



Nota De Soto

WINTER 2025

Who Are We?

Friends of De Soto National Memorial, Inc. was founded in 2008 with the purpose of supporting the National Park Service's De Soto National Memorial. We are a private non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Florida.

Our purpose and mission statement: ***"To initiate, promote, and support the educational, historical, interpretive, and scientific activities of the De Soto National Memorial."***

Board of Directors: Margo Belaga, Mary Hawk, Ann Marie Shields, Kel Roth

Friends Seek New Friends Membership Opportunity

Please take a moment to read the letter enclosed in this newsletter. More than ever we need your support to provide financial assistance to help rebuild our park. Through your membership or direct donation, you can personally impact the status of De Soto National Memorial. Thank you for your support!

If you are interested in a more active volunteering role or joining the Friends of De Soto National Memorial board, please contact board president Margo Belaga at **941-704-6825**.

What's the Damage?

Help Us ReBuild

De Soto National Memorial is temporarily closed due to unsafe conditions caused by Hurricanes Helene and Milton. With its Manatee River frontage, Hurricane Helene resulted in washed out paths and damage to our Visitor Center, which was surrounded by 20 inches of water, six inches of which found its way inside the building. Hurricane Milton's wind severed electricity, water and sewer services to the Visitor Center. Camp Uzita's buildings and the palisade are still severely damaged, the kayak launch has been washed away, and debris from surrounding homes remains lodged in mangrove roots. The park is hurting.

With all of the devastating news affecting the Park, the good news is our rangers are "on it"! De Soto National Memorial Rangers have community engagements scheduled weekly. They are in the community giving talks, sharing park artifacts, and engaging the public in Native American and wildlife-based art activities. If you are interested in inviting a ranger to your event, please contact Ranger Hollis at Hollis_Hatfield@nps.gov.

There has been an outpouring from park lovers who have volunteered to help restore the park. As soon as it is safe for the public to be onsite, the rangers will let us know. Until then, the best thing that we can do is to let the National Park Service send in their teams of trained personnel and let them get their job done. Then we can all return to the De Soto that we love.



P.O. Box 14422, Bradenton, FL 34280-4422

info@friendsofdesotomemorial.org www.FriendsofDeSotoMemorial.org

A Florida Non-Profit Corporation



Dear Friend of De Soto National Memorial:

In the past, our dear Friends of De Soto National Memorial have stepped up to help our beloved park through many challenges, including government shutdowns, government sequesters, dwindling government funding, Gumbo Limbo tree diseases, and COVID, to name a few. ***Now we ask for your help through the largest disaster to occur to our cherished park – the recent Hurricanes Helene and Milton.*** The hurricanes caused much devastation in the park, and as you probably know, the park has been closed to visitors ever since. We aim to assist the park in reopening, ***but we cannot do it without your help!***

The hurricane flood surge breached the shores and flooded our Visitor Center. The Center has been gutted and will need to be completely rehabilitated. The powerful surge and wind toppled trees, moved and changed the coastline, and lifted and scattered boulders, 300-pound picnic benches, and docks from homes along the shore and threw them haphazardly into the park. Three boats were beached and broken into pieces on the shore of the park. Many of the coastal trails have been obliterated, and new trails must be forged.

But all is not lost. Camp Uzita is bent but not broken, the boardwalk survived, and the main entrance, road and parking area were relatively unscathed (though we lost many trees). The federal government is allocating monies for rebuilding, but the process is slow, and ***the funds will be inadequate to put the park back together.***

The Friends of De Soto National Memorial, Inc. is a nonprofit, volunteer-run organization, created many years ago to support the park and its conservation and educational efforts. It receives no funding from the U.S. government, State of Florida, or Manatee County. ***We depend on our members, who have consistently supported the park and our efforts. And we need you now more than ever!***

The Superintendent of De Soto National Memorial hopes to have the restrooms and some trails open as soon as possible for walkers and dog walkers. Our list of other exciting activities planned for the park this season is indefinitely on hold until sufficient refurbishment is accomplished.

The Friends group hopes to help speed the process along by providing needed funding for the following rebuilding efforts:

- Repairing or replacing the palisades surrounding our living history camp, Camp Uzita;
- Supplying materials to refurbish existing trails and forge new trails to replace those that were damaged or obliterated;
- Supplying riprap and other materials to strengthen the berms and coastline;
- Replacing equipment and supplies, including in the Visitor Center.

Many people have asked how they can volunteer at the park during its closure. Right now, the Superintendent has the manpower in place to replace the foundations of the trails, but will be calling for volunteers at a later date. Stay tuned! The Friends group will keep our members informed about all opportunities and progress at the park.

