

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

**BILL #:** CS/HB 109 State Park Campsite Reservations

**SPONSOR(S):** Agriculture & Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee, Canady and others

**TIED BILLS:** **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 76

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Agriculture, Conservation & Resiliency Subcommittee	18 Y, 0 N	Gawin	Moore
2) Agriculture & Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee	15 Y, 0 N, As CS	Byrd	Pigott
3) Infrastructure Strategies Committee	22 Y, 0 N	Gawin	Harrington

### SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The Division of Recreation and Parks within the Department of Environmental Protection is responsible for overseeing Florida's 175 award-winning state parks, which span nearly 800,000 acres and 100 miles of coastline. During Fiscal Year 2021-2022, over 32 million people visited Florida state parks. Florida residents, on average, made up 61 percent of all overnight visitors. Visitors can camp in 57 state parks, 52 of which have amenities specifically for RV campers.

Florida state parks allow visitors to make reservations up to 11 months in advance, by phone or online. This booking window applies to both Florida residents and nonresidents. New dates become available daily at 8:00 a.m. Any new camping sites that become available throughout the day due to a cancellation are randomly released back into inventory following the cancellation.

The bill requires the Division of Recreation and Parks to allow individuals to make reservations for state park cabins and campsites, including RV, tent, boat, and equestrian sites, as follows:

- For Florida residents, reservations up to 11 months in advance.
- For nonresidents, reservations up to 10 months in advance.

The bill requires a Florida resident who wishes to book a state park campsite more than 10 months in advance to provide a valid Florida driver license number or the identification number from a Florida identification card as proof of residency when making a reservation.

The bill will have an insignificant negative fiscal impact on state government that can be absorbed within existing resources.

# FULL ANALYSIS

## I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

### A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

#### Background

##### Florida State Parks

The Division of Recreation and Parks within the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is responsible for overseeing Florida's 175 award-winning<sup>1</sup> state parks, spanning nearly 800,000 acres and 100 miles of coastline.<sup>2</sup> During Fiscal Year 2021-2022, over 32 million people visited Florida state parks.<sup>3</sup> While approximately 75 percent of those visitors were "non-local," meaning they traveled from more than 50 miles away,<sup>4</sup> Florida residents have, on average, made up 61 percent of all overnight visitors.<sup>5</sup>

Visitors can camp in 57 state parks, 52 of which have amenities specifically for RV campers.<sup>6</sup> Full-facility campsites for tent and RV campers include water, electricity, a grill and picnic table, as well as centralized showers, restrooms, and dump stations.<sup>7</sup> Twenty-eight state parks provide primitive campgrounds. These sites have limited improvements, such as a fire ring and a cleared area for tent camping, but generally have no electric power, and may or may not have potable water or bathroom facilities and are typically accessible by foot, bicycle, or canoe/kayak only.<sup>8</sup> Other camping experiences in state parks include cabins,<sup>9</sup> equestrian accommodations,<sup>10</sup> and boat slips.<sup>11</sup> Some parks also have glamorous camping (glamping) sites that include canvas tents with beds, seating areas, and electricity.<sup>12</sup> Glamping site reservations are booked through third-party vendors.<sup>13</sup>

##### Camping Reservations

Florida state parks allow visitors to make reservations up to 11 months in advance,<sup>14</sup> by phone or online.<sup>15</sup> This booking window applies to both Florida residents and nonresidents. New dates become

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<sup>1</sup> DEP, *Florida State Parks: 2019 National Gold Medal Winner*, <https://www.floridastateparks.org/learn/2019-national-gold-medal-winner#:~:text=On%20Tuesday%2C%20September%202024%2C%20the%20National%20Recreation%20and,the%20nation%20to%20win%20a%20fourth%20Gold%20Medal> (last visited Jan. 25, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> DEP, *Division of Recreation and Parks*, <https://floridadep.gov/parks> (last visited Jan. 25, 2023).

<sup>3</sup> DEP, *2021-2022 Economic Impact Assessment Report for the Florida State Park System, available at* <https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/2022%20Economic%20Impact%20Assessment%20Report%20FINAL%209.26.22.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *See id.* at 3. This percentage is from the 2006 Florida State Park Visitor Study. *See also* DEP, *2016-2017 Economic Impact Assessment for the Florida Park System at 4, available at* <https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/Economic%20Impact%20Assessment%202016-2017.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> DEP, *Florida State Parks: Plan Your Visit: Frequently Asked Questions* (no. 24), <https://www.floridastateparks.org/plan-your-visit/faqs> (last visited Jan. 25, 2023).

<sup>6</sup> DEP, *Florida State Parks: Find A Park*, <https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails?parks%5B0%5D=experiences%3A242> (last visited Jan. 25, 2023).

<sup>7</sup> DEP, *Florida State Parks: Stay the Night*, <https://www.floridastateparks.org/index.php/stay-night> (last visited Jan. 26, 2023).

<sup>8</sup> DEP, *Florida State Parks: Primitive Camping*, <https://www.floridastateparks.org/primitive-camping> (last visited Jan. 26, 2023).

