

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

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BILL: SB 590

INTRODUCER: Senator Albritton

SUBJECT: State Park Fees

DATE: March 12, 2019

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Schreiber	Rogers	EN	<b>Favorable</b>
2.	_____	_____	AEG	_____
3.	_____	_____	AP	_____

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**I. Summary:**

SB 590 requires the Department of Environmental Protection’s Division of Recreation and Parks to adopt regulations creating a program for volunteers to receive a free annual entrance pass to all of Florida’s state parks in exchange for performing 50 hours per year of volunteer work removing nonnative and invasive plant species from public lands. The bill requires the Division of Recreation and Parks to issue the annual entrance pass to any volunteer who performs the specified volunteer work. The volunteer work must be performed on conservation and recreation lands in Florida under the supervision of the Division of Recreation and Parks or another land management agency.

The bill lists requirements for the regulations that create the program. Such regulations must include, at a minimum: identification of the specific work that qualifies towards the 50 volunteer hours, a process to document and verify the performance of the 50 volunteer hours, a process to identify activities and locations appropriate for participation in the program, and a process for supervising volunteer activities to ensure safety and consistency with the public land’s management plan.

## II. Present Situation:

### Fees at Florida's State Parks

Florida's award-winning state park system contains 175 state parks, including nearly 800,000 acres of state lands and 100 miles of sandy beaches.<sup>1</sup> Florida's state parks include all real property in the state of Florida under the jurisdiction of the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Division of Recreation and Parks (Division), or real property which may come under the Division's jurisdiction regardless of its designation.<sup>2</sup> The Division manages and controls the operation of all of Florida's state parks.<sup>3</sup> There are numerous designations in Florida's state park system, and examples include state park, state preserve, historic site, archaeological site, botanical site, museum, and culture center.<sup>4</sup> In Fiscal Year 2017-18, over 28 million people visited Florida's State Parks, generating over \$66 million in revenue.<sup>5</sup>

The Division is authorized to charge reasonable fees for the use of state parks.<sup>6</sup> Money from such fees is deposited in the State Park Trust Fund, which the Division uses for the administration, improvement, and maintenance of state parks, and for the acquisition and development of lands acquired for state park purposes.<sup>7</sup> The Division's regulations prohibit any person from entering and using a state park property without paying any appropriate fees.<sup>8</sup> A full stop must be made at the Ranger Station when entering a park, and no one may enter or leave any state park except through designated entrance points.<sup>9</sup> No person may remain in any park after the posted closing time unless properly registered as an overnight visitor or in possession of a valid after hours permit.<sup>10</sup>

Admission fees at Florida's state parks currently range between \$1 and \$10.<sup>11</sup> Individual annual entrance passes are currently \$60.<sup>12</sup> Annual entrance passes generally allow admission to all of Florida's state parks in lieu of paying the general admission fee, but other special use fees may be charged at some parks, such as tours or boat launches.<sup>13</sup> Standard admission fees and other park fees are recommended by the Division Director and approved by the Secretary of DEP.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> DEP, *Division of Recreation and Parks*, <https://floridadep.gov/parks> (last visited Feb. 20, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Fla. Admin. Code R. 62D-2.013(1).

<sup>3</sup> Section 258.004(1), F.S.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> DEP, *Long Range Program Plan*, 52 (Oct. 2018), available at <http://floridafiscalportal.state.fl.us/Document.aspx?ID=18067&DocType=PDF> (last visited Mar. 5, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Section 258.014(1), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> Fla. Admin. Code R. 62D-2.014(2)(a); see Fla. Admin. Code R. 62D-2.015(2). Violating the rules for admission to state park property constitutes a noncriminal infraction.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Fla. Admin. Code R. 62D-2.014(16)(a).

<sup>11</sup> DEP, *Florida State Parks Fee Schedule*, 1 (Oct. 2013), available at <https://www.floridastateparks.org/sites/default/files/media/file/FPSFeeSchedule.pdf> (last visited Mar. 2, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* The price is \$45 for active-duty U.S. military members and veterans.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> Fla. Admin. Code R. 62D-2.014(2)(c), (d). The Division Director takes into consideration the following factors when recommending the fees: user demand, location of the park, cost of managing and operating the park, types of facilities available, season, and natural and historic resource values of the park.

