

# Florida State Parks Foundation Urges Legislature to Fully Fund Our State Parks

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*It is critical that the Florida Park Service receives adequate funding*

TALLAHASSEE, FL, USA, January 31, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Florida State Parks Foundation today urged legislators to fully fund Governor DeSantis' 2020-21 budget request for Florida's award-winning state parks.



When you compare the \$54 million that has been requested with the \$2.6 billion in economic impact that the state parks generated last year, it is hard to think of a better return on the investment."

*Julia Gill Woodward*

"It is critical that the Florida Park Service receives adequate funding to ensure that our state parks continue to be the best that they can be," said Foundation CEO Julia Gill Woodward.

"When you compare the \$54 million that has been requested with the \$2.6 billion in economic impact that the state parks generated last year, it is hard to think of a better return on the investment," she said.

Governor DeSantis' FY20-21 budget included \$54 million

for fixed capital and land management and an additional \$100 million for Florida Forever.

Currently, both the Senate and House have indicated that their Florida Park Service allocations for fixed capital and land management will fall well short of the requested amount. The Senate has proposed \$27 million and the House \$37 million.

The House also provides only \$20 million for Florida Forever although the Senate proposes \$125 million.

"Our state park system is acknowledged as the best in the nation," said President Gil Ziffer. "This was recognized nationally by the award of a record fourth Gold Medal for Excellence just this past fall."

"Our state parks contribute to the state's tourism industry while preserving many of the jewels of our natural environments and Florida's significant historical and cultural sites," he said.

"State parks and trails located in small towns and rural areas are sometimes the only economic driver in the community. Visitors coming to these parks spend dollars for lodging and in restaurants, gas stations, grocery stores, bait shops, etc. If not for state park operations these businesses might not otherwise exist," he added.

Last year, state parks and trails served more than 28 million visitors generating \$2.6 billion in direct economic impact to local communities statewide creating more than 37,000 jobs as a result of state park operations. In addition, over \$176 million was raised in the form of state sales tax.

"If our state parks are not adequately funded, aging infrastructure cannot be replaced, urgent repairs cannot be made and the park experience for our millions of visitors will be diminished. This will have a devastating impact on both economic returns and the environment," said Ziffer.

The Foundation, working with the Florida Park Service, supports the work of Florida's award-winning 175 state parks' staff, local Friends groups and the 14,500 volunteers who donate 1.2 million hours of their time every year working in them.

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