Friends of Maryland State Parks Foundation

is a statewide, independent, volunteer 501 (c) 3 organization founded in 1997.
We are dedicated to ***preserve, protect, enhance, and advocate*** *for our state parks.*

FRIENDS OF MARYLAND STATE PARKS
2026 Annual program Report





Friends of Maryland State Parks Foundation

is a statewide, independent, all volunteer 501 (c) 3 organization founded in 1997.
We are dedicated to ***preserve, protect, enhance, and advocate*** *for our state parks.*

A message from the President to our kind and friendly a contributors:

Greetings,

The Friends of Maryland State Parks are excited to provide you the 2026 Annual Program Report. We have also included a few upcoming events for 2027.

Contributions in 2025 exceeded any previous year since 2014! We provided over $52,000 in grant awards in February. New grants this year included the Ranger Eric Ledbetter History grant (Gathland State Park), the Happy Little Forest Health grant (Garrett State Forest) and public access grant (Harriet Tubman State Park). You can view the list of 2026 projects using this link: https://friendsofmdparks.org/dedicate/. Projects have been completed and reports are due by the end of October. We will add photos of finished projects to our website in December.

In April, the Bob Ross Happy Little Run for the Trees Virtual 5K raised funds for supporting planting trees and related environmental projects in Maryland state forests and parks. On April 18th, 150 friends participated in our first 5K event at Sandy Point State Park.

We are celebrating our 30th anniversary in 2027 and look forward to sharing the great memories in posts throughout next year.

Take care,
Chuck
Chuck Hecker, President
Maryland State Park Ranger (Ret.)

Friends of Maryland State Parks Foundation
What is our Foundation's program focus?

Health & Wellness Lifestyle:

Advance programs in Maryland State Parks promoting health, wellness, and more recreational opportunities.

Natural Resource Conservation:

Enhance ecological, biological, and environmental resources.

Environmental Education & Appreciation:

Elevate learning about the natural world, and our connections w/ it, and encourage environmental "stewardship" for current and future generations.

Enhance learning opportunities for youth through programs such as the Junior Rangers, Senior Rangers, and interpretive programs.

Cultural and Historical Preservation & Restoration:

Promote programs preserving cultural and historical resources.

Economic Development that supports MD's local economies

Focus on programs in the above areas and those enhancing the visitor experience. Note: State Parks are a major contributor to the MD's economy.

Friends of Maryland State Parks Foundation
Programs supported by your Annual Contribution

2026 Small Grants Program

Twenty- nine projects throughout the State of Maryland

Examples: Forest Restoration, Horse History Walking Trail, Night Skies Program, Outdoor Afro Programs



Conservation and Education

Aviaries at Rocky Gap, Tuckahoe and Assateague



Trails

Visitor Information

Friends of Maryland State Parks Foundation
Programs supported by your Annual Contribution

2026 Grant Projects



Youth Fishing Program

Martinak State Park



Dune Restoration

Assateague Island State Park



Outdoor Education

Bohemia River State Park

Friends of Maryland State Parks Foundation
Programs supported by your Annual Contribution

Financial Review for 2026:

Small Grants, Big Impact Grant Program

Available only to Maryland State Park Staff

Up to $2000 per approved project

29 projects awarded in 2026 for a total over $52,000





"We continue to facilitate grant projects with volunteers"

Friends of Maryland State Parks Foundation
Programs supported by your Annual Contribution

Plans for 2027

Participate in the new state park planning process

Ranger Erik Ledbetter History Grant Project Dedication

Maryland State Parks Senior Ranger Gathering - June

Kickoff 2027 Bob Ross Happy Little Trees Run for the Trees 5K

Live 5K event at Sandy Point State Park in April 2027

Potential Live 5K in Southern Maryland

October Hart-Miller Island 5 Miler

Fall Donor Match Appeal

2027 Small Grants Reviewed and Awarded



Hart Miller Island SP
Baltimore County



Wetipquin Creek State Park
Wicomico County

Friends of Maryland State Parks Foundation
Why our work is important



Supporting the people who are working to make our state parks accessible to all by offering small grants for education, conservation, recreation and outdoor educational programs

Friends of Maryland State Parks



Thank You!

www.friendsofmdparks.org