

Friends of Georgia State Parks
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FRIENDS OF GEORGIA STATE PARKS & HISTORIC SITES MOBILIZES TO SUPPORT PARKS DURING STATEWIDE BUDGET CUTS

Friends responds to announcement of potential park closings and budget cuts with continued and greater support

ATLANTA, GEORGIA – Friends of Georgia State Parks & Historic Sites is preparing to mobilize its members and concerned citizens across Georgia in support of the State Parks and Historic Sites across the state.

In light of the recent announcement from DNR Commissioner Noel Holcomb regarding possible state park and historic site closings, Friends of Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites is developing an action plan to help mobilize local chapters and members in support of the state park system and to advocate against further cuts to the system's operating budget. Friends plans to work with the Commissioner, the Division and its members to mitigate some of the impact the proposed budget cuts may have.

Since 2002, the Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites Division has sustained continuous budget reductions. Through these sustained reductions, Friends has worked diligently with the Division to minimize the negative impact on the safety, security and quality of experience for park guests while simultaneously avoiding park closures. The management strategies implemented in response to previous cuts won't suffice under the new cuts, given the cumulative effect of all the reductions.

"These cuts are simply too deep for the PRHSD staff to continue to manage without affecting service to the public," said Andy Fleming, Executive Director of Friends. "We exist to support the parks and historic sites across the state. We intend to ramp up that support even further and to help the parks in whatever way we can during this crisis." In fact, Friends has been a critical support provider to the parks over the past decade, contributing more than \$2 million in volunteer services and park/site improvements. With nearly 8,000 memberships representing over 20,000 Georgians statewide, the organization has consistently provided volunteers and funding to help make the system of Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites one of the nation's best.

"With nearly 40 local chapters statewide, we are uniquely positioned to help the parks and sites at both the state and local levels," Fleming said. "While we are concerned about the impact of potential closures to our chapters and members, we also recognize the impact on all Georgians who utilize and enjoy our state's fabulous state park system. We will be reaching out to these people to ask for their help and support as we establish our plan further."

With almost 40 Chapter Friends Organizations across the state, Friends of Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites is a growing group of dedicated people who show their support in a number of ways. Friends is a non-profit corporation formed by Georgia citizens to support Georgia's system of 63 state parks and historic sites. For more information, contact Friends at 770-975-7533 or visit www.friendsofgastateparks.org.

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