

Awards from the Sea Turtle Grants Program boosts sea turtle education and protection at two Florida State Parks

The Sea Turtle Grants Program is funded from proceeds from the sale of the Florida Sea Turtle License Plate

TALLAHASSEE, UNITED STATES, February 18, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Florida State Parks Foundation announced today that two grants from the Sea Turtle Grants Program will help boost the sea turtle education program at John D. MacArthur Beach State Park and provide protection for them at Sebastian Inlet State Park.



Thanks to these very generous grants, replacement and upgrading has helped improve the quality of life for the sea turtles at MacArthur and Sebastian Inlet."

Julia Gill Woodward

The John D. MacArthur Beach State Park is a Marine Turtle Permit Holder under the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWC). It is the only state park allowed to keep up to three female juvenile loggerhead sea turtles at its facility for educational purposes. These "Sea

Turtle Ambassadors" are the centerpiece of the park's robust marine educational programs.

However, the park's outdoor sea turtle tank needs repair and updating of its aquaria life support system which keeps the water clean and at the right temperature for its temporary sea turtle resident. The grant will enable this work to be done

The park receives six-month-old turtles, and they are cared for until they are about two years old. They are then tagged and released back into the ocean as part of an ongoing research program.

MacArthur is a valuable marine learning center for the school children of the community. Before COVID, more than 14,000 children participated in the sea turtle program.

At Sebastian Inlet State Park, a \$24,475 grant will enable sea turtle-friendly external lighting to be installed as well as the replacement of old interpretive panels educating visitors about sea turtles and what can be done to protect them. Conventional external lighting can disorientate sea turtles coming ashore to nest and hatchlings trying to make their way to the oceans.

The park in Melbourne Beach is one of Florida's thirteen Index Parks that hosts 800 nests along three miles of beaches during the summer sea turtle nesting season. The park runs parallel with a barrier island and spans over 1,000 acres, and is located within the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge, which is a critical area for the nesting of loggerhead sea turtles.

The beaches of the ACNWR support the largest nesting colony of loggerhead turtles in the western hemisphere, the second largest in the world. The park also provides important nesting habitat for green and leatherback sea turtles.

"Thanks to these very generous grants, replacement and upgrading has helped improve the quality of life for the sea turtles using the outdoor tank at MacArthur and provided additional protection at Sebastian Inlet," said Julia Gill Woodward, Foundation CEO.

The Sea Turtle Grants Program is funded from proceeds from the sale of the Florida Sea Turtle License Plate, the primary source of funding for Florida's Marine Turtle Protection Program. It also supports the Sea Turtle Grants Program, which has awarded more than \$2.7 million in grants for research, education, and conservation programs since 2001 to benefit sea turtles in Florida.

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. This project will be completed by the Florida State Parks Foundation Services, LLC, which is a limited liability company affiliate of the Foundation.

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