

Trip Report by Warren Johnson
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I think there is a need to add a date or version stamp on .pdf and gps files that are available for download or browsing from web site and maintain a version/correction sheet so users can insure they have a hard copy Book and corresponding .pdf's and gps files. The idea for a version/correction list is to cover the need to purchase an updated book. I'm not against buying a new book, that's money well spent; but, paddlers may have hand written notes within the margins of an older book and not want to recopy the notes to a newer book.

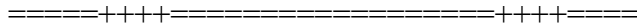
To the list of things to take and notes:

Tent Poles

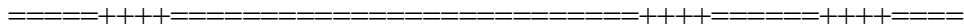
Repairing/replacement of a tent pole is a problem on long journeys through remote areas. I broke many poles this trip; contributing factors include strong winds; beaches where soft changing sand is more likely than flat and level; and plain old carelessness. I discovered that poles could be replaced with metal all-threaded rods available from Lowe's or Home Depot for under \$3 each. These rods typically come in 3-foot lengths but I have found longer. Two shorter rods can be connected with a common long-connector nut usually found near the rod rack to form the correct length. The rods are available in various diameters and flexibilities and are easily cut with a small \$3 hand-hack saw. Full construction of these replacement rods was easily completed on the trail.

Example: rod: ===== nut: ++++

A single rod using long-connector nuts on both ends forming a pole tip/stop that inserts into the tent grommet.



A double rod using long-connectors to join a full length and a shortened rod as well as pole tips



Perfection would include a length of plastic tubing to cover the threads between the long-connector nuts so that the completed rod would slide easily through any tent pole sleeves. Handling of long rods inside the kayak was not issue; however, pieces could be cut-to-suit and joined with multiple long-connectors.

Boots

I found the landings at several PC sites to be extremely difficult at low tide. Along the west coast the creek banks were sometimes covered with oysters and in the Intracoastal the landing were often in soft, shoe-sucking mud. I merely happened to have kept my travel boots; once I realized how perfect the high-top boots were for safety I easily accepted that that decision was the single best decision I made. As a bonus, boots are way better for hiking to/from the various resupply stores that are often more than a mile from the stop.

Rope

I had two fifty-foot ropes and used all of it several times for securing the yak and for strengthening the tent/tarp against strong winds.

Tarpaulin

Tarps are cheap! They make sticker-proof camp areas; provide shelter from the wind, sun, and rain; and make good staging pads so small items are not left ashore.

ThermoCell

Works – a dang good product. Absolutely clears the camp site of mosquitoes and no-see'ems. I would burn one for about two hours around dusk and a half-hour before sunrise before I exited the tent in the morning. They were a huge factor in my being able to take a zero at remote sites where the wind was not blowing.

Waypoints: Corrections and additions

Mile 138 Mexico Beach

W0138X PO Mexico Beach N29.9411 W85.3924

I added waypoint W0138X for the post office in Mexico Beach, FL 32456. The current .pdf has no info listed other than it is a post office.

Mile 396 Anglers

W0394X WP East Side N29.3255 W83.1528

Anglers should be renamed to Suwannee. Angler's was closed in 2012; apparently closed pre-2011. Local signage indicates it is now Anderson's Fish Camp which was operated by nearby Bill's Fish Camp in 2012. There is a restaurant and ATM at the main marina. If it is still open, the post office is along main canal paralleling the main road and on the way to the fish camp. Price for the night was \$5.45 (cash only) for a tent site with access to an indoor restroom and shower (w/electricity inside). I've added a waypoint, J0394X, to insure a paddler will come to the east side of the main road before paddling into town. There are two ways to reach the J0394X waypoint; from there the path is along the canal. If you miss the waypoint, then you are likely on the west side of the main road – been there, done that ☺

Mile 439 Turtle Creek

W0438X Turtle Bay Mouth N29.1150 W82.8008

The path through the mouth of Turtle Bay is heavily burdened with Oyster beds. These beds are fairly lengthy (stretching across the bay) and are, protecting the bay rather well. Having a waypoint for the opening is helpful; much better than searching by scrape and feel, and chance getting stuck on a flat bed hidden just under the water. The gap is approximately one mile prior to the entrance to Turtle Creek.

