

Florida State Parks Foundation, Florida State Parks break ground on Visitor and Nature Center at Topsail Hill Preserve

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://www.einpresswire.com/) -- The Florida State Parks Foundation today joined Florida State Parks, the Friends of Topsail Hill Preserve State Park and a wide variety of community partners to break ground on a state-of-the-art, multimillion dollar Visitor and Nature Center at Topsail Hill Preserve State Park in Northwest Florida.

The center was funded through the Florida Park Service, the Friends of Topsail Hill Preserve State Park, Walton County, the J.W. Couch Foundation, Florida Power & Light, the St. Joe Community Foundation, Crawford Sandefur and Jerry Lancaster, Tom and Ann Earley, and Samantha and Procter McInnis. The total project cost is approximately \$4.2 million.

Construction is expected to be complete by late 2025.

“Interpreting Florida’s natural resources is a key aspect of our mission, and this new center will be a great asset for Topsail Hill and our dedicated park rangers who interact with the public every day,” Florida State Parks Director Chuck Hatcher said. “We are committed to enhancing visitor experiences at parks all over the state, and we are excited to see this project come to fruition.”

The new center will accommodate 100 guests and will serve as a hub for events, workshops and volunteering opportunities.



Florida State Parks, the Florida State Parks Foundation and the Friends of Topsail Hill Preserve State Park held a ceremonial groundbreaking for a new Visitor and Nature Center at the park on Friday, Dec. 20, 2024.

New educational and interpretive exhibits will highlight points of interest and the unique natural communities found within the park, including rare coastal dune lakes and the endangered Choctawhatchee beach mouse.

“The beach here at Topsail is amazing, but there is so much more to see, explore and learn about,” Florida State Parks Foundation board president Kathleen Brennan said. “The new visitor and nature center will transform the experience of visiting this park and help visitors create meaningful connections with the unique ecosystems found here.”

Located on 3.2 miles of beachfront along the Gulf of Mexico, Topsail Hill Preserve State Park is named for its dunes that stand as tall as 25 feet over its white-sand beaches. Its 1,640 acres are home to 13 imperiled wildlife species and 16 distinct natural communities.

The park last year hosted more than 250,000 visitors and supported more than 450 local jobs.

“Topsail Hill Preserve State Park is a jewel of Florida’s gulf coast, and having this new visitor and nature center in place will help share everything that makes this park special with the public in a fresh, new and innovative way,” said Julia Gill Woodward, CEO of the Florida State Parks Foundation. “We are so thankful to our partners and donors who helped make this happen, and we can’t wait to visit the center when construction is complete.”

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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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