

Florida Department of Environmental Protection



Department of Recreation & Parks (DRP)
University of Florida and University of Central Florida

"Wish You Were Here"

Florida State Parks Historic Roadside Attraction Project



March 2015



In the years after World War II and up into the 1960's, there were no interstate highways in Florida and no Turnpike. The main north-south routes were US-1, US-27, US-301, US-441, and US-41. A number of roadside attractions developed along these roads drawing in a steady stream of tourists until the construction of the interstate system and the development of Disney World in 1971. Several of these former attractions, built around freshwater springs, have become today's most popular state parks .





"Wish You Were Here"



Office of Greenways & Trails (OGT) has developed a self-guided itinerary that will use some of these 'back' roads visiting six state parks that were previously old roadside attractions. The route will begin at Wakulla Springs State Park and includes DeLeon Springs, Silver Springs, Weeki Wachee, Rainbow Springs, and Homosassa Springs



"Wish You Were Here"



"Wish You Were Here"

Historic State Park Itinerary Overview

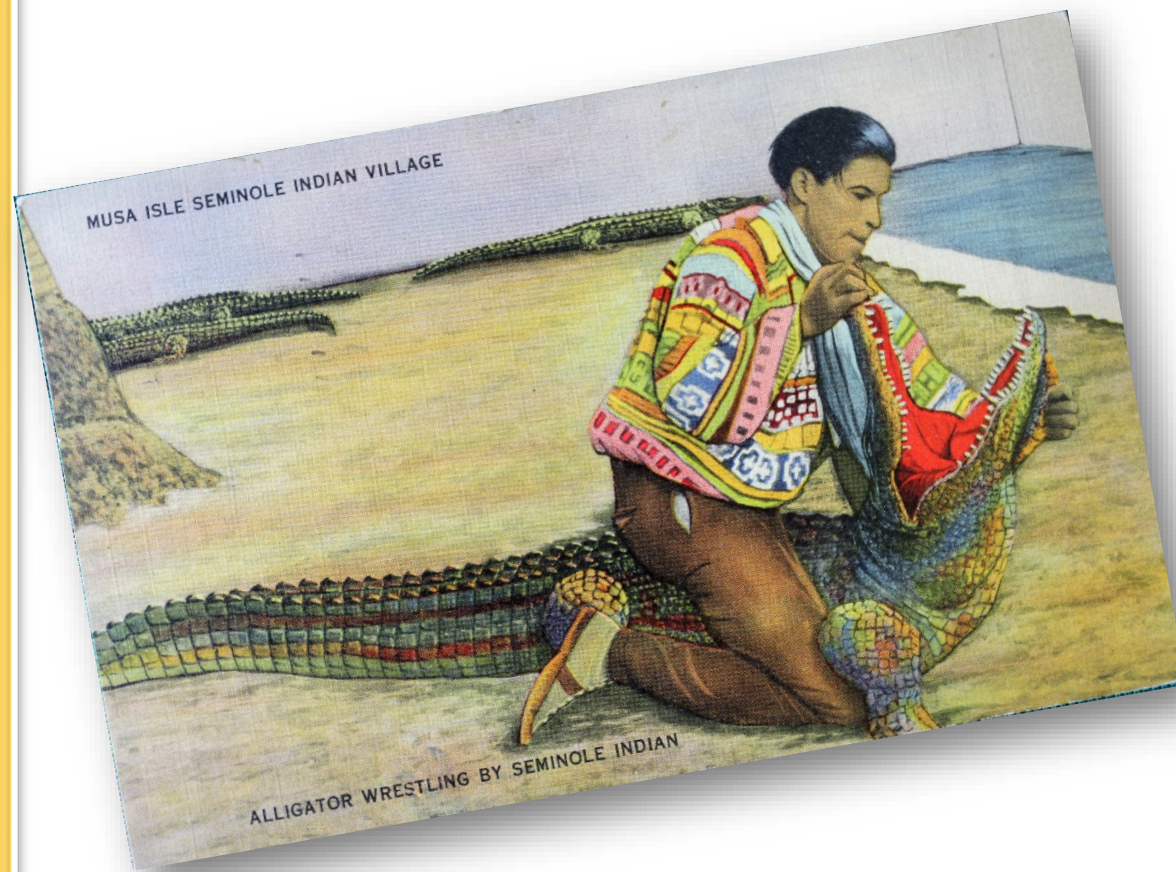
Day 1: Begin your journey at [Wakulla Springs State Park](#), home to one of the largest and deepest fresh-water springs in the world. This park has an abundance of wildlife, including alligators, turtles, deer, and birds. River boat tours bring nature comfortably closer, providing excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing and stunning photos. Swimming is a popular activity during the hot summer months in the spring's sparkling 71-degree water. Wakulla Springs Lodge has retained its historic charm with painted cypress ceilings, period furnishings and an old soda fountain serving up nostalgia by the scoop. It's like stepping into a bygone era. Build up an appetite strolling the shady nature trail along the upland wooded areas of the park and then dine in the historical dining room overlooking the springs.