The Division's regulations state that admission fees shall be waived by authorized Division personnel for government representatives and for individuals who will benefit the state park system.<sup>15</sup> The regulations also state that admission fees shall be waived for: children under six years old; patients and clients of government-funded mental institutions and certain organizations for minors; Florida school groups; and Division employees and their families.<sup>16</sup>

The Florida Park Service's Volunteer Handbook describes Division policies that offer admission to Florida's state parks in exchange for performing volunteer work at a state park.<sup>17</sup> Individuals are normally given a volunteer ID card when volunteering at a Florida state park, which helps identify volunteers.<sup>18</sup> When a volunteer has contributed a minimum of 100 volunteer hours to a certain park, their volunteer ID card may be endorsed by the park manager for free admission to the park where the volunteer hours were performed.<sup>19</sup> The free admission endorsement is valid for one calendar year, and allows the volunteer and their family to receive free admission to the park.<sup>20</sup> The free admission endorsement may be renewed annually if the volunteer contributes 100 additional hours of volunteer work.<sup>21</sup>

The Division also offers a "special volunteer annual pass" to volunteers.<sup>22</sup> The pass is issued to volunteers who have contributed a minimum of 500 hours to one or more Florida State Parks. A special volunteer annual pass is recognized by all Florida State Parks, in the same manner as an annual family entrance pass and is valid for one year following the date of issue. The volunteer must request the pass by completing a form and submitting documentation, and the pass is issued by the Bureau of Operational Services. Additional special volunteer annual passes may be issued if 500 additional volunteer hours are completed during the period following the date the volunteer requested the previous pass. No more than one such pass is issued to any volunteer within a one-year period.<sup>23</sup>

### **Nonnative and Invasive Species**

Invasive species are a serious issue in Florida. Nonnative species are species living outside of human captivity that did not historically occur in Florida.<sup>24</sup> Often, such species are introduced by humans. When nonnative species cause ecological or economic harm in their new environment they can become invasive species.<sup>25</sup> When their new environment lacks their natural predators, invasive species' populations can grow unchecked and cause substantial harm to the ecosystems

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<sup>15</sup> Fla. Admin. Code. R. 62D-2.014(2)(b).

<sup>16</sup> Fla. Admin. Code. R. 62D-2.014(2)(b)(1)-(4). Florida citizens who are at least 65 years of age are offered a fifty percent discount on base camping fees.

<sup>17</sup> DEP, Florida Park Service, *Florida Park Service Volunteer Handbook*, 14–16 (2011), available at [https://www.floridastateparks.org/sites/default/files/media/file/Vol\\_Handbook\\_Winter2011\\_0.pdf](https://www.floridastateparks.org/sites/default/files/media/file/Vol_Handbook_Winter2011_0.pdf) (last visited Mar. 5, 2019).

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* at 14.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at 15.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> *Id.* at 16.

<sup>24</sup> Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, *Nonnative Species Information*, <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/nonnatives/exotic-information/> (last visited Mar. 5, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> See section 581.011(15), F.S.

they inhabit.<sup>26</sup> An invasive species can be a plant, animal, or other type of organism.<sup>27</sup> In Florida, over 500 non-native fish and wildlife species have been observed, and over 1,180 non-native plant species have become established outside of human cultivation.<sup>28</sup> Florida is particularly vulnerable to the introduction and spread of invasive species due to its climate and geographic location.<sup>29</sup>

Government entities work collaboratively to manage nonnative and invasive species inhabiting Florida's lands and waters. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services have programs that work to identify, prevent, and manage nonnative and invasive species in Florida.<sup>30</sup> Florida's water management districts also manage nonnative and invasive species as part of their land and water management activities.<sup>31</sup> Each manager of state conservation lands is required to submit a land management plan to DEP's Division of State Lands, and such land management plans must include short-term and long-term management goals for exotic and invasive species maintenance and control.<sup>32</sup>

The Office of Economic & Demographic Research reports that FWC spent \$31 million dollars on invasive plant control on public lands for Fiscal Year 2017-18.<sup>33</sup> Managing invasive animals can also cost large amounts of public funds.<sup>34</sup> Florida's various land management agencies have volunteer programs that normally include opportunities for volunteers to go out into public lands and remove nonnative and invasive species.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Nicole M. W. Dodds, Mary Hannah Miller, and Alexa J. Lamm, UF IFAS Extension, *Floridians' Perceptions of Invasive Species*, 1 (Oct. 2014), available at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/WC/WC18600.pdf> (last visited Mar. 5, 2019).

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

<sup>30</sup> Chapter 369, F.S.; Chapter 581, F.S.; Fla. Admin. Code Chapter 5B-57; Fla. Admin. Code Chapter 5B-64; Fla. Admin. Code Chapter 68F; see Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, *Habitat and Species Conservation*, <https://myfwc.com/about/inside-fwc/hsc/> (last visited Mar. 5, 2019); see also Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, *Division of Plant Industry*, <https://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Plant-Industry> (last visited Mar. 5, 2019).

