cafe serving up a New Orleans-inspired menu along with a little jazz. While the cafe calls UWF's main campus home, on occasion you may spot Bistro Blue at local events along the Gulf Coast.

Join us for our grand opening celebration. Refreshments and cake will be served. Bring this ad and receive a free cup of Judy's Jamboalaya.

When: May 22, 2012, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.
Where: Between Buildings 12 & 18

uwf.edu/foodserv

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