From a tourist standpoint, Wakulla Springs became a popular destination in the late 1800s, and glass bottom boat tours began around 1925. The spring was developed more heavily as an attraction when Ed Ball, Florida businessman and brother-in-law of billionaire Alfred I. DuPont, purchased the spring and 4,000 acres of the surrounding property in 1934. Ball built a Mediterranean Revival style lodge overlooking the spring in 1937 and hired Newton

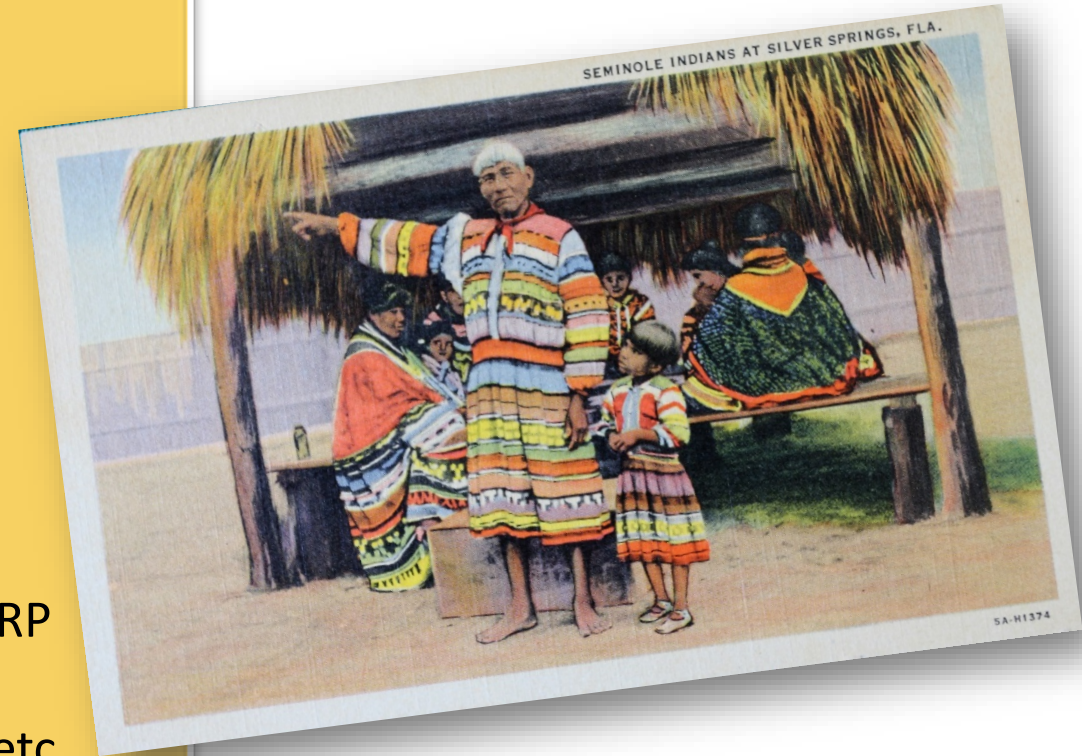
DRP & Academic Partner Roles

- DRP team will act as liaison between universities and six state parks
- Dr. Whitney Sanford will take lead at UF
- Dr. Connie Lester will take lead at UCF
- Student products will include:
 - ADA compliance
 - Sustainability
 - Allow time for internal review process
 - Apply to multiple functions/formats – more “juice for the squeeze”



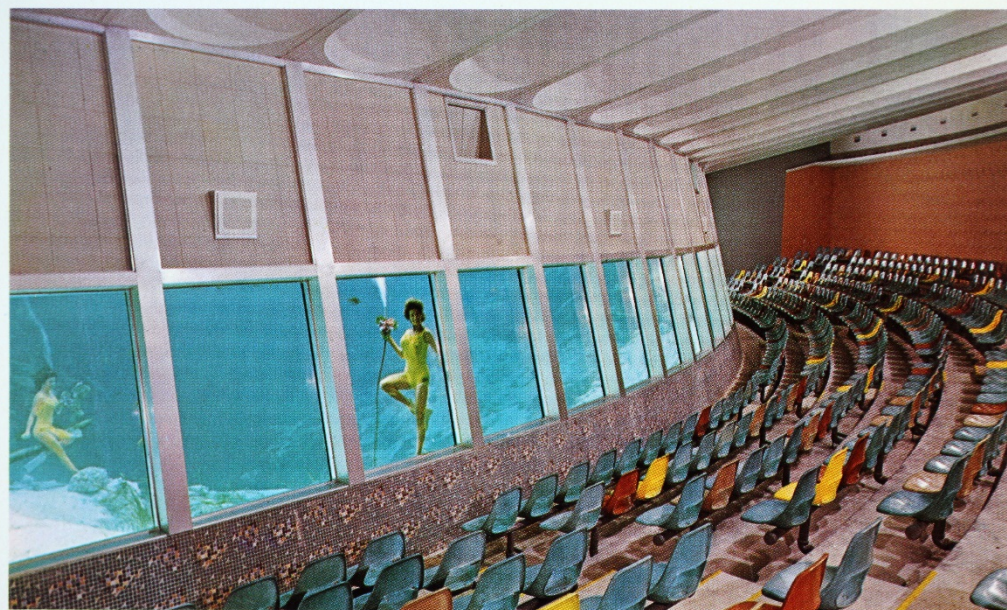
DRP Responsibilities

- Providing ideas for research and product development
- Granting access for student (s), give tour, share archives
- Be part of review process
- House content on park website with assistance from BOS
- Help plan for November 2015 event with assistance of DRP
 - Provide location for 1-2 hour event
 - Can be something already in place – tour, boat ride, etc.



