

Florida State Parks Foundation Celebrates Landmark Year

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, December 13, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Florida State Parks Foundation Celebrates Landmark Year

The Florida State Parks Foundation debuted a new initiative to encourage environmental sustainability, embarked on a transformational partnership to amplify the role of state parks in the Florida Wildlife Corridor and set an organizational fundraising record for the second consecutive year as part of an extraordinary and historic 2023.



“

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Kathleen Brennan, Florida State Parks Foundation president

Through an array of community partners and grassroots donors, the Foundation secured nearly \$2.1 million to preserve, protect, sustain and grow Florida’s award-winning state parks.

“Florida’s state parks are the best in the country, and it is an honor to do all we can to support them,” said Foundation President Kathleen Brennan, who assumed that role from Tammy Gustafson in October. “Not only have we had an outstanding year of fundraising, but we

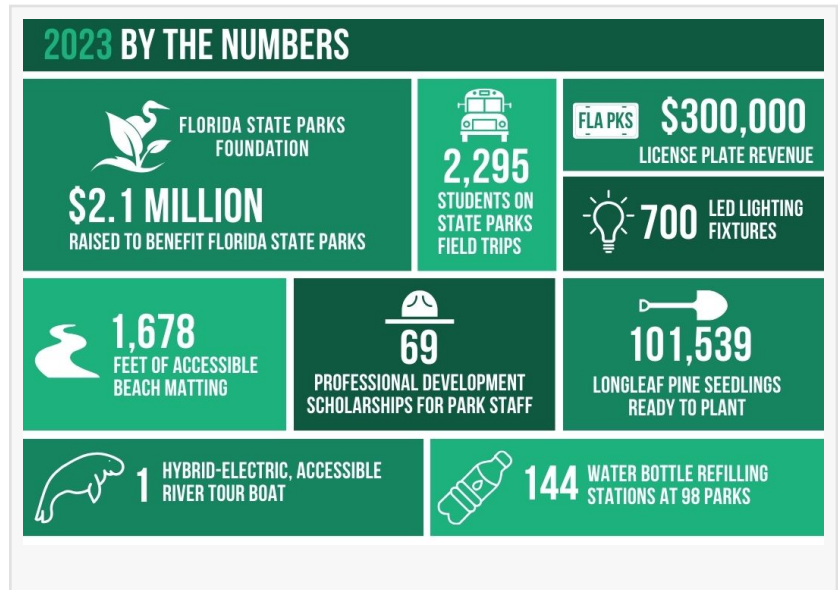
are also proud to have played a role in a remarkably wide variety of park projects, campaigns and educational initiatives.”

The Foundation’s 2023 highlights include:

- The continued success of the “Explore Our State Parks” specialty license plate. In its first full year of availability, the plate climbed to the top half of the state’s license plate sales rankings and has generated more than \$400,000 in revenue.

- The launch of the Greener Initiative, a campaign to make Florida's state parks more environmentally sustainable through projects funded by specialty license plate sales. Early efforts include the purchase and installation of 144 water bottle refilling stations at 98 state parks, as well as upgraded LED lighting at five pilot parks.

- The purchase of the "Great Blue Heron," a fully accessible hybrid-electric tour boat at Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park.



- A partnership with Live Wildly to promote awareness of the role that state parks play in protecting the Florida Wildlife Corridor. Through this partnership, the Foundation and Live Wildly hosted two public screenings and discussion panels of the National Geographic film "Path of the Panther" at Wekiwa Springs and Camp Helen state parks.

- Designation as a community partner of the Sing Out Loud music festival in St. Augustine, as well as selection as the philanthropic partner for Intuition Ale Works' Sing Out Loud Session IPA.

- More than \$100,000 raised for the Foundation's Plant a Pine program, which plants one longleaf pine seedling in a state park for every \$1 raised. The Foundation also announced a partnership with the Bob Ross Inc. "Happy Little Trees" 5K program to support Plant a Pine in 2024.

- Grant funding for accessibility features such as accessible trams at Oscar Scherer and Henderson Beach state parks and mobility beach matting at four parks in the Florida Panhandle.

Funding for a new "strike team" trailer to aid park response to major storms and other severe weather events across the state.

"Whether you're in the Florida Panhandle, the Florida Keys or anywhere in-between, there is an amazing state park nearby," Foundation CEO Julia Gill Woodward said. "There are so many things that make our state parks great, and there are just as many great ways to support them."

Additionally, the Foundation in November surpassed its fundraising goal for a major construction project at Fort Mose Historic State Park in St. Augustine. The project – a full-scale, life-sized reconstruction of the 1738 Fort Mose – will break ground on Jan. 19, 2024.

Once complete, the project will help to fully tell the story of Fort Mose, the first legally sanctioned free African community in what is now the United States.

"I'm inspired by the passion and dedication of our community partners, citizen support organizations, private donors and countless others who have joined us in our mission to support Florida State Parks," Woodward said. "We had a spectacular 2023 together, and we plan to reach even greater heights in 2024."

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

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