



GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

Indian River County partners with Land Trust to develop Oyster Bar Marsh Trail on barrier island



Kayakers enjoy the Indian River Lagoon at Round Island Park in Vero Beach in 2013. The park is just south of land where the Oyster Bar Marsh Trail would be built. (TREASURE COAST NEWSPAPERS FILE PHOTO)

By Colleen Wixon of TCPalm
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INDIAN RIVER COUNTY — Nature enthusiasts soon will have another barrier-island trail for exploring the Indian River Lagoon and upland habitats.

Indian River County commissioners on Tuesday unanimously approved a \$247,000 contribution toward developing the Oyster Bar Marsh Trail, part

of a 137-acre joint project with the Indian River Land Trust. The county will seek a grant from the Florida Inland Navigation District to cover half the county's cost, with the remainder coming from money set aside in the county's five-year plan.

"This is the type of project which we have a responsibility to provide," said Commission Chairman Bob Solari.

The Land Trust has committed about \$100,000 for the project, located between State Road A1A and the lagoon in south Indian River County. In addition to the trail across the wetland and maritime hammock habitat, the project includes a boardwalk, interpretive signs and a pavilion.

In 2001, Indian River County bought about 96 acres from private landowners, but was unable to develop a trail as planned because not enough contiguous property was available, said Land Trust Executive Director Ken Grudens. Last year, the Land Trust bought about 29.5 adjacent acres.

The Land Trust hopes to get access to privately owned property to create a trail that loops around the property, he said.

Trail design could begin this summer, Grudens said.

"I think this is going to be well used," said Commissioner Joe Flescher. "I believe we are going to see quite a few people coming to walk this trail."

The project will be similar to the Lagoon Greenway project, with trail and parking area off Indian River Boulevard in Vero Beach, Grudens said. The county would be responsible for getting funding and permits for the trail development and managing the trail and facilities. The land trust, for its part, would promote the trail to the public, develop educational programs and manage volunteers, Grudens said.

OYSTER BAR MARSH TRAIL

- Total cost, to date: \$1.6 million

Indian River County

- \$708,000: Cost of 96 acres of Oyster Bar Marsh property in 2001

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- \$247,000: County contribution for trail development, approved Tuesday
- \$123,500: Possible amount paid for by state grant

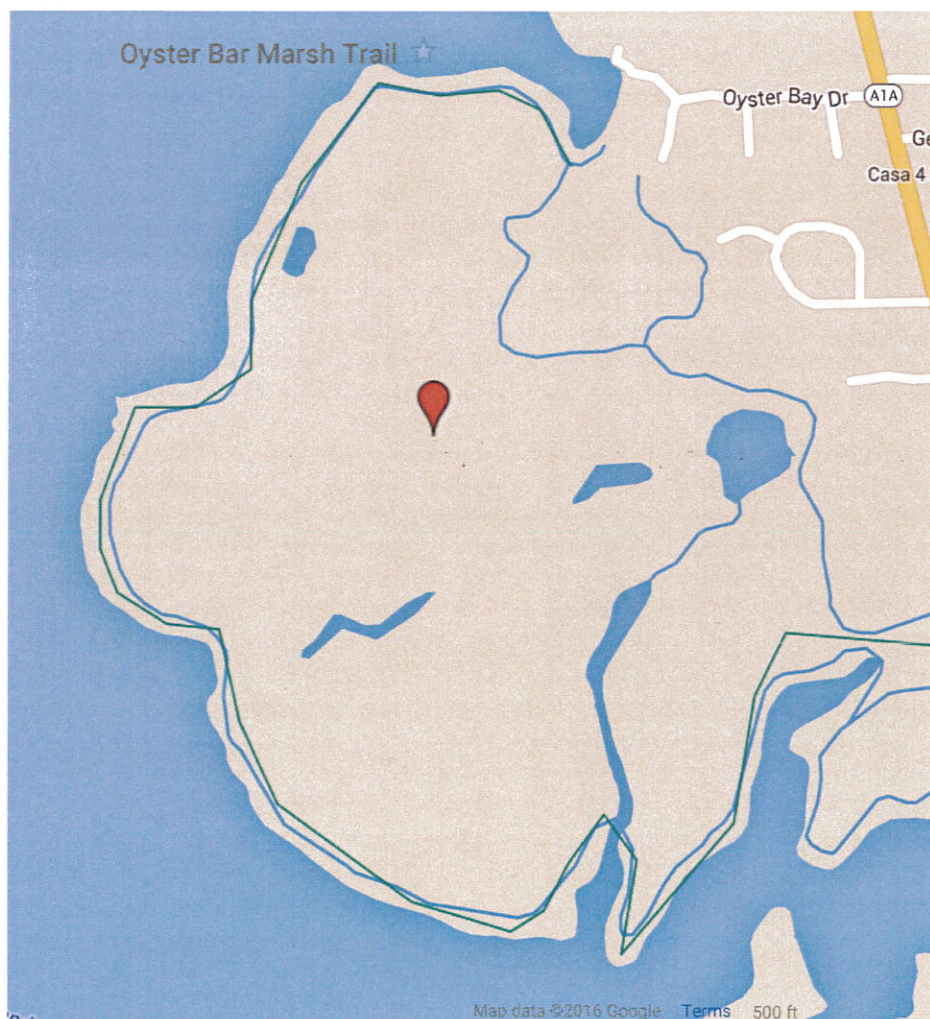
Indian River Land Trust

- \$307,428: Cost of about 30 acres in 2015
- \$100,000: Pledged contribution for trail promotion and development

Indian River Mosquito Control District

- \$245,000: Cost for dike improvements

Go here to see the map in a browser window.



About Colleen Wixon

Colleen Wixon is a multimedia journalist covering issues affecting Indian River County for the Shaping Our Future team. She has been with Treasure Coast Newspapers since 1995. Find her on Twitter @TCPalmWixon.