

Florida State Parks Foundation Urges Lawmakers to Fully Fund Our State Parks

Award-winning Florida State Parks would receive more than \$186 million in Governor's Framework for Freedom budget

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, April 11, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Florida State Parks Foundation urges the Florida Legislature to fully fund Governor DeSantis' 2023-2024 budget request for Florida's award-winning state parks.

The Governor's budget allocates more than \$186 million for Florida State Parks, which would be directed to operating the state's parks, trails and historic sites, as well to critical repairs and renovations, resource management and expanding accessibility features.

Florida State Parks welcomed more than 30 million visitors last year and generated an estimated economic impact of \$3.9 billion.

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Tammy Gustafson, Florida State Parks Foundation President

“Time and again, our amazing state parks offer unmatched value for Florida's citizens and visitors alike,” said Tammy Gustafson, president of the Florida State Parks Foundation. “Not only do they provide public access to beautiful natural settings, world-class outdoor recreation opportunities and fascinating historical sites, but they also attract visitors from across the nation and world while supporting thousands of jobs.”



Members of the Florida State Parks Foundation board visit The Florida Capitol on March 23.

Recently, members of the Foundation's volunteer board of directors met with more than 20

lawmakers at the Florida Capitol to share detailed information about the economic and environmental benefits our state parks provide, and to emphasize the value in providing them with necessary funding.

Board members shared a state-level summary of Florida State Parks, as well as detailed data regarding the parks in each lawmaker's home district.

"Our state parks have enjoyed tremendous support from the Florida Legislature for many years," said Julia Gill Woodward, CEO of the Florida State Parks Foundation. "Our representatives in Tallahassee are well aware of what our state parks mean to Florida residents and tourists, and we look forward to the legislature approving Gov. DeSantis' budget and providing full funding for state parks in the year ahead."

The only four-time winner of the National Recreation and Park Association's National Gold Medal Award (1999, 2005, 2013, 2019), Florida State Parks consists of 175 state parks, trails and historic sites across 800,000 acres and 100 miles of beaches.

Florida's state parks offer opportunities for camping, hiking, swimming, paddling, fishing and more, while also protecting and managing the state's native ecosystems and wildlife.

"Our state parks are widely recognized as the best in the nation, and we are grateful to have a Governor and lawmakers who are committed to maintaining and improving them each year," Gustafson said. "It is so important that Florida State Parks receives full funding, and we are confident that the Governor's generous budget allocation will provide our parks with the support they need for the year ahead."

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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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