



Construction of the Fort Hamer Bridge started on the north shore and moved south across the Manatee River. This photo taken in March showed the construction was nearing the south shore. **James A. Jones Jr.** jajones1@bradenton.com

LOCAL

Rains push Fort Hamer Bridge opening back one month

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EAST MANATEE

Tropical Storm Emily and all the other rain between June and mid-July threw a wet blanket over plans to open the Fort Hamer Bridge to traffic on Aug. 26.

Those plans have been pushed back to Sept. 23, project spokeswoman Trudy Gerena said Monday.

A total of 21 inches of rain was recorded at Sarasota Bradenton International Airport in June and July, said Mike Clay, chief meteorologist for Bay News 9.

“It’s extreme,” Clay said of the impressive amounts of rain that fell before Tropical Storm Emily suddenly appeared offshore Aug. 1.

The Fort Hamer Bridge and associated improvements to Fort Hamer Road and Upper Manatee River Road total \$32.69 million.

Although the bridge won’t open to traffic until Sept. 23, the Fort Hamer 5K and 10K runs will go on as scheduled 7:30 a.m. Aug. 26.

Originally, organizers were expecting about 1,500 runners, but 1,700 are already registered.

“We expect to eclipse 2,000 runners now,” event planner Doug Schiller said.

Schiller has been meeting with Emergency Medical Services and firefighters to ensure all necessary support is in place for the runs.

A parking area with a capacity of about 1,800 vehicles is located about four blocks north of the bridge.

Corey Peyerck, a board member of the Bradenton Runners Club, previously said the Fort Hamer run would rank among the largest runs in the area, including the Robinson Preserve 5K and 10K runs.

Registration opens 6 a.m. race day. A kid's race at 6:45 a.m. begins the competition, followed by a dual start in the 5K and 10K at 7:35 a.m. Runners with strollers are welcome.

Proceeds will be divided between the Parrish Y Branch Scholarship Fund, the Parrish Foundation, and Manatee County Youth Rowing.

Runners will receive a Fort Hamer Bridge Run commemorative medal. Children will receive finisher medals.

The timed race will begin near the Fort Hamer rowing facility, proceed south over the 2,300-foot bridge to the south shore, and return north, finishing at the Islands on the Manatee River neighborhood.

The rainy season in Florida drops off sharply after mid-September, Clay said, although hurricane season continues into November.

To register for any of the running events visit forthamerbridgerun.com or call Doug Schiller at 941-932-6147.

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A crane is shown working from the construction trestle of the Fort Hamer Bridge near the south shore of the Manatee River in March. **James A. Jones Jr.** Herald file photo.