



FRIENDS OF FLORIDA STATE PARKS

A New Year, New Challenges and New Opportunities

There is no doubt that 2015 was something of a roller coaster year for Florida's fabulous state parks – and we can expect more of the same in the months ahead.

The good news is that attendance was up 14.5 percent over the previous year to a record 31 million visitors. Collectively they had an economic impact of \$2.8 billion, generating \$184 million in increased sales tax revenue. This economic impact is calculated on the basis of how much the average person would spend per day on traveling to a park including transportation, food (groceries and restaurants) and lodging.

When you analyze the figures it means that for every 1,000 people visiting a state park in Florida, there is a direct impact on the local community of more than \$90,500. In addition, 45,049 jobs were supported as a direct result of state park operations.

The top three state parks and trails alone have an economic impact of over \$436 million. Top of the list is the Cross Florida Greenway (\$212 million), followed by the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail (\$123 million), and Honeymoon Island (\$101 million). Other parks which have a huge economic impact on their local economies are Anastasia, St. Andrews, Bill Baggs Cape Florida, Lovers Key, John Pennekamp Coral Reef, Sebastian Inlet and Bahia Honda.

Of course, there are many more state parks – just as beautiful and special in their own way – that don't attract lots of visitors yet they still have to be staffed, managed and maintained.

In the last year Florida state parks have also become more self-sufficient. Through entry fees, camping and concessions, they now provide 81 percent of their budgetary needs, up from 75 percent in 2014.

What does all this mean? It means that we have one of the greatest state park systems in the country and one of the most profitable. And, as demand for recreational areas grows the parks will continue to attract more visitors and generate more income so become more self-supporting.

Our task is to foster that growth by increasing the number of volunteers needed to support the efficient running of the park and to provide some of the funds needed to help maintain and improve them.

We have a huge amount of work to do in 2016 from increasing accessibility for all to assisting with major capital projects like new interpretive pavilions, board walks and vehicles. Our parks are great because of the rangers who work there, the volunteers who support them and Friends – like you – who through membership fees and donations allow us to do so much to help them.

Here's to a healthy and happy 2016 and a year that sees Florida's state parks protected like never before for all future generations to enjoy.

Copyright © 2015 {Organization_Name}.

All rights reserved.

Contact email: {Organization_Contact_Email}

Prepared by [My Paper Pusher, LLC](#). Nonprofit Association Management & Bookkeeping Experts.

[Unsubscribe](#)