



Media Contact:
Morgan McClure
Marketing and Communications Director
morgan@fwfonline.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Florida Wildlife Federation and Local Eagle Scout Unite to Protect Threatened Gopher Tortoises

LITHIA, Fla. (January 16, 2025) — In a continued effort to protect Florida's native wildlife, the Florida Wildlife Federation (FWF) has proudly partnered with a local Eagle Scout, Logan Richardson, to promote awareness about the gopher tortoise, a keystone species in Florida's ecosystems. Richardson, with the support of FWF and Lithia Springs Park in Hillsborough County, installed a series of educational signs throughout the park to inform visitors about the importance of gopher tortoises and how to protect them.

Gopher tortoises, which are state-listed as a threatened species, play a crucial role in maintaining the health of Florida's ecosystems. Their burrows provide shelter for over 350 other species. The educational signs are strategically placed around Lithia Springs Park to encourage park visitors to protect these animals by appreciating from a distance and not disturbing their burrows, while also warning against placing the tortoises in water since they cannot swim.

Richardson is the outdoor ethics guide of his troop and has prioritized conservation and outdoor awareness most of his life. He commented on the significance of this partnership: "I hope that park visitors will learn about gopher tortoises, their role as a keystone species, and that they need to be respected and understood."

Oscar Gomez, Park Supervisor of Lithia Springs Park, expressed his enthusiasm for the project, stating, "As a conservation park, this is exactly the type of project we like to support. Logan has done a great job, and the more people we can get preserving the wildlife around us, the better."

"We are thrilled to collaborate with such a dedicated young conservationist," said Florida Wildlife Federation President and CEO, Sarah Gledhill. "This project underscores the

importance of community involvement in wildlife conservation and highlights the role that individuals, especially young leaders, can play in protecting Florida's diverse ecosystems.”

FWF collaborates with individuals and organizations to provide educational signs for public sites where gopher tortoise burrows are present, helping to protect this vital species. To support this initiative or learn more, visit floridawildlifefederation.org/gopher-tortoise.

Photos and Video

About Florida Wildlife Federation

The Florida Wildlife Federation is a statewide non-profit dedicated to safeguarding Florida’s water, wildlife, and wild spaces by taking action today to prevent irreversible loss tomorrow. Since 1936, we’ve united conservationists, anglers, hunters, recreationists, and wildlife enthusiasts to protect Florida’s ecosystems. From the halls of legislature to the homes of everyday Floridians, we’ve achieved milestones such as securing protections for iconic species like the Florida panther and constitutional amendments for land and water conservation. With a steadfast commitment to tackling challenges like pollution and unchecked development, we envision a future where Florida’s natural resources are fiercely protected by and for all. Learn more at floridawildlifefederation.org.

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