

Tour de Picayune 68 mile Bicycle Event 6/24/24

Update #2 TdP 2024

From Race Director Wes Wilkins

Hello again and welcome to the TdP website.

Still looks positive for the now July 20 TdP Championships

About 10 days ago a very big and slow moving “tropical wave” dumped a great amount of rain in SW Florida and this swamp in particular.

Picayune Strand collects much of the rain as part of what swamps are about and why this one has been restored; Retaining rainwater and filtering it before it gets into Florida Bay and the Everglades via sheets of water flowing south/southwest to the 10,000 islands and into where the “Great Mangrove Forest of North America ” begins. about 10 miles directly south and straight down the old “Miller Blvd.” (the same road where the starting line is) with nothing in between except a two lane stretch of Tamiami Trail. (US 41)

Here in Picayune Strand Forest, specifically the northwest corner, morning and early afternoon crystal clear skies have allowed the intense and searing Florida June sunshine to evaporate most of the standing water. Additionally, flows southward have been slowly, but steadily and widely draining out the rain driven water of the Big Cypress Basin. In my observations it’s definitely drastically receded from where it was a week ago last Monday after the deluge. About half on average seems gone and all the higher ground dried but mostly soft. Still a long way to go until the south end drops much as the ground is sodden and showing a lack of absorption. After those subsequent gully washers came through over the last two afternoons, water rose quickly but came down just as fast and appeared to have remained well below the high water from last Monday so It's promising and definitely much less today one week later. So progress has been maintained even after 2 typical afternoon thunderstorms.

I have to say this though, the mosquitos are seriously ridiculous. Not Collier Seminole incredible or Fakahatchee horrible, but really extreme compared to normal around here to say the least. However, normal will return soon if steady water decline continues. But for now, be prepared. Bring “Off” plus a general area spray if you can. Even riding along quickly can accumulate a slew- like on your back out of the breeze and appearing as a carpet of fuzzy blood suckers. And if anything happens requiring stopped attention for any long length of time, preparing for that reality will be worth it.

What's prepared? Repellent for one thing. Your choice or method, just make sure it's effective enough to maintain your grip during a bad episode. Plus covering up goes first. Long sleeves, a collar, long pants and a hat. Mostly thin cotton, and very breathable, ventable, dries rapidly and of a material tough enough to impede the sucking and siphoning of mosquitoes. Wearing a form fitting snug and light weight cycling suit is practically going buck naked to a blood sucking bug. An invite.

Lighter color is also a good idea. Mosquitoes prefer dark colors like camo and black and dark greens. And we should all be aware perfumes and sweet smelling things can attract bugs in droves. A head net is very nice for those inhalable situations. And don't forget the deer flies. They can be brutal. Attacking and hitching rides. They'll make you bleed. Hats are helpful even beyond a bike helmet and eye protection is also key when swarming bug conditions sometimes pop up.

When the multitude of hard and soft bodied tiny, winged specs and spatters of irritation come alive in our stew of biology, they quest to enter you through your eyes and everything else possible; The burning can be debilitating and the annoyance unbearable.

Eye protection can be mandatory in the early mornings or evenings or on sweaty, cloudy days. A brim or visor like on a baseball cap can be tipped over the eyes, sweeping bugs away, too. Hats can keep a scalp from getting "scalped" from something such as a swarm of no see-ums or hard biters like pine bores, stings from bees tangled in hair, or angry yellow jackets.

A scarf is good and handy around the neck, keeping it free from plant organics and dust as well as spiders and mites and other various things getting down your neck and back. This goes with a collared shirt and makes for a higher level of protection and helps keep those exposed scratches and scrapes and edges of ears and eyelids and the like from suffering too much from the grinding effects of the Florida swamp environment in the summertime.

Nothing at all? Don't panic. Try dog fennel. It also loves being here during the summer. It's everywhere. Just grab the stalk, pull one or cut one out and leave on the foliage. Now flog yourself. It fits the circumstance and appropriate.

Next update I'll discuss particular plants that can be trouble and what to do and expect when getting into some.