



2100 W. French Ave., Orange City, FL 32763
501(C)3 #57-1199346

March, 2021

Greetings Friends of Blue Spring State Park! What a year 2020 has been....and here's to hoping 2021 is significantly better. I wanted to let you know what the Friends have been up to this past year. Although we have been fairly quiet this past year, due to the pandemic, we brought in just over \$10,000 – primarily via the 2020 Manatee Festival, firewood sales, donations, and the Penny Press (now conveniently located in the Gift Shop). We funded a \$10,000 renovation of the ranger station (rangers now have a bump-out window for collecting entry fees (especially nice when it's raining!) and a refurbished interior), spent about \$2,000 on everything from t-shirts for the fire crews, weights for ranger pack tests, machinery rental to improve camp sites, repairs to the entrance sign, and a new radio for the Manatee Volunteer Observer Program. You may have seen that we recently posted plaques around the park letting visitors know of our existence and including a QR code that will take them directly to our website (with newsletter, fundraising button, and membership information).

Our big news is that we are starting a fund-raising campaign to raise money for a Manatee Rescue & Release area at the lower end of the spring run. Blue Spring State Park is in real need of safe and easy access to the lower portion of the spring run for releasing manatees and bringing them out of the water for transport to rehabilitation facilities. Currently, the manatee staging area is the old canoe beach, which has eroded to the point that there is frequently no beach at all. Access to this beach is currently an old, narrow, winding boardwalk, with steep wooden steps. If you have ever watched a manatee rescue or release, you know how much fun that is to watch, and yet how hard it is to get a good view. Our goal is to help fund a well-designed staging area with interpretive displays. The new area would provide an outreach opportunity for interpretation/education about rescues, manatees, and the partnerships that help keep them safe. This project will need to be completed in 2021 and will include construction of a ramp, landscaping, access to the ramp, boardwalk work, and interpretive panels, plus some design and permitting costs. I hope you will join us in supporting this worthy cause!
<https://friendsofbluespringstatepark.wildapricot.org/Donate>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melinda Ann Hicks".

President, Friends of Blue Spring State Park