



Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc.

LOVE FLORIDA STATE PARKS

Position Statement
Adopted September 13, 2012

Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. is committed to ensuring that natural, cultural and historical heritage resources are accessible to the public and preserved for future generations to enjoy.

By any measure, the award-winning Florida State Parks, Greenways and Trails system is one of the best in the nation. As set forth by the Florida Legislature, the Division of Recreation and Parks under the Department of Environmental Protection operates the Florida Park Service in coordination with federal, state, county and municipal agencies; tribal councils; environmental coalitions; non-profit organizations and clubs; commercial and industrial enterprises; and private interests. The Florida Park Service is recognized worldwide as exemplary in "providing resource-based recreation while preserving, interpreting and restoring natural and cultural resources." Millions of acres of exceptional 'old Florida' landscapes are managed to preserve ecological integrity and developed with low-impact amenities to facilitate outdoor recreation and enjoyment of nature. Thousands of architecturally or historically significant structures and artifacts have been salvaged and restored. Hundreds of guided tours, classes and workshops, exhibits, collections and catalogs interpret Florida's natural and cultural heritage. Thanks to the vision and initiative of the Florida Park Service, state parks, recreation areas, wildlife management areas, forests, preserves, trails and greenways, ornamental gardens, museums and specially preserved archaeological, historical and geological sites attract millions of visitors each year.

Florida parks offer extraordinary opportunities for outdoor recreation. Hundreds of miles of scenic wilderness trails, paddling routes and paved pathways, fishing piers, boat ramps and docks, boardwalks, observation towers and treetop suspension bridges, campsites and cabins, picnic pavilions, grills and fire pits provide easy access to the best of Florida's natural resources. Unspoiled beaches and coastal dunes, wind-swept barrier islands, living coral reefs, sawgrass marshes, blackwater creeks and slow-moving rivers, crystal clear artesian springs, lakes, limestone caverns, pine woodlands, palm groves and tropical hardwood hammocks, cypress and mangrove swamps are available for a wide range of sport and leisure activities. Florida's unique and irreplaceable historic record is preserved in state parks. Excavated dinosaur and saber-tooth tiger bones, megalodon (shark) teeth, pre-Columbian Native American burial grounds; recovered shipwrecked Spanish galleons; refurbished lighthouses, European missions and founding churches, battlefields and forts, frontier ranches, antebellum plantations and opulent winter homes of America's industrialists provide tangible links to days gone by. Florida parks protect essential habitat for rare and endangered species. Undisturbed natural areas are vital for the survival of many plants and animals. Nearly extinct in the wild, one of the oldest trees on Earth, the Florida Torreya (*Torreya taxifolia*) and the wide-ranging Florida panther (*Puma concolor coryi*) subsist only in preserves.

Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. recognizes that outdoor recreation provides innumerable health and social benefits, and enjoyment of nature increases environmental awareness. In order to sustain public access to resource-based recreation, Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. supports the following:

To Support the Florida State Parks, Greenways and Trails System

- Provide substantive funding to meet operational needs for staffing, infrastructure, maintenance, resource management and visitor services
- Continue to promote productive affiliations with federal, state, county and municipal agencies; tribal councils; environmental coalitions; non-profit organizations and clubs; commercial and industrial enterprises; and private interests
- Encourage ongoing scientific research and inventories to inform adaptive conservation and land management practices
- Fund critically important conservation and land acquisition programs, such as *Florida Forever*
- Increase both active and leisure recreational opportunities and interpretive exhibits and narratives
- Promote public awareness of park resources and the benefits of active participation in outdoor recreational activities

To Provide Good Stewardship

- Maintain natural biodiversity and restore historical ecosystem function and values
- Develop and implement outreach programs to engage youngsters in outdoor recreation and hands-on learning experiences
- Continue leadership in modeling the successful integration of volunteers into every aspect of park operations and management

Charter Member of National Garden Clubs, Inc.

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