



# FRESpace Findings

Fall Winter 2022

## President's Report

As you might expect, the Park was very busy this summer, and the staff was fully engaged in programs and projects.

FRESpace was heavily involved in funding major projects and supporting the Park through volunteer participation. The following reports of our Park Manager and Interpretive Ranger provide additional details.

Sea turtles laid a total of 351 nests on the State Park beach, tying the record set in 2019, and it was a 70% increase over the previous year. As of Sept. 7, 25,431 hatchlings had emerged, and 49 nests were incubating. One of the nests was laid by a Green Turtle, a rarity for Edisto. Sea Turtle Specialist Leah Schwartzentruber, her interns and volunteers do a great job protecting the turtles, collecting data, and communicating turtle biology and protocols to the community and visitors. FRESpace again sponsored the annual Turtle Fest which continues to grow in scope and popularity.

This year FRESpace funded more than \$8,000 in projects and is awaiting estimates on several more. Major projects included sand fencing materials, beach access mats, sea turtle supplies, feed for the ELC bird sanctuary, tie-dye shirts for an ELC program, beach/river sweep, and the ELC media upgrade. We anticipate funding to shade a new playground set, a display for the Spanish Mount shell mound, and a new water

quality exhibit for the ELC. The primary source of funds is your membership dues. Please visit the Environmental Learning Center to see the improvements being made and programs offered.

This year we are placing an emphasis on volunteer activities for our members. Members supported the Park staff in trimming trails, installing sand fencing, and roping off areas to protect nesting shorebirds and dunes. Our group dubbed the Blowhards, regularly blows off four miles of Park trails, and volunteers actively support various sea turtle activities.

We continue to emphasize communications with our membership. We currently have 6,000 Facebook followers. Watch our website, emails, and Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/frespace](http://www.facebook.com/frespace)) for volunteer opportunities.

Our membership numbers and renewal rate remain solid with 339 family and 21 corporate memberships. Our business sponsors are: All Clear System; Charleston Fossil Adventures; Cope Concrete; Edisto Bike Rentals; Edisto Kennels; Edisto Saltwater Tours; Edisto Watersports and Tackle; Green Boat Discount Liquors; The Happie Chicks; Higgins Adjusting; Home Advantage Realty; The Joggle Factory; Kenerty Surveying; McConkey's Jungle Shack; Mueller Electric; O-Hair by Lisa; Positive ZENergy Massage Therapy; Sea Spirits Liquor; Swann Associates; Walterboro Motor

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Sales; and The Wills Agency. Please patronize these businesses and thank them for their support of FRESpace. The annual fee for a business sponsorship is \$100.

Some benefits of membership are:

- Entry to the State Park
- Boat ramp privileges at Live Oak Landing;
- Use of picnic shelters and grills;
- Parking and use of restroom facilities
- Admission to the ELC;
- Park trails for hiking and biking; and
- Membership in an organization helping preserve Edisto's natural beauty.

Thanks to each of you for your support. Together we are making a difference.

*Bill Andrews, FRESpace President*

### **Park Manager's Report**

Greetings FRESpace Members,

It has been a hot and busy summer season for us. Our parking lots were full nearly every weekend and even some weekdays. We held at 90% occupancy in both camping and cabins.

Since our last newsletter, we have had personnel changes. Matthew Coleman was promoted to Park Ranger II at Poinsett State Park. We hired Caitlin Smith from Calhoun Falls State Park where she served as the Off-Park Ranger. Our long time Ranger II, Mike Lane, retired this spring. The vacancy was filled by Arthur Murray. Arthur served as the Ranger I at Lake Greenwood State Park. Our other Ranger I, Rachael Knierim, left the park service. Within the last week, we hired Connor Kokel. Connor served as an assistant park ranger at Hunting Island State Park. Last, one of our assistant rangers,

Thomas Gillen, was promoted to Ranger I at Rivers Bridge State Park. So, we have a whole new staff.

We had a full program season with the Turtle Night Walks this summer. Our interpretive staff along with our turtle volunteers had a record year with nests! A big thanks to FRESpace for conducting the Hole Patrols for us before the Night Walks. We know it's hot, but the service helped us in our conservation efforts for our turtle friends.

This season we continued the extension of sand dune fencing past our beach front campground. Even in this short amount of time, you can notice the sand collect, and it is starting to build up. As this continues, we will be able to naturally collect the sand and build our dune system. The sand fencing and materials were provided by FRESpace again this year. Each year we hope to keep adding extensions. If you're out walking the beach, come check it out. We were able to place sand fencing in the leased parking lot beside Coots Bar & Grill. In a short time, you can see the effectiveness in protecting the dunes. We could not have done it as quickly and effectively as we did without help from FRESpace volunteers.

This past winter and spring, we had numerous projects where members and park staff worked side by side. Not only were they able to accomplish a lot together, they mingled and got to know one another. Our staff was excited to get to know those who came out and look forward to future collaborations.

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*Sand Fencing Volunteers*

As always, thank y'all for your continued support. We look forward to seeing you out in the park, as well as in our great community here at Edisto Beach!

*Kyle Bullock, Park Manager*

**Interpretive Ranger's Report**

Hey FRESpace!

This summer season was very busy. We are starting to slow down a little. Our interns have left to continue school, and we are sad to see them go. Each left a project behind at the ELC. Sarah updated the content from the trash display that was put up in 2018 by our previous sea turtle interns. Dalton had an ELC sign made which was put in front of our building. Christine created a loggerhead informational pamphlet to put around the park to educate visitors and campers when we aren't there. Ciara created a display/program about animal tracks that can be found around the area.

In June, Brandi Driggers, our assistant interpreter, left for a position at a North Carolina County Park. Mary, our program specialist, filled this position in August. She is a great addition to our team with her dependability

and organizational skills. This left another position to be filled. Jefferson Boulware was selected for the Program Specialist. He is from Beaufort and has a Wildlife Biology degree from Clemson University. He has a background with creating and performing programs for the public. We are looking forward to having him as a part of our team! Be sure to stop in and say hi to him.



*Sam, Pebbles, and Bamm-Bamm*

Pebbles and Bamm-Bamm are the names for our new alligators who are growing fast. Stop by and check our gators at one of our reptile programs.

We are working on our movie theater upgrade. It will include an interactive video selection and allow visitors to select what they want to watch. Keep an eye out for more updates! The water quality exhibit is still in the prefabrication stage but will be moving forward towards the end of the year. This is a lengthy process, so it will be a while until it is completed. Be on the lookout for these exciting updates.

See you around the park!

*Sam Pettit, Interpretive Ranger*

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