

Florida State Parks Foundation Partners with Sea Turtle Grants Program for UTVs, Educational Kits in State Parks

TALLAHASSEE, FLA., UNITED STATES, October 11, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- To celebrate the final month of sea turtle nesting season, the Florida State Parks Foundation is proud to announce two new major elements to its longstanding partnership with the Sea Turtle Conservancy's Sea Turtle Grants Program.

These elements, secured through \$47,487 in funding from the Sea Turtle Grants Program, include:



John D. MacArthur Beach State Park received a new UTV through a grant from the Sea Turtle Grants Program.

- New utility task vehicles (UTVs) to assist with turtle care and management at John D. MacArthur Beach State Park and Dr. Von D. Mizell-Eula Johnson State Park in South Florida.
- Innovative, reusable sea turtle education kits for use at nine state parks, including:

“

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*Florida State Parks Director
Chuck Hatcher*

- Anastasia State Park (St. Augustine).
- Bald Point State Park (Alligator Point).
- Dr. Von D. Mizell-Eula Johnson State Park (Dania Beach).
- Fort Pierce Inlet State Park (Fort Pierce).
- Gamble Rogers Memorial State Recreation Area at Flagler Beach.
- John D. MacArthur Beach State Park (North Palm

Beach).

□ Sebastian Inlet State Park (Melbourne Beach).

□ St. Lucie Inlet Preserve State Park (Port Salerno).

□ Talbot Islands State Parks (Jacksonville).

Forty of Florida's 175 award-winning state parks are home to a combined 12,000 sea turtle nesting sites. Florida State Parks partners with a variety of conservation and wildlife organizations, including the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), to track sea turtle populations, measure the success of conservation efforts and develop turtle management policies.

"For several years, our state parks have been able to count on the Sea Turtle Grants Program to generously provide assistance for sea turtle management and education," said Julia Gill Woodward, CEO of the Florida State Parks Foundation. "These new vehicles and educational materials will be of great value to park rangers as they care for sea turtles within their parks and share information about these beloved creatures with visitors."

UTVs at John D. MacArthur Beach and Dr. Von D. Mizell-Eula Johnson state parks will allow staff to quickly and efficiently manage sea turtle tasks along beaches. These activities may include patrolling for nests, responding to stranded sea turtles, transporting gear, removing litter and other debris, and traversing miles of beaches to monitor nesting sites, among others.

Those parks and seven others will also receive dynamic sea turtle education kits that can easily be moved to and from turtle nesting sites for interpretive programs. The kits include turtle-friendly flashlights, night-vision monoculars, cross-cut displays of turtle nests, and replica turtle skeletons, as well as durable backpacks in which the kits can be stored and transported.

"Our state parks provide safe habitats for many species of native wildlife, especially the sea turtles that rely on Florida's beaches to nest," said Florida State Parks Director Chuck Hatcher. "Park rangers work tirelessly to protect sea turtles within their parks, and we are thankful to have partners like the Sea Turtle Grants Program who are dedicated to supporting these important efforts."

This is the latest in a series of generous contributions from the Sea Turtle Grants Program to Florida's state parks.

Earlier this year, the Foundation announced a grant of nearly \$25,000 from the program to purchase and install turtle-friendly lighting at Sebastian Inlet State Park. The Sea Turtle Grants Program also previously partnered with the Foundation to renovate the outdoor sea turtle tank at John D. MacArthur Beach State Park, as well as to purchase nine Trimble GPS devices to aid in

nest data collection at parks around the state.

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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. These projects were completed through the Florida State Parks Foundation Services LLC, which is a limited liability company affiliate of the Foundation.

The volunteer Board of Directors represents private and public sectors as well as local and statewide interests.

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