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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**State Park Advocacy Group celebrates its fourth year offering Small Grants, Big Impact (SGBI) grants for projects promoting Recreation, Conservation & Education in Maryland State Parks**

**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND (January 16, 2024)** The Friends of Maryland State Parks recently awarded twenty-four grants totaling \$41,798 to Maryland State Parks statewide. These funds will enable staff to collaborate with community partners to provide information on Maryland’s cultural history in state parks, replace unsafe bridges and puncheons, provide water safety resources, and promote recycling and stewardship on our public lands.

“Our park rangers and staff are getting more creative every year, submitting projects that provide an additional benefit for park visitors,” says Chuck Hecker, Board President, Friends of Maryland State Parks. “We have funded seventy-three SGBI projects since the grant program started over four years ago, for a total of \$113,334.”

The Friends of Maryland State Parks has increased funding 207% since year one (\$13,619 in 2021 to \$41,798 in 2024). At least one state park in all of the four state park regions has applied for and received a grant every year.

Launched in 2020, the Small Grants, Big Impact! program of the Friends of Maryland State Parks and was designed to inspire people from all backgrounds to connect with, celebrate, and support Maryland’s State Parks and their community-based programs. Through its Small Grants program the nonprofit provides \$2,000 grants to state parks to help them achieve their mission of excellence, bringing smiles to park rangers and visitors alike. This year’s funding exceeds last year’s allocation by 30%, which can be attributed to an increase in contributions.

A list of the 2024 projects is provided below:

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## 2024 FOMSP Small Grants, Big Impact Projects

### Assateague Island State Park

#### Horse Safety Signs

Assateague State Park is designing two interpretive panels to educate park patrons about the history of the horses, where to find them on the island, and how to safely coexist with them during the visit.

### Bohemia River State Park

#### Middle School Bioblitz - We Need A Ride!

Bohemia River State Park is requesting transportation funds to transport 155 students from Bohemia Manor Middle School to Bohemia River State Park to conduct two comparison Bioblitzes. A Bioblitz is a communal citizen-science effort to record as many species as possible in a short time frame within a designated location.

### Cedarville State Park (Three Projects)

#### Blue Trail Puncheon

#### Brown Trail Puncheon

Replace aging puncheons on the Blue and Brown Trail at Cedarville State Forest.

#### Green Trail Bridge Resurface, 20 foot bridge on the Green Trail

Replace the tread boards on a 20' bridge on the Green Trail at Cedarville State Forest and to add curbing. The bridge provides recreation opportunities for hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians.

### Cunningham Falls State Park

#### Aviary Improvements- Snapping Turtle Enclosure

Renovation of the outdoor summer enclosure of Edmund, a snapping turtle and popular animal ambassador. This renovation will allow the park staff and aviary volunteers to abide by new USDA regulations regarding wildlife care facilities.

### Cypress Branch State Park

#### Archery 101

This archery program aims to make archery more accessible as well as provides opportunities for students and families to participate in an activity together, outside, and sets the foundation for a new skill.

### Deep Creek Lake State Park

#### Discovery Center Educational Enhancements

Connects the center amenities with the natural resources in the surrounding park and greater Garrett County. Staff will purchase new signage for the current "in flight" display in the Discovery Center and purchasing new sets of binoculars and field guides for adults and children to use during birding programs led by park rangers and park naturalists.

## **Statewide Work Group**

### **Maryland Park Service Regional Outreach**

The Maryland Park Service's initiative on Diversity, Engagement, Inclusion, and Justice will purchase basic, branded setups (canopies, tables, table cloths) in order to be more visible and self-sufficient at local events such as community fairs, and job fairs.

## **Franklin Point State Park**

### **Branded Entrance Signs**

Park staff will purchase and install Maryland Park Service branded wood routed signs from Maryland Correctional Enterprises as dictated by State procurement guidelines. The signs will clarify where visitors are, meet branding requirements, and improve the aesthetic atmosphere of the park, as well as help improve access to this underutilized park.

## **Gathland State Park**

### **Sign Frames for Battle of South Mountain Waysides**

A new interpretive trail is being developed that will extend the current trail at Gathland State Park. The current trail as well as the new extension will be located in Cramptons Gap, an important area where the Battle of South Mountain occurred. Installation of three sign frames in order to mount new interpretive signs that will help join the existing trail and the new trail into one interpretive and educational story.

## **Greenbrier State Park (Two Projects)**

### **Beachfront Native Pollinator Garden and Swim Buoys**

Will develop an eighty-four plant native pollinator garden located within a designated section of the park. The goals of this project are to exemplify a beautiful native garden to the public along a heavily trafficked route and support a pollinator population for the benefit of local habitats. Greenbrier State Park has about 1,000 linear feet of beachfront. That beachfront is marked with small swim ropes and buoys that signify the protective swim area. Along with those swim buoys are the larger marker style buoys that alert boaters and fishermen that they are approaching a swim area.

