

Silver Springs State Park's Wheelchair-Accessible Glass-Bottom Boat named one of the ten most significant boats of 2021

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TALLAHASSEE, FL, UNITED STATES, November 22, 2021 / EINPresswire.com/ -- The Florida State Parks Foundation announced today that the new wheelchair-accessible glass-bottom boat at Silver Springs State Park has been named as one of the ten most significant boats of 2021.



Wheelchair accessible glass bottom boat

The top ten list, compiled by WorkBoat magazine, will be used to select the Boat of the Year on Wednesday, Dec. 1, the first day of the 2021 International WorkBoat Show in New Orleans.

The Florida State Parks Foundation commissioned Lay, Pitman & Associates Naval Architects to design the 37-foot boat, which includes a flat deck and spacious aisles providing easy and convenient access for wheelchairs. It is also equipped with an induction-loop system that assists passengers using hearing aids to listen to the captain's narration.

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There have been glass-bottom boat tours at Silver Springs since 1870 but none of the vessels could accommodate wheelchairs and it wasn't possible to retrofit them, so an entirely new boat was needed”

Paula Russo

This boat is significant in many ways, said Paula Russo, former Foundation president, who oversaw the vessel's designed and construction. Although glass bottom boat tours have been operating at Silver Springs since 1870 none of the vessels was able to accommodate wheelchairs and it was not possible to retrofit them, so an entirely new

boat was needed. The vessel was built by St. Johns Ship Building in Palatka using design principles that give universal access to all people.

The totally electric glass bottom boat was donated to the Florida Park Service in June. It can carry up to 28 passengers and two crew members and has a 12" draft. The boat is powered by twin 20-hp Elco electric outboards with four Lithionics 7.5 kW lithium-ion batteries. The ship's service power comes from two Lithionics lithium-ion 7.5-kW batteries.

In keeping with the tradition of naming the glass-bottom boats at Silver Springs after Seminole tribal chiefs, the new boat is named Chief Potackee – Betty Mae Tiger Jumper, after the only woman to serve as chief of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

In addition to the Foundation, a consortium of public and private partners helped fund the boat, including the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida, the Felburn Foundation, the Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund, the Florida Park Service, Friends of Silver Springs State Park, and Cape Leisure.

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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