

DEP Announces 2024-25 Great Outdoors Initiative to Increase Public Access, Recreation and Lodging at Florida State Parks



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CONTACT: DEP Press Office, 850-245-2112,

**~ Ensures Florida's conservation lands can be enjoyed by
Floridians today and tomorrow ~**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Today, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced the launch of its 2024-25 Great Outdoors Initiative. The initiative will work to expand public access, increase outdoor activities and provide new lodging options across Florida's state parks—reinforcing the state's dedication to conservation, the outdoor recreation economy and a high quality of life for Floridians.

The Florida Park Service, established in 1935 to bolster the state's growing tourism sector and manage its historic sites and conservation lands, remains a national leader in public land stewardship. In Fiscal

Year 2022-23, Florida's 175 state parks attracted nearly 30 million visitors, contributing to an [annual economic impact of \\$3.6 billion](#) and supporting more than 50,000 jobs. Florida's broader outdoor recreation economy continues to thrive, generating over \$52 billion in economic output and supporting more than 460,000 jobs in 2022 alone—a 20% increase in economic output and an 11% rise in employment compared to the previous year.

Under the leadership of Governor Ron DeSantis, Florida has significantly increased its investment in conserving its natural landscapes, acquiring over 260,000 acres, the majority of which are located within the Florida Wildlife Corridor. This cumulative investment represents nearly 20% of the total acres of lands currently part of the Florida State Park System.

In addition to increasing the number of campsites, cabins and lodges on park property, the initiative will increase the number of outdoor recreation opportunities available at Florida's state parks, including pickleball, disc golf, golf and paddling.

Since 2019, Florida has invested over \$400 million to support the operation and maintenance of existing park infrastructure. Through this initiative, DEP will begin to update state park plans to allow for increased public access, while employing the same best practices utilized by DEP and park systems across the country, ensuring all improvements are welcoming and reflective of Florida's heritage, are complimentary of and work with park-specific resources, are compatible and fitting within surrounding landscapes, and provide efficient amenities that visitors expect.

Today's announcement reinforces the DeSantis Administration's record

support for conserving our natural landscapes and commitment to ensuring every Floridian can visit and recreate at Florida's state parks. This includes the [2023-24 Great Outdoors Initiative](#), which offered 50% discounts for Florida State Parks annual passes and Florida's Freedom Summer Kickoff on Memorial Day, which provided all Floridians free entry into state parks.

Celebrating its 90th Anniversary in 2025, the Florida Park Service, the first to win the prestigious Gold Medal Award four times for excellence, is one of the nation's largest park systems, comprising 175 state parks, trails and historic sites across more than 815,000 acres and 100 miles of pristine coastline. To find a state park near you, visit FloridaStateParks.org.

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