FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Flagler County to relocate gopher tortoise from Lehigh Trail

October 26, 2020 – Flagler County officials plan to relocate a gopher tortoise that has burrowed directly on the edge of the paved Lehigh Trail pedestrian path for its safety as well as walkers, joggers, and bicyclists.

The Land Management and Parks and Recreation departments will safely trap and relocate the gopher tortoise. One of its burrows is currently located on the eastern section of the Lehigh Trail. The entrance to the burrow – a hole about the size of a dinner plate – is a potential trip hazard.

“Once the tortoise is captured, it will be safely moved elsewhere onsite, and the existing burrow will be filled with gravel to discourage it re-occupying the burrow,” said Environmental Projects Supervisor Michael Lagasse. “It is illegal to handle a gopher tortoise or disturb its burrow without a permit from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.”

Staff sought guidance from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and obtained the necessary permit to relocate the gopher tortoise. Staff has up to 28 days to complete the relocation process once the trapping has begun. Informational signs have been placed on site.

“Gopher tortoise habitats are interconnected systems – more than a single location. They most often have more than one burrow at a time,” Lagasse said. “The only thing you can know about a tortoise from a burrow alone is how big the largest tortoise to use that burrow was. Any number of tortoises at any given time can, and will, use any burrow into which they can fit.”

###