Mile 455 Jetty Crossing

W0455X Jetty Crossover A N28.9435 W82.7762

I did not go to the cords provided in the book so I do not know if there is a pass located there. Departing the PC at Mile 453, there was a strong wind from the ESE, so I took a slightly sheltered route; heading into the wind and across to the jetty. I expected to then to go west to the expected jetty crossing further out; longer, but I would be protected from wind and what would be near parallel waves. As I grew nearer the jetty I found that I was at a pass through the jetty. This was a deep water pass about 0.4 miles inland of the given location; a local boater travelled through before I did.

Mile 460.5 Shell Island

W0460 WP-PC Shell Island N28.9250 W82.6924

I corrected the coords at Shell Island. There is no land within 300 yards of the provided coords. The nearest land on the Gulf side of the island is north and it is low, swampy, buggy, narrow, and generally ugly. The coords I provide are inside the Crystal River entrance where it is still buggy, but it is high and roomy. Crystal River runs noticeable swift through the pass.

Mile 482 Chassahowitzka Cutoff

1. W0482X WP MR-Depart N28.7037 W82.6523
2. W0482Y WP MR-Reconnect N28.6871 W82.6459

Just after Mile 482, the trail heads inland/off route about 6 miles to the campground. I chose to skip the campground and proceed to the unofficial, 10 Palms PC, campsite at Mile 492. I departed the Main Route at near Mile 482 and reconnected after about 1.3 miles.

Mile 498.8 Mary's Fish Camp

I tried to get a mail drop set up for Mary's Fish Camp. The person sending me the box found that Mary's was closed. It is far enough off of the main route that I skipped by and stopped at Mile 509 Norfleet. These new owners were kayak-friendly folks who let me stay overnight near their gated/protected launch; also, they gladly had received my care package. I gave them \$20 though they never asked for money and took the money only after I convinced them that it was customary to pay \$10 for the holding of a mail drop and my instance to pay \$10 for a tent site.

Mile 532.4 Anclote Key SP

This location suffers from the same 'care not' attitude as XXX where the site is plain, unshaded, and comes with stickers and ants. I stayed there but there are several better protected landings where the water isn't painfully shallow. Of course, the inlet may not have been shallow when it was first selected.

Mile A616E Robinson Preserve (Group camping only).

W0616X PC N27.51428 W82.68703

I have recently looked at the area on Google Maps and wonder how this site made the book listing. It would take a pretty good effort for someone unfamiliar with the area to reach this site from the bay.

There is a substantial spoil island prior to Robinson that clearly is being used by local boaters for day picnics and pit-stops.

Mile 669 Cayo Costa SP

I think that staying at Cayo Costa is a poor decision. The campsites are one mile from the bay-side landing. The shuttle runs between 9am and 4pm – that means landing early and taking care of business before the last shuttle. The 9am shuttle is not at the campsite at 9am. That it likely means a late 10am start the next morning into what will be a very long day regardless of route chosen. Also, the sites are just a table – there is no water, little noon shade, and clearly over priced; and electricity is available only near the main office – one mile away. (For clarity, there is water available near the camp sites, just not at each sites)

Far better, if one intends to paddle in calm waters, is to stay on the north end of Big Pine Island at Mile 680 Jug Creek Cottages or along the north beach. I stayed at Cayo Costa and I lived that poor decision – running out of daylight before reaching Mile 700 Picnic Island.

Mile 710 Koreshan SP

Because of what amounts to my simply not being familiar with the area, I stayed at both the San Carlos RV Park at Mile 707 and the Koreshan SP. The trip up the river to Koreshan is painfully long and really out of the way. Considering the terrific bus system at San Carlos I cannot recommend staying at Koreshan. In fairness the bus does run along the highway one mile the Koreshan Park entrance. I stayed there because I wanted to buy a new tent from Dick's Sporting Goods near(?) the Park but Dick's is reachable by bus from San Carlos (one transfer). I think the data needs to indicate the connecting bus system stops at the San Carlos RV Park..