## **Gunpowder Falls State Park**

### **Dundee Creek Interpretive Panels and Fishing Line Recycling Station**

Increases the public access to fishing at the Dundee Creek Marina (DCM) by creating a visible access point. DCM is a very popular access point for boating and fishing in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, but the current fishing area is not visible to many in the public. This project will have a big impact by further delineating the fishing area at Dundee Creek Marina, introducing fish identification to the park users, and promoting sustainable fishing practices.

## **Harriet Tubman State Park**

### **Back Deck Interpretation**

Installation of two 8-foot-long portable benches made from recycled plastic to be placed on the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center back deck. The addition of two benches will assist with interpretation aspects of the park with ranger programs. Additionally, the benches on the back deck will enhance the visitor experience.

## **Janes Island State Park**

### **Eliminating Cigarette Litter, One Vote at a Time**

Cigarette litter is a constant problem experienced at Janes Island State Park. Due to its location sitting along the salt marsh, there is an increased need in fighting this toxic issue in order to preserve not only our mainland ecosystem, but the marine life that attracts so many of our visitors a year. The project will establish a new, innovative way to reduce cigarette litter called a Ballot Bin which allows visitors to 'vote' with their litter. The box has an interchangeable question and has two options leading to separate columns to 'vote' with the cigarette butts. While the primary aim will be in reducing cigarette litter, using the voting mechanic of the bins will create a new outlet to communicate with and engage visitors.

## **Pocomoke River State Park**

### **Scales & Tales Aviary Enhancement & Renovations**

In preparation for 2024 federal USDA regulations, Pocomoke River SP Aviary will need to have all the door fixtures, hinges, and locks and some portions of the rat wire that have rusted and show signs of wear replaced, as well as the refrigerator as it is rusty and out-dated. It will also need added shelving and replaced counters with surfaces more reliable for adequate disinfection. A sink with two separate areas will need to be purchased as well. This grant would drastically help the park to bring its beloved aviary up to standard and help foster a safe and healthy environment for their education ambassadors.

## **Point Lookout State Park**

### **Nature Nook Rejuvenation**

Develop educational initiatives centered around the beachfront Nature Nook, catering to a majority of our 400,000 yearly visitors. Through this grant, the park will be able to paint and re-roof this building so that it can fall within the Maryland Park Service standard for public facilities as well as modernize and rejuvenate the exhibits inside this building.

## **Rocky Gap State Park**

### **Interpretive Aviary Signage/Healthy Parks Healthy People**

This project consists of two separate projects that help connect visitors to the park while offering the opportunity to gain an understanding and appreciation for natural resources. The first includes creating and purchasing permanent interpretive signage for the park's aviary building. The second includes creating and expanding program opportunities for the Healthy Parks Healthy People program.

## **Rosaryville State Park**

### **Perimeter Trail Bridge**

Installation of a bridge on the Perimeter Trail. This bridge will connect a rerouted portion of the trail back to the main loop. The reroute was dug the summer of 2023 by Eagle Scouts. The park would look to partner with other volunteer and/or youth organizations to help foster stewardship and volunteerism in our community. The Perimeter trail is the primary trail at Rosaryville State Park and would benefit the hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrian users.

## **Sandy Point State Park**

### **Water Safety Outreach**

In an effort to have local outreach on water safety and to recruit seasonal lifeguards to provide safety for the beachgoers at Sandy Point State Park, the park is requesting funds to purchase supplies for park programs, park special events, festivals, local county events, and career fairs. The continued shortage of lifeguards is a pressing issue that threatens the safety of Sandy Point patrons. By investing in recruiting startup supplies, we are actively working to combat this shortage and ensure that Sandy Point remains safe and well-guarded.

## **South Mountain State Park Battlefield**

### **Sign Frames for South Mountain Inn Interpretive Waysides**

The South Mountain Inn was recently acquired and requires stabilization and restoration. Once research of the history of the building is complete, interpretive signs will be designed and manufactured. The signs will be mounted in interpretive wayside frames near the building so that visitors can read them and gain a better understanding of how and why the building is being conserved. The sign frames will be used for the planned interpretive waysides.

## **Swallow Falls State Park**

### **Tree Replenishment**

This project will replenish native trees in a section of the old-growth forest near Muddy Creek Falls at Swallow Falls State Park. The area to be rehabilitated is a short trail and an overlook that are no longer safe for public use. Rehabilitating this area of the park will help to conserve natural lands, prevent soil erosion, promote biodiversity, benefit wildlife, and enhance the visitor experience through aesthetic appeal.

## **Tawes Garden (Maintained by Sandy Point State Park staff)**

### **MD Native Plant ID Signs**

The purpose of Tawes Garden Native Pollinator Plants Signs is to provide identification of pollinator habitat plants located in the Tawes Pollinator Demonstration Garden (also known as Plant Mural) at MD DNR headquarters. Tawes Garden Native Pollinator Plants Signs will provide identification for park guests and school groups. The plan is for the signs to also serve as templates for other pollinator demonstration gardens in Maryland Park Service through Project Butterfly and Bumblebee.