

Florida State Parks Foundation collaborates with Duke Energy Florida for new, accessible playground at Wakulla Springs

WAKULLA SPRINGS, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, June 18, 2024

/EINPresswire.com/ -- The Florida State Parks Foundation today joined Duke Energy Florida and its Foundation, along with the Friends of Wakulla Springs State Park, to unveil a new, state-of-the-art accessible playground at Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park near Tallahassee.

The new playground, located a short distance from the park's beachfront along the Wakulla River, includes several accessible play elements and a wide path to accommodate mobility devices.

The playground's centerpiece is a large glider styled in the fashion of the park's iconic river tour boats.

"Seeing a replica of the Wakulla Springs boat and all of the other fun playground experiences here brings a huge smile to my face," said Kathleen Brennan, president of the Florida State Parks Foundation board of directors. "Thanks to Duke Energy Florida and the amazing Friends of Wakulla Springs, this beautiful new playground will welcome smiling faces for many, many years to come."

Playground materials and installation costs totaled \$72,204. Duke Energy Florida donated \$44,000 toward the project, while the Friends of Wakulla Springs State Park contributed \$15,000 and the Foundation funded the remaining balance.

The playground is open during regular operating hours and access is included with park admission.



Representatives from Florida State Parks, the Florida State Parks Foundation, Duke Energy Florida and the Friends of Wakulla Springs State Park gathered to celebrate a new, accessible playground at Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park near Tallahassee.

“The Foundation is constantly seeking opportunities to expand accessibility in our state parks, and we are proud to have played a part in creating a playground for all children who visit Wakulla Springs,” said Julia Gill Woodward, CEO of the Florida State Parks Foundation.

This is the latest in a series of collaborations between the Foundation and Duke Energy Florida to benefit Florida State Parks.

In recent years, Duke Energy Florida and its Foundation have donated more than \$300,000 to state parks amenities and projects, including all-terrain beach and trail wheelchairs, a new strike team trailer for the Florida Park Service’s emergency response teams, and more than 100 water bottle refilling stations at parks across the state.

“Vibrant communities do not happen by accident. They are the result of hard work, intentional investments and collaboration with key organizations to solve challenges and nurture the places where we live, work and play,” said Melissa Seixas, Duke Energy Florida state president. “We are proud to support the Florida State Parks Foundation and all they do to protect Florida’s most-treasured parks and expand access to outdoor recreation opportunities for all.”

The Foundation also unveiled the “Great Blue Heron” hybrid-electric tour boat at Wakulla Springs State Park late last year. The boat includes an extended dock ramp and wide spaces to accommodate people who use mobility devices.

“We are committed to providing inclusive recreational experiences for all of our visitors, and we are so pleased to offer these new accessible features at Wakulla Springs,” Florida State Parks Director Chuck Hatcher said. “This new playground will create fun memories for our youngest park guests, and we hope that it will help inspire a lifelong love of Florida’s natural resources.”

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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. This project was 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.

Duke Energy Florida

Duke Energy Florida, a subsidiary of Duke Energy, owns 12,300 megawatts of energy capacity, supplying electricity to 2 million residential, commercial and industrial customers across a 13,000-square-mile service area in Florida.

Duke Energy Foundation

The Duke Energy Foundation provides more than \$30 million annually in philanthropic support to meet the needs of communities where Duke Energy customers live and work. The foundation is funded by Duke Energy shareholders.

Tim Linafelt

Florida State Parks Foundation

+1 850-559-8914

[email us here](#)

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