

# Florida State Parks Foundation Celebrates 2026-27 Budget Allocation for Florida's Award-Winning State Parks

*~Nation's only four-time gold medal winner to receive nearly \$45 million for facility improvements and new projects ~*

TALLAHASSEE, FL, UNITED STATES, June 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Florida State Parks Foundation joins outdoor enthusiasts, nature lovers and everyone who enjoys Florida's natural wonders in celebrating a \$44.5 million allocation for park improvements that will help Florida's state parks advance their status as the very best in the nation.

Governor Ron DeSantis officially signed the budget for Fiscal Year 2026-27, finalizing a significant investment in state parks that will create far-reaching positive impacts for parks in all corners of the state.

"This generous budget is a clear sign that Governor DeSantis, our state representatives and our senators understand how much our state parks mean to Floridians and to visitors from all over the world," said Matt Caldwell, president of the Foundation's board of directors and a former state representative. "We are thrilled to see this reflected in the budget and appreciate all the support that our state parks receive from our state's leaders."

The nation's only four-time winner of the National Recreation and Park Association's Gold Medal for Excellence, Florida State Parks last year generated an estimated economic impact of \$3.6 billion while welcoming nearly 28 million visitors and supporting approximately 50,000 jobs.

"Every year, we are amazed and thankful for the support we receive from the Governor and all our elected officials," Florida State Parks Director Chuck Hatcher said. "The parks improvement budget addresses some of our highest priorities and will either create or enhance visitor



The Florida State Parks Foundation applauds the 2025-26 budget allocation for Florida's award-winning state parks.

experiences at parks all over the state.”

Funding for facility improvements supports projects like the new discovery center and aquarium at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park in Monroe County, which broke ground on Earth Day. In addition to funding for facility improvements and new projects, state parks also received \$19 million for natural resource management and compensation increases for park rangers.

“Our state parks are a tremendous source of pride for the state of Florida,” said Representative Allison Tant, a Foundation board member who serves District 9 in the Florida House of Representatives. “Not only are they home to pristine beaches, springs, trails and wildlife habitat, but they also provide incredible value and return on investment while also serving as major economic drivers for our state and local communities.

“I’m proud to join my colleagues here in Tallahassee to ensure Florida’s state parks have the funding they need over the year ahead and beyond.”

The 2026-27 budget allocation marks the latest milestone in the Florida State Parks Foundation’s ongoing efforts to advocate for state parks at the Capitol. Each year, the Foundation hosts “Legislative Days” in Tallahassee, with a legislative reception at the Florida Historic Capitol Museum followed by 1-on-1 meetings between Foundation board members and state senators, representatives or staff. The Foundation also regularly hosts state park tours for legislators, helping to ensure that Florida’s elected officials have a firsthand view of their home parks.

“One of the Florida State Parks Foundation’s primary goals is to create ‘Legislative Champions’ at the Capitol,” said Julia Gill Woodward, CEO of the Florida State Parks Foundation. “We believe that when our state’s leaders experience the parks for themselves and see the incredible benefits they create for Florida’s environment and economy, it’s then easy to prioritize state parks in the budget and provide them with necessary funding.

“We are so thankful to the Governor and the Florida Legislature for this allocation, and we look forward to sharing even more about our state parks over the next year.”

Tim Linafelt

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