

Manatee Care Supports Thriving Growth at Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Manatees cared for at Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park are thriving with expert care, rehabilitation services and dietary support thanks in part to a \$25,000 donation from The Freed Foundation gifted to the Florida State Parks Foundation for this purpose. The funding has helped to provide care for two subadult manatees, two adult residents and a rotation of rehabilitating manatees.

As with many young animals, extra attention was needed to support the growth of juvenile manatees Keeks and

Adobe. This donation provided veterinary treatment, propane to heat the inground rehabilitation pool water and an abundance of lettuce necessary to feed the growing manatees. Keeks was released back into the wild this year and her attached tracking device shows she remains active and healthy. Adobe was returned to SeaWorld this year after receiving special care for six months.

Homosassa Springs is part of the Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership and is one of five federally permitted acute care facilities in Florida that treat sick, injured or orphaned Florida manatees. The state park is distinctive in the support it provides due to its natural setting. The spring water helps condition manatees to the aquatic environment before they are released, and the 74-degree water is also ideal to keep manatees warm.

"Providing both vital support in manatee care and offering the public a place to watch these aquatic animals in a natural habitat year-round, Homosassa Springs is truly an exceptional state park with springs that are both beautiful and restorative," said Tammy Gustafson, Florida State Parks Foundation President. "We are very grateful for this donation and the partnership that allows us to help support the state park's efforts in managing Florida's wildlife."



Rehabilitating Manatee Shantay at Homosassa Springs



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*Tammy Gustafson, Florida
State Parks Foundation
President*

Homosassa Springs is home to two long-time resident manatees, Betsy and Ariel, and welcomes a rotating number of incoming manatees that require attention. The spring's natural run has varying water depths making it a good rehabilitative place for manatees with buoyancy issues, as is the case with manatee Heinz currently at the park.

The secure spring location also provides a safe, natural habitat for manatees with limited mobility, which is important for manatee Shantay, who is at the park

recovering from a severe tail injury resulting from a boat strike. In the wintertime, Homosassa Springs becomes a refuge for wild manatees seeking warm waters in the colder months.

For members of the public interested in manatee care in Florida State Parks, donations can be made at the Florida State Parks Foundation [website](#) with a note that identifies the gift as for manatee support.

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

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