



FRIENDS OF FLORIDA STATE PARKS

E-Newsletter July 2011 Edition

FFSP AWARDS FUNDS FOR SPECIAL PARK PROJECTS

The Friends of Florida State Parks (FFSP Inc), a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and enhancement of Florida's state park system has embarked on a new program to assist Friends & Alliance groups supporting a specific state park. FFSP, Inc is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2011 partnership project funds for 2011. FFSP INC congratulates all 2011 winners.

- Friends of Pensacola State Park – funding to repair electrical circuits to light fixtures at the Amphitheatre parking lot and allow for scheduling night events in the amphitheater.
- Friends of Dudley Farm State Park - Funding to update visitor welcome video, add interpretive map and new ADA information.
- Friends of Dunns Creek State Park - Funding to support annual Fall Open House event to be held in October. This event generates funds and encourages park volunteer participation.
- Friends of Delnor-Wiggins Pass

- State Park - Funding to support the Green Flash event held in November. The goal of this event is to increase the number of volunteers for the park.
- Friends of Oscar Scherer State Park - Funding to support volunteerism/event activities to be held on National Public Lands Day (Sept 2011).
- Washington Oaks Gardens State Park - Funding to install new interpretive panels in the park.
- Friends of Lovers Key - Funding to support the 5K Turtle Trot Race held each year to raise funds for future park projects.
- Friends of Fort Cooper State Park – Funding for a Phase 1 kiosk and brochures to provide visitor information in support of Fort Cooper Seminole Trail.
- Friends of Falling Water State Park – Funding for the development of a closed circuit camera system to transmit live feed of the waterfall to the Ranger Station. This will allow mobility challenged visitors to see and experience the waterfall from a safe distance.

FUN FACTS

- The 1899 Florida Legislature appropriated funds to preserve Olustee Battlefield, which became Florida's first State Historic Monument in 1909.
- While better known for its grounds, Eden State Gardens also showcases the second-largest collection of Louis XVI furnishings in America.
- Lignumvitae Key is home to more than a thousand of its namesake trees, with wood that is so dense it sinks rather than floats.
- On its more than 54,000 acres, Kissimmee Prairie Preserve hosts a permanent colony of endangered whooping cranes.
- Located on a historic military trail, Fort Cooper commemorates the survival of a battalion of soldiers ambushed during the Second Seminole War.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

A DAY IN THE LIFE --
VOLUNTEERING AT HONEY-
MOON ISLAND STATE PARK -
by Sally Hess

Entering the park, Mary, a toll-booth volunteer greets visitors with a smile, answers their questions and takes their entrance



fees. I catch sight of the monofilament recycling bins that were built by student volunteers. To get to the beach I walk over a boardwalk built by two skilled volunteer carpenters known as "George squared" and I walk past recycling bins that an intern and volunteer assisted in installing. Near the sand dunes, our park biologist and a volunteer have placed a cage over a sea turtle nest to protect it from predators or beach goers who could step on the delicate forming hatchlings. On the north end of the beach, Tom and Mike, two volunteer Bird Stewards head out to gently educate visitors on why the bird nesting

areas are roped off to the public. I wave to Pat, perennially patrolling for trash, as I cross the beach. Volunteer interns Liz and Grayson are working with a ranger to spray exotic, invasive plants on the nature trail. As I walk into the Nature Center, I'm greeted by two of the many trained volunteers who educate and entertain visitors from 9 to 5, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Tonight, I'll attend the Friends of the Island Parks meeting/social here at the Nature Center where yet more volunteers will present a lively program and delicious treats to members and guests as they do each month..

FLORIDA STATE PARKS APP TRACKS VISITOR INTEREST

On Arbor Day of 2010, Florida author Sandra Friend - now a member of the Friends of Florida State Parks Board of Directors - unveiled an iPhone app for visitors to Florida State Parks, produced in conjunction with Sutro Media. Based on her research for many guidebooks over the past decade and more than 40 years of personal visits to 154 of our parks, the app includes park-by-park details with personal anecdotes, little-known facts, and recommendations for visitors, as well as nearly 2,000 images of our parks, mostly taken by Sandra in her travels. App users are able to leave comments for other readers and ask questions as well. Information about becoming a volunteer through both lo-

cal and state Friends groups is provided. The latest release of the app includes Sandra's recommendations for "Great Eats" and "More Outdoors" near the parks, as well as the ability to look at hiking and campground maps from within the app and to call outfitters directly from the app to make reservations for tours or rentals.



Behind the scenes, the app keeps aggregate information on visitor interest. Sandra shares these statistics for 2010:
TOP 5 COUNTRIES: United States 94%, followed by Germa-

ny 2%, Switzerland 1.2%, United Kingdom 1.2%, Canada 0.8%, Netherlands 0.6%
TOP 5 ACTIVITIES: Camping, Canoe/Kayak, Bicycling, Cabins, Hiking



TOP 5 PARKS: Blue Spring, Bahia Honda, Anastasia, Wekiwa Springs, Rainbow Springs
TOP 5 TOPICS: Overview, Accommodations, Pets, Park Fees, After Hours

The Florida State Parks app is available through the iTunes App Store or via www.floridahikes.com/apps/floridastateparks

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Tammy Gustafson



By now most of you are aware of the controversial proposal by the Florida Department of Environmental

Protection to expand camping in 56 state parks where camping opportunity does not currently exist. Over the past few weeks, many major Florida media have reported on the proposed plan to allow private developers to design and operate these new facilities, as well as citizen reaction to the first four proposed expansions. We are grateful for the recent reprieve that has allowed both park supporters and park

staff to more carefully evaluate the need for expanded camping and the appropriateness of expanded camping in several parks that were originally listed.

Friends of Florida State Parks, Inc. is aware of the concern being expressed and the budget pressures on state government that generated this concept. We support individual park Friends & Alliance organizations and encourage them to weigh in on any proposed change to the park they work so hard to protect and promote. It is also important that we recognize the following facts:

- The Florida State Parks system has designed and operated award-winning full-service camping and RV facilities in 55 parks for over 75 years.
- The parks system currently generates 68% of its own operating costs with 22% coming from camping revenue at 55 state parks; 7% from cabin

rentals at 25 state parks; 12% from over 90 private concessionaire partnerships currently successfully operating in most state parks; 35% from entrance fees and 24% from other revenue sources like annual passes and facility rentals.

- We are not alone in the challenge to keep our state parks open so that we can protect the natural and recreational areas we all feel so passionate about. As of the writing of this newsletter, California has closed 70 of their parks; Arizona, Texas and New York are also closing parks.

Please help us raise awareness in your community by talking to friends, family and community leaders about why you value protection of our 160 fabulous state parks. Even better - log onto www.lovemystateparks.org to tell your state park story.

NATURE NEWS

CHOCTAWHATCHEE

SAND PINE by Paula Russo

This species of pine occurs only in northwest Florida and extreme southeastern Alabama. It is able to grow in very well-drained, open, hot, deep sandy habitats. Unlike other sand pines' cones, which are dependent on fire exposure to open, the Choc-



tawhatchee cones open when mature and the seeds are spread by wind. Wild turkey, bobwhite

quail, fox squirrel, gray squirrel, and mourning dove are some of the animals that rely on these seeds for food.

One great place to see Choc-tawhatchee sand pines is at Camp Helen State Park in Panama City Beach. Here there is an easily accessed paved trail with shaded benches winding along Lake Powell and out into a Choc-tawhatchee sand pine forest.



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