Please consider joining or re-joining the Friends group this year or making a donation of any level to help the rebuilding effort. Please fill out and return the enclosed form or join at www.FriendsofDeSotoMemorial.org

Thank you,

From the volunteer board of the Friends of De Soto National Memorial



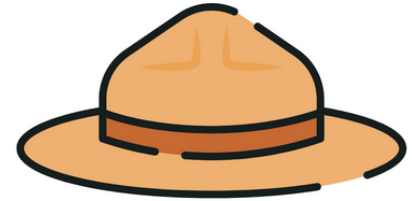
Why Are We a Memorial?

The story of why the Tampa Bay area's only national park is NOT called a park

Do you know why De Soto National Memorial is designated as a “memorial” and not a park?

Here's a **multiple choice quiz** to test your knowledge:

- A) Hernando De Soto is buried here.
- B) Hernando De Soto's pigs are buried here.
- C) We know that this is where De Soto landed in Florida.
- D) The land donated for the park used to be a cemetery.
- E) None of the above.



The correct answer is “E) None of the above.”

To understand this, we need to look at how National Park Service sites are named. Here are the three most common designations and what they include.

National Park

A national park contains a variety of resources and encompasses large land or water areas to help provide adequate protection of the resources.

National parks can only be created by Congress and are managed by NPS for the enjoyment of the public and to preserve them for future generations. Hunting, mining, and consumptive activities—like logging and grazing—are not authorized.

National Monument

A national monument is intended to preserve at least one nationally significant resource. It is usually smaller than a national park and lacks its diversity of attractions. As directed by the Secretary of the Interior, many national monuments are managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

The Antiquities Act of 1906 authorizes the U.S. President to declare by public proclamation landmarks, structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest situated on lands owned or controlled by the government to be national monuments or memorials.

National Memorial

A national memorial is a primarily commemorative site, often focused on a historical person or tragic event. It need not be a site or structure historically associated with its subjects.

For example, the home of Abraham Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois is a National Historic Site, but the Lincoln Memorial in the District of Columbia is a National Memorial because it commemorates Lincoln's life and presidency.

We are a national memorial because our site commemorates Hernando de Soto's 1539 landing in Florida and his expedition throughout the Southeast. There is no evidence that De Soto actually landed here, although he may have at some point in his expedition traversed this area. The possibility that De Soto did not land exactly at this site in no way detracts from the rich history of the area, which includes the following:

- The extensive and thriving Native American population that made its home here before the arrival of Europeans and how that population was decimated by conquest and disease
- Spain ceding Florida to the U.S. and withdrawing to Cuba
- The impact on this area of the Seminole Wars
- The Armed Occupation Act and its role in bringing settlers to this area
- The Civil War conflicts in the area
- Cattle drives from interior Florida to our deep water cove to allow shipment of beef to Cuba and beyond



Ranger Spotlight: Hollis Hatfield

Ranger Hollis Hatfield was a wildlife biologist before she knew what one was. She loved watching nature and was quick to let her childhood neighbors know which ones were the “good snakes”.

In high school, Hollis volunteered for the North Carolina Museum of Natural Science as a Junior Curator. Educating others about the wild things that she loved so much led Hollis to earn both a Bachelor of Science and a master’s degree in Wildlife Biology.

Her career has included time with National Wildlife Refuges and other U.S. Fish and Wildlife locations. As her personal career goals blossomed, she realized she was most happy when engaging others in the wonders of nature. This led her to the National Park Service, where her first assignment was at Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve.

We are lucky to have welcomed Ranger Hollis to De Soto National Memorial in 2022. She has been busy as the park’s Community Engagement Ranger, bringing park artifacts and wildlife education beyond the confines of De Soto National Memorial and into our community.

From school presentations and library talks to wildlife based art activities, Ranger Hollis is excited to share the wonders of De Soto National Memorial with our Gulf Coast community.

Ranger Hollis can be reached via email at Hollis_Hatfield@nps.gov

Invite her to your next event!

Pictured Right: Ranger Hollis next to a barred owl.
Photo Credit: Willow Kessel



Become a member!

Yes, I would like to support my National Park by becoming a member of the Friends of De Soto National Memorial, Inc.

Memberships are tax deductible. (Check one.)

- Individual.....\$25.00
- Family.....\$40.00
- Business.....\$75.00
- Senior (65+).....\$20.00
- Sponsor.....\$100.00+ \$_____

My check for \$_____, (membership renewal plus an additional donation if desired) made out to “Friends of De Soto NM” is enclosed. Please send membership materials to the name and address below:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

I would like to help! (Check all that apply.)

- Membership Committee
- Publicity Committee
- Fundraising/Special Event Committee

Detach and mail to:

Friends of De Soto National Memorial
P.O. Box 14422, Bradenton, FL, 34280-4422

Or join online at:

www.friendsofdesotomemorial.org

Thank you!

The Friends of De Soto National Memorial, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization.



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