Mile 766 Whitehorse Key

Correction: N25.86661 W81.57226

The given coords are woefully incorrect by about a mile.

Mile 953 / Blank / 954

W953X R-g-PO Key West N24.55041 W81.80038

I do not know the thinking for leaving the waypoint/name blank between 953 and 954. As far as the provided coords, I suggest changing them to the intersection of US1 and Whitehead Street. Google indicates that the post office is 2 miles from the given location and on US 1. I suggest provided coords N24.55041 W81.80038.

Mile 1050 Tavernier Creek / Atlantic Ocean

W1050X PC Tavernier Creek N24.9967 W80.5045

The book, on page 121, indicates that paddlers might stay on Tavernier Key. There is only one boat-size landing site cut into this mango island. The strip of (shell) land itself is well protected but low; tide changes are minimum. I stayed there two days June 20/21 while watching hurricane Debbie.

FYI: On June 18, I struggled all day to complete 20 bay-side miles intending to reach the Conch On Inn Motel (25 miles) from Long Key SP. I fell 5 miles short and was forced to spend the night on the dock at a bar. I didn't set up my tent; I just slipped inside, zipped-up, and slept. It was pretty good even with a warm drizzling rain throughout the night. In the morning of the 19th I left early but it still took me till noon reach the Conch On Inn Motel. I was never at risk to the hurricane directly; however I never caught a break on the tides or wind on either of those days. I spent the one night at that motel and then stopped at the Tavernier Key to save money while waiting out Hurricane Debbie.

That was days 3 and 4 of six or seven days of being affected by the winds. The wind started blowing from south to north so I moved off the low island to the PC north of Pennekamp SP for two days before moving north again.

Also, one of my few mishaps occurred at the marina located at the US-1 Bridge near the south end of Tavernier Creek. I stopped there to walk the half-mile to the grocery store, bank and restaurants. Afterwards, while loading the supplies I managed to drop my billfold containing the usual cards and \$300 of freshly withdrawn cash off of the dock and into the deep water. There was no panic because I had just made a full resupply; I could get another card and would not need money for several days. The marina serves as a Scuba diving school/tour shop so I asked the people in the office about contacting a diver. The crew on-hand managed to retrieve my billfold with only flippers, mask and light.

Of course I was relieved and paid \$40 in cold wet cash for the service. So, in my life, June 20 is Clint Day – the diver that rescued the billfold.

Mile 1346 Titusville Railroad Bridge

Site south of the bridge: N28.6384 W80.8021

Site North of the bridge: N28.6748 W80.8086

The book location is 0.5 mile north of the bridge. There is NO island at that location. Paddlers can either stop 1.0 mile south or 1.5 mile north after the bridge. The southern location is a substantial, improved site with trees and picnic table. The northern site is smallish and somewhat brushy but high (3+ feet at high tide) with a good landing on the north side. There is another spoil island 'about' a mile further north that I did not visit; that island appeared larger and more rugged from a half-mile distance.

Mile 1436 Moses Creek

W1436XA WP Moses Creek Mouth N29.77291 W81.26944

The Moses Creek site itself is very good. There is a sturdy set of wooden steps to get up the high/steep bank and at low tide the base is sandy. However, at low tide the path back to the Intracoastal very is shallow showing numerous oyster beds. Also, the area approaching the creek is guarded with high grass and with the several false inlets, time/effort can be saved by knowing the location of the creek's entrance. I added a waypoint for the entrance as 1436A Mouth of Moses Creek at N29.77291 W81.26944

Mile 1465 Palm Valley Road Bridge

The coords are completely incorrect. The correct coords are N30.13274 W81.38512. Those given are the same as those for Mile 1414.6.