

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 1, 2010

CONTACT: Marguerite Jordan, (850) 245-3029 or (850) 251-7282 (cell)
Kristin Lock, (850) 245-2112 or (850) 778-7294 (cell)

**GET OUTDOORS AND CELEBRATE PARKS AND RECREATION MONTH AT
FLORIDA STATE PARKS**

~Residents and visitors encouraged to enjoy nature-based activities at state parks~

TALLAHASSEE – Recognizing the benefits of time spent outdoors in Florida’s environment, Governor Charlie Crist recently signed a [proclamation](#) highlighting July as Parks and Recreation Month. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) Division of Recreation and Parks, along with Governor Crist, is encouraging families and friends to explore and enjoy nature and celebrate the 75th Anniversary of Florida State Parks.

Continuing the theme of *Family. Friends. Fun.*, Florida’s 160 state parks will host events throughout the state for individuals and families of all ages and interests. Day-use entry into all state parks (except Skyway Fishing Pier) will be free on Saturday, July 17 to provide an opportunity for residents and visitors to head outdoors and experience Florida’s environment.

“Parks and Recreation Month increases awareness of the value and important benefits of recreation and parks to individuals, families and communities,” said DEP’s Deputy Secretary of Land and Recreation Bob Ballard. “Florida’s state parks provide an excellent avenue to escape from the rigors of every day life and enjoy all of the benefits and treasures of the great outdoors.”

Florida’s state parks will also offer an Independence Day Photo Contest for Twitter followers, allowing visitors to share their Parks and Recreation Month memories. Participants can enter to win a free Family Annual Entrance Pass and other prizes simply by tweeting their favorite photo taken at a Florida state park from July 1 through July 10, 2010. For contest information follow Florida State Parks on Twitter at www.twitter.com/FLStateParks.

Select events throughout the state are listed below. To view a full list of park events visit, www.floridastateparks.org/thingstodo/events.cfm.

NORTHWEST FLORIDA

Early Boat Tour

Wakulla Springs State Park

Saturday, July 10, 8:00 a.m.

Participants will enjoy the early morning sights and sounds as they cruise the scenic

Wakulla River. Breakfast is available in the historic Wakulla Springs Lodge. The event is \$10 for adults and \$7 for children. For more information, call (850) 926-0700.

Breakfast with a Ranger

Topsail Hill Preserve State Park

Saturday, July 10, 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Join the rangers of Topsail Hill Preserve State Park and ask them all the questions you can think of about park life. This program is family oriented and ideal for the whole family to enjoy. To cover the cost of food, please bring \$4, which goes to Friends of Topsail Hill Preserve State Park to enhance the park or bring your own breakfast. Park entry fee for this event is waived. For more information, call (850) 267-8330.

NORTHEAST FLORIDA

Family Fun Day

Manatee Springs State Park

Saturday, July 3, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Participants will enjoy games such as the three-legged race, sponge game and more. There will be competitive races for family teams. Events are set up for every visitor to safely participate with little or no assistance required. All activities are free with park admission. For more information, call (352)-493-6072.

Beginning Bird Watching

Fort George Island Cultural State Park

Saturday, July 31, 2:00 p.m.

Join a Park Ranger for a program that will introduce you to bird watching. Topics include the basic tools available to birdwatchers, and the basics of bird habitat, behavior, and identification. This program will take place at the Ribault Club on Fort George Island Cultural State Park. No reservations are necessary and the program is free with regular park admission. For more information, call (904)-251-2320.

CENTRAL FLORIDA

Saltwater Fishing Workshop

Washington Oaks Gardens State Park

Adults Workshop Every Thursday in 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Kid's Workshop Every Friday in July, 9:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.

Sponsored by the Friends of Washington Oaks Gardens State Park, this event will consist of demonstrations of techniques anglers use to catch fish, the importance of conservation and safety, learning to identify saltwater fish species commonly caught in this area, and how to use a fishing rod and reel. The kids four hour workshop is open for ages eight to 17 years old, the adult four hour workshop is for ages 18 and up. Space is limited and advanced registration is required, the fee is \$20.00, including park entrance. For more information, call (386) 446-6783.

Junior Ranger Academy

Blue Spring State Park

Saturday, July 3, 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Saturday, July 17, 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Saturday, July 31, 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Participants will participate in educational games, activities, stories, and more related to Florida wildlife. Attend two or more sessions and receive a Blue Spring State Park Junior Ranger Patch! The program is best suited for children grades K-5. All activities are free with park admission. For more information, call (386) 775-3663.

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Firecracker 5K Race

Highlands Hammock State Park

Sunday, July 4, 7:30 a.m.

Wear red, white and blue and show your patriotic spirit. This race is a fast, flat track under the hardwood hammock of Highlands Hammock State Park. Fees are \$20.00 per participant. For more information, call (863) 385-4736.

Art in the Park - Paint With All The Colors of The Wind

Hillsborough River State Park

Friday, July 30, 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

A great way for the entire family to enjoy time together making tangible memories of your time at the park by creating art. Participants can create multimedia works of art that tell a story that is unique to each artist's interpretation of various pieces of music and sounds of nature; a multi-sensory experience for all ages. Event is free and located at the recreation hall. For more information call, (813) 987-6771.

SOUTHEAST FLORIDA

Old Fashioned Fourth of July Picnic

The Barnacle Historic State Park

Sunday, July 4, 11:00 a.m.

Enjoy the Fourth at an old-fashioned picnic on the grounds of this 19th century pioneer home site hosted by The Barnacle Society. This event features lawn games, kite-making, knot-tying demonstrations and more. Bring a blanket and a picnic lunch and enjoy the day's celebration. Fees are \$5.00 for individuals 12 years and older, \$2.00 for ages six to 12 and children under six are free. For more information, call (305) 442-6866.

Live Concerts

John D. MacArthur Beach State Park

Sunday, July 11, 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, July 18, 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Come to the park and listen to live music from The Conch Stomp Band on Sunday, July 11 and live music from Nathan Rich and Friends on Sunday, July 18. Both concerts are free with park admission of \$5.00 per carload. For more information, call (561) 624-6952.

Created in 1935 by the Florida Legislature, the Florida State Park system has grown from eight to 160 parks in the last 75 years. Today, the Florida Park Service manages more than 700,000 acres of Florida's natural environment, including 100 miles of beaches, eight National Historic Landmarks and 39 sites on the National Register of Historic Places. Florida State Parks has been recognized by the National Recreation and Park Association as the nation's first and only two-time Gold Medal winner for the nation's best park service.

To learn more about the 75th Anniversary and the history of Florida State Parks, visit www.floridastateparks.org/history. To follow Florida State Parks on Twitter, visit www.Twitter.com/FLStateParks.