<sup>9</sup> DEP, *Florida State Parks: Find A Park*, <https://www.floridastateparks.org/index.php/parks-and-trails?parks%5B0%5D=amenities%3A284> (last visited Jan. 26, 2023).

<sup>10</sup> DEP, *Florida State Parks: Equestrian Camping*, <https://www.floridastateparks.org/equestrian-camping> (last visited Jan. 26, 2023).

<sup>11</sup> DEP, *Florida State Parks: Boat Camping*, <https://www.floridastateparks.org/boat-camping> (last visited Jan. 26, 2023).

<sup>12</sup> DEP, *Florida State Parks: Let's Go Glamping*, <https://www.floridastateparks.org/index.php/learn/lets-go-glamping> (last visited Jan. 26, 2023).

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

<sup>14</sup> Certain county parks allow advance reservations for residents. For example, Brevard County, Palm Beach County, and Fort De Soto Park in Pinellas County allow in-county residents to make reservations before nonresidents. *See* Brevard County Parks, *Parks & Recreation Online Portal Search*,

<https://registration.brevardfl.gov/wbws/wbws/wbws/search.html?module=RN&primarycode=LONGP> (last visited Jan. 26, 2023);

Palm Beach County, *Parks & Recreation: Campground Reservations*,

<https://discover.pbcgov.org/parks/CampingJohnPrincePark/CamperInformation.aspx> (last visited Jan. 26, 2023); Pinellas County

Parks, *Campsite & Picnic Shelter Reservation System*, <https://secure.rec1.com/FL/pinellas-county-fl/catalog> (last visited Jan. 26, 2023).

available daily at 8:00 a.m.<sup>16</sup> Any new camping sites that become available throughout the day due to a cancellation are randomly released back into inventory following the cancellation.<sup>17</sup>

The maximum length of stay for a single reservation is 14 nights total. After 14 nights, visitors must leave the park for at least three nights before returning for a new stay. Based on availability and once the camper is registered and on-site, the park manager or designee may, at their discretion, extend a camper's current stay up to an additional 14 nights. The maximum continuous length of stay in any one park is 28 nights. Campers are permitted up to 56 nights of total occupancy in any one park in each six-month period, defined as October 1 to March 31, and April 1 to September 30. All campsites or cabins not reserved or occupied may be rented to walk-in visitors on a first-come, first-served basis.<sup>18</sup>

Campsite fees and rental rates vary by park and are generally the same for residents and nonresidents.<sup>19</sup> Only certain Florida citizens—those who are 65 years of age or older, who are disabled, or who operate a licensed family foster home—are eligible for a 50 percent discount.<sup>20</sup> Recipients of such discounts must provide proof of eligibility.<sup>21</sup>

### **Effect of the Bill**

The bill requires the Division of Recreation and Parks to allow individuals to make reservations for state park cabins and campsites, including RV, tent, boat, and equestrian sites, as follows:

- For Florida residents, reservations up to 11 months in advance.
- For nonresidents, reservations up to 10 months in advance.

The bill requires a Florida resident who wishes to book a state park campsite more than 10 months in advance to provide a valid Florida driver license number or the identification number from a Florida identification card as proof of residency when making a reservation.

#### **B. SECTION DIRECTORY:**

Section 1. Amends s. 258.014, F.S., related to use of state parks.

Section 2. Provides an effective date of January 1, 2024.

## **II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT**

#### **A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:**

##### **1. Revenues:**

None.

##### **2. Expenditures:**

Implementation of these changes would require an estimated \$238,000 in nonrecurring contracted services to reconfigure existing software and add additional capabilities to interface with the residency certification data. DEP can absorb this cost within existing departmental resources.

#### **B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:**

##### **1. Revenues:**

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<sup>15</sup> DEP, *Florida State Parks: Reservation Information*, <https://www.floridastateparks.org/reservation-information> (last visited Jan. 26, 2023).

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

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

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

<sup>19</sup> DEP, *Florida State Parks: Fee Schedule*, available at [https://www.floridastateparks.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/2021\\_05\\_10%20FSP%20Fee%20Schedule%2005.2022.pdf](https://www.floridastateparks.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/2021_05_10%20FSP%20Fee%20Schedule%2005.2022.pdf) (last visited Jan. 26, 2023).

<sup>20</sup> *Id.* See also s. 258.016, F.S.

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

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

### III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable. This bill does not appear to require counties or municipalities to spend funds or take action requiring the expenditure of funds; reduce the authority that counties or municipalities have to raise revenues in the aggregate; or reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

### IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

On February 22, 2023, the Agriculture & Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee adopted an amendment and reported the bill favorably as a committee substitute. The amendment:

- Allowed individuals to make reservations for state park cabins as well as campsites, including sites for tent, boat, and equestrian camping.
- Changed the reservation period for Florida residents from 12 months in advance to 11 months in advance.
- Changed the reservation period for non-Florida residents from 11 months in advance to 10 months in advance.
- Eliminated the requirement for a Florida resident to show proof of identification (ID) upon check-in.
- Removed a reference to the Division of Recreation and Parks' state park reservation website.
- Changed the effective date from July 1, 2023 to January 1, 2024.

This analysis is drafted to the committee substitute as approved by the Agriculture & Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee.