

Florida State Parks Foundation Awards \$100,000 to Florida State Parks Citizen Support Organizations

Ten organizations to receive grants of \$10,000 each to support accessibility, resource restoration and park maintenance through CSO Small Grants Program

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EINPresswire.com/ -- The Florida State Parks Foundation today awarded a total of \$100,000 through its small grants program to 10 state parks

citizen support organizations (CSOs), often known as Friends groups, to advocate for or support their parks.



This year's winners include Friends of Camp Helen State Park, Friends of Pensacola State Parks, Friends of Fort Clinch, Stephen Foster Citizen Support Organization, Friends of DeLeon Springs State Park, Friends of Gamble Rogers State Park, Friends of Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park, Friends of Koreshan State Park, Inc., Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park, Inc., and Friends of Oleta River State Park.

“

CSOs and Friends groups are at the heart of our state parks, and we are proud to support these organizations and the passionate, dedicated people who serve them.”

Kathleen Brennan, Florida State Parks Foundation Board President

Since it began in 2021, the Foundation's CSO small grants program has distributed nearly \$225,000 to 36 CSOs or state parks without a CSO. The program previously awarded grant amounts of up to \$5,000 but expanded amounts to \$10,000 in 2024.

“CSOs and Friends groups are at the heart of our state parks, and we are proud to support these organizations and the passionate, dedicated people who serve them,” said Kathleen Brennan, board president of the Florida State Parks Foundation. “Our small grants program has already

done some amazing things at parks across the state, and this year's increased funding will allow parks and CSOs to do even more. We can't wait to see the results."

- Friends of Camp Helen State Park (Panama City Beach) received a grant to restore the hardwood floors inside the park's historic lodge building. The 1930s-era lodge hosts hundreds of visitors each year for events, weddings, reunions, meetings, tours and other functions. The lodge also helps share the unique history of Camp Helen State Park and the surrounding area.

- Friends of DeLeon Springs State Park (Volusia County) received a grant to replace the boardwalk leading to "Old Methuselah," a majestic, 500-year-old cypress tree that is among the most popular natural resources in the park. The new boardwalk will be constructed with composite boards to ensure durability for generations to come.

- Friends of Delnor-Wiggins Pass State Park (Naples) received a grant to purchase and construct a first-of-its-kind mobile plant propagation shade house that will assist efforts to repopulate native vegetation that was destroyed when Hurricane Ian made landfall in southwest Florida in 2022.

- Friends of Fort Clinch (Fort Clinch State Park, Fernandina Beach) received a grant to improve its playground with inclusive and accessible equipment that will provide new play experiences for children of all ages and abilities.

- Friends of Gamble Rogers State Park (Gamble Rogers Memorial State Recreation Area at Flagler Beach) received a grant to purchase a new pickup truck for use by park volunteers. A safe, reliable truck will help volunteers efficiently perform tasks across the park's 144 acres.

- Friends of Koreshan State Park, Inc. (Estero) received a grant to clean and restore the park's antique Koreshan paintings and rugs. These historical resources help share the story of the Koreshan people who lived on and built a settlement on the land that would eventually become Koreshan State Park in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

- Friends of MacArthur Beach State Park, Inc. (John D. MacArthur Beach State Park, North Palm Beach) received a grant to purchase new sheds to house park supplies and sea turtle program materials. The park is an extremely active sea turtle nesting site, and the new sheds will help park staff maintain its sea turtle programs, which include public sea turtle walks, surveys and aquarium upkeep.

- Friends of Oleta River State Park (North Miami Beach) received a grant to restore two wooden bridges along the park's trail system. The restoration will allow the park to reopen trails for hiking, biking and running, as well as safe passage across areas that flood during seasonal high tides.

- Friends of Pensacola State Parks, which serves three parks in northwest Florida, received a grant to build a power wash transport system at Tarkiln Bayou Preserve State Park. The system

will include an aluminum trailer, pressure washer, utility water pump, storage box and an IBC water storage tank, and will allow staff and volunteers to more efficiently care for the park's 1,600-foot wooden boardwalk overlooking Tarkiln Bayou.

- Stephen Foster Citizen Support Organization (Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, White Springs) received a grant to provide bicycle racks and repair stands throughout the park. The park is popular with local bicycling enthusiasts and attracts thousands of cyclists each year. The new racks will allow visitors, staff, volunteers and campers a place to safely secure their bicycles on park property. Additionally, there are no bicycle repair shops within 90 miles of White Springs, Florida, and having a repair stand onsite will allow visitors to make minor adjustments and repairs to their bicycles without leaving the park.

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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. All projects are 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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