



FRESpace Findings

Fall/Winter 2024

President's Report— Mick Royston

2024 has been a busy and successful period for Frespace. Our board approved funds to participate in the Edisto Island Chamber of Commerce Turtle Tide. Sponsors of this event purchase a blank fiberglass replica of a loggerhead sea turtle along with its mounting stand, then arrange for a local artist to design and paint each sponsor's entry.

Frespace will be the recipient of all funds generated from our entry to the auction. Our turtle is named ELCee, appropriately, and is presently displayed at the Environmental Learning Center. ELCee was designed and painted by local artist Sarah Wannamaker and is a beautiful turtle. We invite all Frespace members to visit the ELC and see ELCee, and, hopefully, to consider bidding on her during the Turtle Tide auction on October 13. We would love to see ELCee in permanent residence at the ELC, and it is hard to imagine a more worthy recipient of your donation than Frespace. Contact the Chamber if you need more information on bidding.

Our volunteers contribute with their hands as well as their pocketbooks, and Volunteer Coordinator, Ron Steele, does a great job with our volunteer group. Be sure to read Ron's report to catch up on volunteer projects this year. We are especially proud that after Storm Debbie visited Edisto, thirty volunteers showed up to a hastily called work session at the Edisto Island State Park beach day-use area to clear storm debris. It was a great turnout and a great job!

Finally, Frespace would like to announce a new addition to our board. Lisa Cumming, has been appointed to the board and elected as our new Secretary. Lisa is an island resident and has great qualifications and experience. She is already proving to be an energetic and impactful officer.

Keith Seigfried has volunteered to be our new webmaster. Keith is an Atlanta resident who plans to reside here permanently next year. He has already improved our website performance, and all our officers who have met Keith have been impressed with his experience and expertise. Our special thanks go to Communications Coordinator, Idydy Andrews, who recruited Keith.



Park Manager's Report – Kyle Bullock

The park has made it through another high-volume season. It is pretty much guaranteed that from May through Labor Day weekend, all facets of the park will be busy. One thing has been the uptick in use at the Live Oak Landing. There were multiple times where the park came close to having to close the ramp due to lack of parking. All in all, it was a solid season for the park.

It was a pretty good turtle season as well. Although it was anticipated to have fewer nests than 2023, we had a good amount. Big thanks to all the volunteers and Turtle Team who worked tirelessly to protect the sea turtles. It is a labor of love, and we greatly appreciate their dedication.

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This season the park suffered damage from Tropical Storm Debby. The park evacuated all campers in a safe and timely fashion and prepared the park for any foreseeable damage. A tornado landed on the park and caused damage on Cabin Road and proceeded north through the trail system before continuing across Palmetto Road towards Fishing Creek. The campgrounds and day-use area were closed until August 15. A big thanks goes out to our FRESpace members who came out to clean up the day-use area. The workday was so proficient that a predicted two-day job was knocked out on the first day! By having the volunteers come out, we were able to devote park personnel to continue in other areas which kept our August 15 opening day an obtainable goal. Before the storm, we had another successful work project day in which volunteers helped park staff install new sand fencing at the leased lot by Coot's. In doing so, we ensure the protective efforts of the dune system and diverting beach traffic to use the beach accesses.

This upcoming fall/winter we will work on projects to enhance and improve the park's amenities. We are working with FRESpace to expand the ADA sidewalk system in the day-use portion of the park. Potential plans call for a section to include the construction of at least two new beach rinse stations. This would make the amenity more visible and help with the access to the beach. Park staff are looking to do some long-needed work on the main office building to help secure the flashing and seal off areas which have allowed water to infiltrate. Another big portion will be devoted to trail section cleanups from the aftermath of the tornado damage.

As always, thank y'all for your continued support of the park. We look forward to seeing you in our great community and the park.

Interpretive Ranger's Report – Samantha "Sam" Foreman

Since our last newsletter, we have had a few outreach events that were quite successful and provided great opportunities for our staff to work with DNR and FRESpace. This spring and summer season were slightly slower in attendance compared to last year, but we are still on track to have a high attendance year. Our ACE Basin Fun Day in April,

the 20th Anniversary of the ELC, and TurtleFest brought in over 700 visitors combined. As we continue to have these events throughout the year, this will allow us to promote the park, the ELC, and FRESpace. The next ACE Basin Fun Day is September 21 and has the same layout as previous years with the educational booths, food trucks, and DNR's educational vessel.

This busy season saw some staff changes at the ELC. In March, Mary, our assistant interpreter, left, and we hired Piper West to fill that position. Piper is from North Carolina and has a background in outdoor recreation with a degree from Western Carolina University. She has been a great asset to our staff this season. Additionally, our animal care specialist, Sarah, left to pursue graduate school in Alaska. We hired Daniel Logging from Lexington, SC to fill that position. Daniel has a background in fisheries and is a recent USC grad. Next time you are at the ELC, be sure to stop in and say hi to our new additions!

This summer, we had 4 interns who assisted us with our turtle program and at the ELC, Anna, Drew, Julianne, and Julia. They are from SC, PA, VA, and GA, respectively. They were a great help with patrols, our night walk programs, our ELC programs, and assisting with day-to-day operations. They left to continue their education, and we know they will go on to do great things!

For exhibits, we are still waiting to add the microscope from the same company as the microscope so visitors will be able to have an up-close view of larger specimens. We will install microscope slides and slide turntables for each scope to protect the slides and specimens on display. All these updates are possible from a grant that FRESpace received and FRESpace funds. Thank you to FRESpace for always supporting enhancement projects at the ELC!

As time goes on and more opportunities pop up, there will be more exciting updates to the ELC. Hope to see around in the park and at the ELC!

