

Speaker Elect Paul Renner Tours Washington Oaks Gardens State Park

Speaker Designate discusses issues affecting all of Florida's 175 award-winning parks and trails.

TALLAHASSEE, FL, UNITED STATES, July 26, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Representative Paul Renner, who represents District 24, visited Washington Oaks Gardens State Park on Friday as a guest of the Florida State Parks Foundation and the Florida Park Service.

Representative Renner, a retired naval veteran and attorney, will be Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives from 2022-24. The Palm Coast visit was to brief him about new developments at the park and to discuss issues affecting all of Florida's 175 award-winning parks and trails.



Rep Renner with Florida State Parks staff and Foundation board members

Florida State Parks Foundation President Gil Ziffer stressed both the environmental and economic importance of the state parks. "Our state parks attract 28 million visitors from around the world, have an economic impact to the state of \$2.4 billion and support more than 33,500 jobs," he said.

"And, as 2020 clearly demonstrated, Florida's state parks play an important role in providing open spaces where people can recreate and exercise in a safe, socially distanced environment," he said.

"We had a wonderful visit at Washington Oaks Gardens State Park, where friendly staff and volunteers shared their vast knowledge of native plant species, preservation practices, and the rich history of the Gardens," said Representative Renner. "Thank you to the individuals working at Washington Oaks Gardens and across our State Parks System for their dedication to ensuring that our 175 award-winning Florida State Parks and Trails continue to provide a substantial

environmental and economic benefit to our state," he added.

The formal gardens are the centerpiece of Washington Oaks, with remarkable displays of native and exotic plant species such as azaleas, camellias, and bird of paradise. The gardens offer visitors a peaceful stroll through winding reflection ponds which are sheltered by a picturesque oak hammock. Washington Oaks is also famous for the unique shoreline of coquina rock formations that line its Atlantic beach.

Washington Oaks Gardens State Park attracts more than 100,000 visitors a year, supports more than 130 local jobs and has an economic impact of more than \$10 million a year.

The Foundation, founded in 1993 as Friends of Florida State Parks and renamed in 2018, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation whose mission is to support and help sustain the Florida Park Service, its 175 award-winning parks and trails, local Friends groups and more than 20,000 park volunteers.

It does this through programs that preserve and protect state parks, educate visitors about the value of state parks, encourage community engagement and active use of state parks, and advocacy.

The volunteer Board of Directors represents private and public sectors as well as local and statewide interests.

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