<sup>31</sup> South Florida Water Management District, *Vegetation and Exotic Control*, <https://www.sfwmd.gov/our-work/vegetation> (last visited Mar. 5, 2019); St. John's River Water management District, *Land Management*, <https://www.sjrwm.com/lands/management/invasiveplants/> (last visited Mar. 5, 2019); Southwest Florida Water Management District, *Aquatic Plant Management*, <https://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/projects/aquatic-plant-management> (last visited Mar. 5, 2019); Suwannee River Water Management District, *Non-native, Invasive Plant Species*, <http://www.srwm.com/303/Non-Native-Invasive-Plant-Species> (last visited Mar. 5, 2019).

<sup>32</sup> Section 253.034(5)(b)5., F.S.

<sup>33</sup> Office of Economic & Demographic Research, *Annual Assessment of Florida's Water Resources and Conservation Lands, 2019 Edition*, 33 (2019) available at [http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/natural-resources/LandandWaterAnnualAssessment\\_2019Edition.pdf](http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/natural-resources/LandandWaterAnnualAssessment_2019Edition.pdf) (available at Mar. 5, 2019).

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, *The Economic Cost of Large Constrictor Snakes* (2012), available at [https://www.fws.gov/verobeach/PythonPDF/EconImpact\\_LargeConstrictorSnakes.pdf](https://www.fws.gov/verobeach/PythonPDF/EconImpact_LargeConstrictorSnakes.pdf) (last visited Mar. 5, 2019).

<sup>35</sup> DEP, *Volunteer at a Florida State Park*, <https://www.floridastateparks.org/volunteers> (last visited Mar. 4, 2019); Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, *Volunteer Project Opportunities*, <https://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/For-Communities/Programs/Florida-Forest-Service-Volunteer-Opportunities/Volunteer-Project-Opportunities> (last visited Mar. 4, 2019); South Florida Water Management District, *Volunteering*, <https://www.sfwmd.gov/community-residents/volunteering> (last visited Mar. 4, 2019); Southwest Florida Water Management District, *Volunteer*, <https://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/recreation/volunteer> (last visited Mar. 4, 2019); Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, *Volunteer*, <https://myfwc.com/get-involved/volunteer/> (last visited Mar. 4, 2019).

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

**Section 1** amends s. 258.014, F.S., which authorizes the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Division of Recreation and Parks (Division) to charge fees for the use of state parks.

The bill requires the Division to adopt rules creating a program to provide annual park entrance passes to individuals who volunteer to remove nonnative and invasive species. The bill requires the Division to issue an annual entrance pass to all of Florida's state parks at no charge to individuals who perform at least 50 hours per year of volunteer work removing nonnative and invasive plant species on conservation and recreation lands in Florida. Such conservation and recreation lands may include, but are not limited to, state parks, state forest lands, water management district lands, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission-managed lands, or other public lands managed by DEP.

The volunteer work must be conducted under the supervision of the Division or another appropriate land management agency. The volunteer work must also be consistent with the public land's management plan.

The Division's rules must, at a minimum, contain provisions specifying all of the following:

- Identification of the specific work that qualifies for volunteer hours.
- A process to document and verify that the individual performed at least 50 hours of volunteer work for nonnative and invasive species removal on the public land before receiving an annual entrance pass at no charge.
- A process to identify activities and locations appropriate for volunteers consistent with each public land's management plan.
- A process for supervising volunteer activities to ensure the safety of the volunteers and that the work is conducted in a manner consistent with the public land's management plan.

**Section 2** states that the act shall take effect on July 1, 2019.

### IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Individuals who participate in the program will receive a free annual entrance pass to Florida's state parks, and such annual entrance passes usually cost money. This may result in a positive, indeterminate fiscal impact on individuals in the private sector.

C. Government Sector Impact:

State land management agencies spend significant amounts of money each year preventing, eradicating, and removing nonnative and invasive species in the state. If enough people participate in the program it could potentially reduce the amount of money or resources the state must invest in such activities. This may result in a positive, indeterminate fiscal impact on these land management agencies.

The fees the Division charges for entrance to state parks fund the management and development of Florida's state parks. If people participate in the program and receive a free annual entrance pass, and the value provided by their volunteer work does not exceed the value of the pass, this may result in a negative, indeterminate fiscal impact on the Division.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends section 258.014 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:**

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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