

Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Funds Celebrates Manatee Awareness Month With Unprecedented \$250,000 Gift For State Parks

TALLAHASSEE, FL, UNITED STATES, November 3, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Florida State Parks Foundation today joined the Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Funds to announce an unprecedented \$250,000 gift for four state parks that provide important habitats for manatees.

Today's announcement coincides with the start of Manatee Awareness Month, held each November in Florida since 1979, and comes on the heels of Mrs. Weaver's \$500,000 pledge to support accessibility in Florida's state parks announced last year.

Mrs. Weaver, a Jacksonville philanthropist and dedicated supporter of Florida's state parks, has donated nearly \$1 million for parks across northeast Florida and beyond since 2021.



The Florida State Parks Foundation and the Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Funds announced a \$250,000 gift for four state parks that provide important habitats for manatees.

"Time and again, Mrs. Weaver amazes us with her incredible passion and commitment to Florida's natural wonders," said Julia Gill Woodward, CEO of the Florida State Park Foundation. "Mrs. Weaver is a true friend to our state parks, the people who love to visit them and the precious wildlife that call them home. We simply cannot thank her enough."

Mrs. Weaver's gift will be distributed in \$125,000 increments across two years. The first phase will address needs in four parks most associated with manatees:

— Blue Spring State Park (Orange City), Fanning Springs State Park (Fanning Springs) and

Manatee Springs State Park (Chiefland) will each receive new interpretive signage to educate park visitors about the significance of Florida's manatees and how to best enjoy Florida's waterways alongside them.

Blue Spring, which is home to the most manatees of any state park in Florida, will also receive new materials for children's programming, including an underwater hydrophone that allows children to hear manatees underwater.

— Ellie Schiller Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park (Homosassa) will receive a variety of resources to support habitat for the ambassador manatees who live within the park, as well as repairs to the park's manatee patrol boat.

Dozens of Florida's state parks provide critical habitat for manatees, who depend on warm spring water to make their homes during the winter. Blue Spring State Park last year marked a record 932 manatees during a one-day roll call.

Florida first declared November as Manatee Awareness Month under Gov. Bob Graham in 1979, when the state began designating manatee protection zones in areas where manatees gathered during the winter. November is typically when manatees return to Florida's warm waters from their summer migratory routes.

"People come from all over the world to see manatees in our state parks, and we are proud to provide them with safe, natural habitats throughout the winter and year-round," Florida State Parks Director Chuck Hatcher said. "Delores Barr Weaver has already done so much for state parks over the years, and we are thrilled that she is now lending her support to a safe and sustainable habitat for manatees."

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