

Florida State Parks Foundation Celebrates A Historic Year

We look forward to even greater things in 2022

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The Florida State Parks Foundation has celebrated a year full of tremendous achievements, President Tammy Gustafson said in her end-of-year message to members.



The Foundation is truly fortunate to have the support of the many thousands of folks who recognize the importance of our fabulous state parks and the need to protect them for generations to come."

Tammy Gustafson

"As we approach the end of the year, it is good to reflect on all the incredible accomplishments we have achieved together to make our award-winning Florida State Parks even better," Gustafson said. "We look forward, with your help, to even greater things in 2022."

The Foundation started 2021 with a huge success by introducing a bill to establish a Florida State Park specialty license to benefit park projects and then getting overwhelming bipartisan legislative support to get it

approved. Impressively, the license plate cleared its 3,000-preorder threshold in less than 34 days, has gone into production, and will be available in early 2022.

"The Foundation is truly fortunate to have the support of the many thousands of folks who recognize the importance of our fabulous state parks and the need to protect and preserve them for generations to come," Gustafson said. "The impact you have cannot be overstated. Your generosity has enabled the Foundation to make significant accomplishments in its mission of protecting, preserving, sustaining, and growing our Florida State Parks."

Gustafson went on to recognize some of the Foundation's most significant milestones from the last year:

"Your generosity helped us fund, build, and launch the first-ever wheelchair-accessible glass-bottom boat at Silver Springs State Park. 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.

“Thanks to you, we have improved accessibility in our parks through funding a new accessible playground at Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park, breaking ground on the first phase of an accessible fishing pier at Oscar Scherer State Park, and providing beach-accessible wheelchairs to every single coastal state park.

“Your continuing largesse has improved wildlife care and conservation through expanding resources for sea turtle needs at Sebastian Inlet State Park and John D. MacArthur Beach State Park, provided habitat maintenance for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker at St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park, expanded manatee care at Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park and provided funding for coral reef research at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park.

“You have helped improve the ability to share our historical and cultural resources through the funding of the Flight to Freedom Trail at Fort Mose Historic State Park, telling the story of the first freed Black settlement in the precolonial United States and also commemorating two civil rights heroes and the park’s namesakes at the Dr. Von D. Mizell – Eula Johnson State Park, who will finally have their stories told through interpretive signage.

“You have helped make our parks even greener by funding longleaf pine restoration work through our Plant a Pine program and providing electric-accessible trams at Hugh Taylor Birch State Park and Topsail Hill Preserve State Park.

“And, at the Florida State Parks Foundation, we have increased our membership to record levels. We have funded the training of dozens of park rangers this year and advocated for the most robust parks budget in recent history.

“Through the work of many, much has been accomplished. Together, we will continue to ensure that Florida’s State Parks remain the best in the nation and a treasure that we can all be proud of.”

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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