Desired Outcomes

- New, creative interpretive materials
- Promotion of parks
- Continue a partnership with academic institutions
- Develop model for future itinerary support



The Fabulous Underwater Aquaz-Theatre, Weeki Wachee, Florida





"Wish You Were Here"



All six parks need assistance with:

Archiving and digitizing

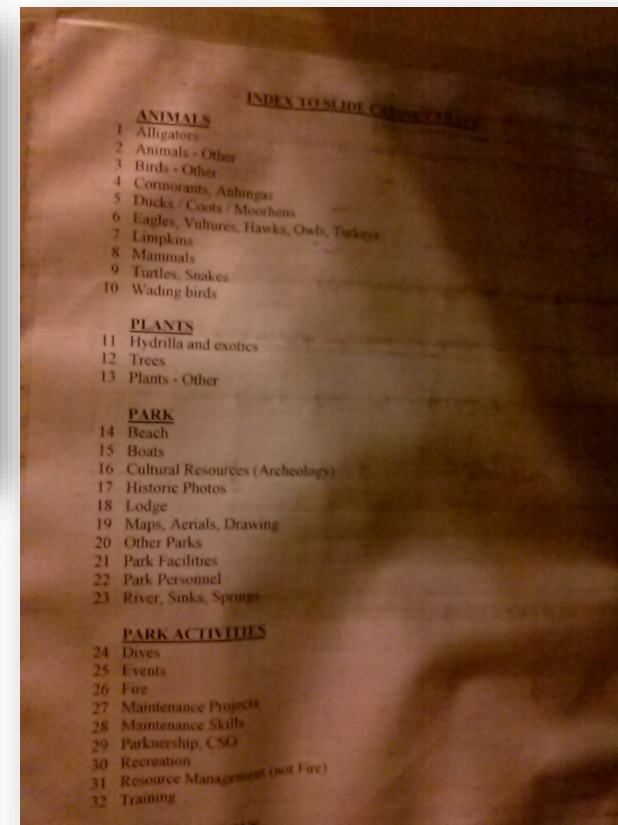
Oral history collection to one degree or another

Virtual tours and other products to support the itinerary



Wakulla Springs State Park

- Several boxes of unknown slides and movie reels to archive & digitize.
- Unknown machinery and mechanical items to identify and archive
- Transparencies need restoring
- Historic lodge is currently undergoing renovations to restore to 1930's décor. Staff to be dressed in period clothing, gift shop and new bar are sourcing locally made items, menu is being restored to original recipes and sourcing local food.



Index of slides to scan

DeLeon Springs State Park

- A good bit of interpretive work has been done. The Visitors Center has good video of the former attraction. The manager, Brian Polk, has been very involved in research and developing materials.
- There are six file boxes of archives-photos, publications, newspaper articles, etc. that need digitizing.



Liz Green Dane waterskiing with
'Queenie'
DeLeon Springs, 1959

Silver Springs State Park

- Huge need for archival help
- Staff is interested in sponsoring an internship
- Paradise Park
- Create permanent story-telling 'booth' to capture stories.
- Interpretation center being developed
- Concessionaire makeover in progress for vintage theme





"Wish You Were Here"



Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park

- Develop virtual tour
- Identify unknown objects and archive



Weeki Wachee State Park

- Two refrigerators stuffed with movie reels & slides. There may be some undiscovered footage of Elvis.
- Need to digitize architectural plans
- There has been little oral history collection here. There are only 3 of the original 'Aquabelle' mermaids left alive.
- There is a lack of materials from the 1980s and 90s



Homosassa Springs

- Assist with scanning and digitizing archive collection
- Update timeline display, make ADA compliant
- Coordinate oral history collection opportunity during Heritage Day, March 14th





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Rainbow Springs State Park

Virtual tour development



Rainbow Springs,
As Seen from Terrace of Rustic Rainbow Lodge
Near Dunnellon, Fla.

Connecting the dots....

Develop two-sided statewide map in style of vintage placemat with scalloped edges, period graphics and colors.

Create games like scavenger hunt or bingo that capture features of remaining roadside 'old Florida' as visitors travel between parks.

Create Junior Ranger component and connect to Geocaching.

Develop 'selfie template' for smart phone using 'Wish You Were Here', maybe appear hand-tinted?





"Wish You Were Here"



Kick-off celebration November 7-11, 2015

- Wakulla Springs
- DeLeon Springs
- Silver Springs
- Rainbow Springs
- Weeki Wachee
- Homosassa Springs



Future itinerary Development

There is mutual interest in developing future itinerary projects such as the CCC/ WPA Legacy . We are very excited about potential opportunities but would like to get this first itinerary completed before we consider future options

