

Florida State Parks Foundation Reaches New Heights Throughout Exceptional 2024

Achievements include fundraising record, new construction projects and enhanced accessibility

TALLAHASSEE, FL, UNITED STATES,
December 17, 2024 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- The Florida State Parks Foundation celebrated two major construction projects, embarked on new, innovative ways to advocate for Florida's state parks at the capitol in Tallahassee, and set an organizational fundraising record for the third consecutive year during an exceptional 2024.



Thanks to a wide cohort of community partners and grassroots donors, the Foundation secured more than \$2.1 million to preserve, protect, sustain and grow Florida's award-winning state parks. The Foundation's fundraising total has increased each year since 2021.

“

Each year, Florida's state parks redefine what it means to be the best in the nation, and we want to be right alongside them as they reach greater and greater heights.”

Julia Gill Woodward, Florida State Parks Foundation CEO

“We are honored to have played a role in supporting Florida's state parks this past year,” said Kathleen Brennan, president of the Foundation's board of directors. “And while we are proud of our fundraising achievements, we are just as proud of the events, initiatives and partnerships that have defined the past 12 months and beyond.”

The Foundation's 2024 highlights include:

- The “Explore Our State Parks” specialty license plate continued to soar in popularity. As of December 2024, more than 17,000 vehicles in Florida had received the plate – good for 39th out of 150 specialty license plates in the state. In three years of availability, the plate has helped to fund the purchase of more than 150 water bottle refilling stations, more than 700 energy-efficient lighting fixtures and the “Great Blue Heron” hybrid-electric river tour boat at Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park near Tallahassee.

- In January, hundreds gathered at Fort Mose Historic State Park in St. Augustine to break ground on a reconstruction of the 1738 Fort Mose – the first free Black community in what is now the United States. Construction is in progress, with completion anticipated for spring 2025.
- This week, the Foundation will join Florida State Parks and the Friends of Topsail Hill to break ground on a new Visitor & Nature Center. The center will serve as a gateway to the park’s pristine beachfront along the Gulf of Mexico and will have event space for approximately 100 people.
- Early this year, the Foundation teamed up with Live Wildly to host the first ever Florida State Parks legislative reception at the Florida Historic Capitol Museum. The Foundation also hosted Rep. Kelly Skidmore and Rep. Vicki Lopez for tours of John D. MacArthur Beach and Bill Baggs Cape Florida state parks, respectively.
- In the spring, the Foundation hosted five Volunteer Recognition Awards Events and distributed a total of \$100,000 in grants to citizen support organizations across the state. The grants were applied to park projects such as historic resource restorations, boardwalk repairs, accessible playground equipment and sea turtle program materials.
- In April, the Foundation was honored to receive the SportsAbility Alliance’s Active Leisure for Life Award, which is presented each year to an individual or organization dedicated to enriching lives through accessible, inclusive recreation and active leisure.
- The Foundation continued to advance its unparalleled commitment to accessible state parks experiences. Recent accessible advances made possible through Foundation partnerships include:
 - o A new pool lift at William J. “Billy Joe” Rish Recreation Area.
 - o An accessible picnic pavilion at Lake Manatee State Park.
 - o Accessible viewfinders at Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park.
 - o An accessible playground at Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park.
 - o New, accessible electric trams at Oleta River and Big Lagoon state parks.
- Additionally, the Foundation in October announced that Jacksonville philanthropist Delores Barr Weaver had pledged \$500,000 to enhance accessibility in Florida State Parks. The grant will be distributed in increments of \$100,000 over the next five years.
- In July, the Foundation partnered with REI Co-op’s Winter Park store and Cannondale Bikes to provide 25 Cannondale e-bikes for use by park rangers across the state. The bikes were purchased with funds generated by the “Explore Our State Parks” specialty license plate.
- In response to Hurricanes Helene and Milton, the Foundation partnered with Florida Power & Light to fund the purchase of three new trailers for Florida State Parks’ storm recovery strike

teams.

“Each year, Florida’s state parks redefine what it means to be the best in the nation, and we want to be right alongside them as they reach greater and greater heights,” Foundation CEO Julia Gill Woodward said. “I’m proud of everything we achieved together in 2024, but I am even more excited to see where our path leads in 2025.”

Tim Linafelt

Florida State Parks Foundation

+1 850-559-8914

[email us here](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/769763113>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2024 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.