

Florida State Parks Foundation announces major Greener Initiative to enhance environmental sustainability in state parks

Multitiered campaign will reduce state parks' energy footprint

APOPKA, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, April 5, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Florida State Parks Foundation today officially unveiled its Greener Initiative during a press conference at Wekiwa Springs State Park.

“

The Foundation is committed to making our parks even greener and ensuring they remain as beautiful, natural spaces for future generations.”

Julia Gill Woodward, Florida State Parks Foundation CEO

The Greener Initiative, funded in part through sales of the Foundation’s “Explore our State Parks” specialty license plate, is a multitiered campaign that will plan, develop, fund and install projects that increase environmental sustainability, reduce waste and lower utility costs within Florida’s award-winning state parks.

During today’s event, the Foundation shared plans to install new, energy-efficient LED lighting at five “pilot”

parks: Blue Spring State Park (Orange City), Highlands Hammock State Park (Sebring), Dr. Julian G. Bruce St. George Island State Park, Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park (White Springs) and Wekiwa Springs State Park (Apopka).

New lighting will replace more than 700 outdated fixtures in campgrounds, office buildings, restrooms and other park facilities. The project will cost approximately \$39,000 and comes with a projected payback period of just 1.43 years, upon which it will save an estimated \$27,000 and 132,052 kilowatt hours per year.

In 10 years, the updated lighting at these parks will have saved an estimated \$311,000 in energy and maintenance costs.

Duke Energy Florida conducted energy audits at each park to help inform implementation strategies. Audits are in progress for the next wave of parks, which is expected to include Rainbow Springs State Park (Dunnellon), Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park, Lake Kissimmee State Park (Lake Wales), Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park (Gainesville) and

Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park.

“In addition to their amazing beauty and outstanding recreational opportunities, our state parks play a crucial role in the preservation of Florida’s unique native ecosystems and landscapes,” said Tammy Gustafson, president of the Florida State Parks Foundation. “It’s only natural that the Foundation would support our parks’ efforts to be as environmentally friendly as possible, and we are excited to launch an initiative that will do just that.”

The Greener Initiative is a direct result of the “Explore Our State Parks” specialty license plate, which debuted in March 2022. In a little more than a year of availability, the plate has sold nearly 8,000 units and ranks in the top half of all specialty license plates in Florida.

Each plate sold contributes \$25 to the Florida State Parks Foundation.

Plate sales helped fund the unofficial first stage of the Greener Initiative late last year, when the Foundation partnered with Duke Energy Florida to purchase and install 121 water bottle refilling stations in 85 state parks and trails from the Florida Panhandle to the Keys.

The stations are designed to decrease the use of single-use plastics in state parks and encourage visitors to think of ways to make small, environmentally minded changes at home. Many stations are equipped with digital counters which tally the number of bottles saved. In only a few months, the stations have already saved nearly 100,000 single-use plastic bottles that might otherwise have ended up in a landfill.

“Duke Energy Florida is proud to collaborate with organizations like the Florida State Parks Foundation as we move ahead in pursuit of building a cleaner, more resilient energy future for our state,” said Sharon Arroyo, Duke Energy Florida Vice President of Government and Community Relations. “Duke Energy Florida is grateful to be part of the Greener Initiative and the Florida State Parks Foundation’s efforts to preserve and protect Florida’s natural resources.”

In recent years, the Foundation has also created the Plant a Pine program, which for every \$1



Representatives from Florida State Parks, the Florida State Parks Foundation and Duke Energy Florida announce a new environmental sustainability initiative at Wekiwa Springs State Park on April 5, 2023.

received plants one native longleaf pine in a state park, as well as debuted an electric, accessible glass-bottom boat at Silver Springs State Park and a fleet of electric, accessible trams at parks across the state.

“We have seen amazing results from our water bottle refilling stations, and we can’t wait to see the positive effects of these new LED lights,” said Julia Gill Woodward, CEO of the Florida State Parks Foundation. “The Foundation is committed to making our parks even greener and ensuring they remain as beautiful, natural spaces for future generations.”

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