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**FLORIDA'S STATE PARKS WELCOME WEEKI WACHEE SPRINGS**  
*-One of Florida's oldest tourist attractions joins state park system-*

**SPRING HILL** – The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Florida State Parks welcomes Weeki Wachee Springs as the newest unit in the state park system. State Park management of the site not only protects the integrity of this well-known first magnitude spring, it also preserves one of Florida's oldest tourist attractions.

“We are pleased to welcome Weeki Wachee Springs as the 160th state park in Florida's award-winning state park system,” said DEP Deputy Secretary Bob Ballard. “Adding Weeki Wachee Springs to the Florida State Park system has been a cooperative effort between all of the parties involved and we are truly excited to be a part of preserving this unique piece of Florida history.”

Weeki Wachee Springs, “The Only City of Live Mermaids,” is a famous Florida attraction located in Hernando County. As one of Florida's 33 first-magnitude springs, Weeki Wachee is a valuable natural and cultural resource. The attraction, established in 1946, turned the spring into an underwater mermaid show which garnered increased attention and fame into the 1960s.

“The addition of Weeki Wachee Springs will add a new dimension to the state park system” said Florida Park Service Director Mike Bullock. “The historic mermaid show and the first-magnitude spring are welcome additions that will be preserved for generations.”

The first two-time Gold Medal winner honoring the nation's best state park service, Florida's state park system is one of the largest in the country with 160 parks spanning nearly 700,000 acres and 100 miles of sandy white beach. From swimming and diving in Florida's rivers and springs to birding and fishing or hiking and riding on natural scenic trails, Florida's state parks offer year-around outdoor activities for all ages and abilities. Battle re-enactments and Native American festivals celebrate Florida's unique history, while art shows, museums and lighthouses offer a window into Florida's cultural heritage. Florida's state parks are also home to the 2008 Best Beach in the nation, Caladesi Island State Park, located off the coast of Southwest Florida in Pinellas County.

For more information about Florida State Parks, visit [www.floridastateparks.org](http://www.floridastateparks.org). For more information about Weeki Wachee Springs, visit [www.weekiwachee.com/](http://www.weekiwachee.com/).