

The Florida State Parks Foundation Celebrates Reopening of William J. ‘Billy Joe’ Rish Recreation Area

The 100-acre addition, located in Port St. Joe, is open year-round and is specifically designated for people with disabilities

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On Friday, the Florida Park Service officially reopened the William J. “Billy Joe” Rish Recreation Area for day-use access at the Gulf of Mexico and the St. Joseph Bay.

The 100-acre addition, located in Port St. Joe, is open year-round and is specifically designated for people with disabilities, their families, and their caregivers. Management of William J. “Billy Joe” Rish Recreation Area transferred from the Agency for Persons with Disabilities to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Division of Recreation and Parks on Dec. 1, 2021.



Florida State Park and Foundation leadership at the reopening

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The park had previously been closed since October 2018 after sustaining significant damage from Hurricane Michael.

“The park has been closed for more than three years, but it will now be a huge asset to our network of state parks,” said Julia Gill Woodward, CEO of the Florida State Parks Foundation.

With beautiful, sugar-white sand, sea-oat-covered dunes, refreshing sea air, and shimmering

turquoise water, William J. "Billy Joe" Rish Recreation Area is a fabulous getaway that is completely accessible for people with disabilities.

The park, which is connected by a series of boardwalks and ramps, features a multipurpose event hall with a complete cooking facility. Additional amenities expected to open this year include an Olympic-sized swimming pool, dormitory-style cabins, and family cottages.

The park's nature trails allow visitors to view native wildlife and vegetation in its natural state.

The Florida State Parks 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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