

Recreation Trails Program Application Support and Summary of Activities

Hugh Taylor Birch State Park and Friends of Birch State Park, Inc.

Hugh Taylor Birch State Park is a Florida State Park managed through the Florida Park Service. The Park is located on 180 acres between the Atlantic Ocean and the Intracoastal Waterway in South Florida. Friends of Birch State Park, Inc. was founded in 1999, and is a Citizens Support Organization (CSO) recognized by the Florida State Park System, and 501[C] (3) non-profit corporation whose function is to organize community support for fundraising toward the preservation, conservation and enhancement of Hugh Taylor Birch State Park. This is done through providing special work projects; special events and programs; community outreach programs; educational activities; guided tours and communications; special exhibits; interpretive programs; fund raising activities; purchasing new equipment and supplies; and providing assistance to the park staff with any activity which is designed to meet the additional needs of the park to support the conservation, preservation and enhancement of the park's cultural and natural resources.

Friends of Birch State Park, Inc. is working with the leadership and staff of Hugh Taylor Birch State Park to identify, pursue and administer \$10 million in funding opportunities for priority projects within Hugh Taylor Birch State Park, including:

- Trestles Trail, which follows the path of the old Birch State Park Scenic Railroad
- North-South Trail, which will connect to the Trestles Trail as well as the East Coast Greenway network of trails
- Arts and Education Outdoor Stage
- Seawall Reconstruction – partially funded through a \$2 million state appropriation
- Floating Dock (\$150,000 funding for planning secured through F.I.N.D. and Broward B.I.P. grants)
- Long Lake cleanup and removal of invasive plant species
- Renovations of Terramar, the home of Hugh Taylor Birch

Friends is seeking support for an application to the State of Florida Recreational Trails Program (a pass-through federal funding opportunity) for \$250,000 to fund the Trestles Trail. The trail will follow the path of the defunct Birch State Park Scenic Railroad, and will rehabilitate the trail as well as the two remaining train trestles, converting this to a multi-use trail for walkers, hikers, bikers and nature enthusiasts (please see attached draft site plan – the Purple Line follows the Trestles Trail proposed route, the Pink Line shows the proposed North-South Trail).

This application to the Recreational Trails Program will fund not only the Trestles Trail, but will support future grant applications for both the Park and the City of Fort Lauderdale. Park and Friends staff are currently in discussions with the City MOT Division for the City's 2016 application to the Transportation Alternatives Program (or its successor), which will seek funding for the North-South Trail. This trail will run through the Park, and connect to the trestles trail as well as provide a vital link in the Greenways network.

Both of these grant opportunities support the innovative relationship between Friends of Birch State Park, Florida State Parks and the City of Fort Lauderdale. As a Community Service Organization (CSO), Friends has a unique mission to support the vision of Hugh Taylor Birch, who dedicated the one hundred and eighty acres of the Park that he once called home for residents and tourists to enjoy. By working closely with these partners, as well as other partners in the business, government and non-profit sectors, Friends of Birch State Park and the management of Hugh Taylor Birch State Park hope to improve the Park and the Park experience for residents, visitors and future generations.