



**Florida Department of Environmental Protection
CITIZEN SUPPORT ORGANIZATION
2024 LEGISLATIVE REPORT
(pursuant to Section 20.058 Florida Statutes)**

Citizen Support Organization (CSO) Name: [FRIENDS OF THE GTM RESERVE](#)

Mailing Address: [450 GUANA RIVER ROAD, PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FL 32082](#)

Telephone Number: [\(904\) 380-8600](#)

Website Address *(required if applicable)*: [GTMNERR.ORG](#)

Check to confirm your Code of Ethics is posted conspicuously on your website.

Statutory Authority:

Section 20.2551, F.S., Citizen support organizations; use of property; audit; public records; partnerships. In summary, the statute specifies the organizational requirements, operational parameters, duties of a CSO to support the Department of Environmental Protection (Department), or individual units of the Department, use of Department property, audit requirements, public records requirements, and authorizes public-private partnerships to enhance lands managed by the Department.

Section 20.058, F.S., Citizen support and direct-support organizations. In summary, the statute specifies the organizational requirements to submit an annual report each year for each designated CSO and to post that information on the Departments website.

YOUR MISSION AND LAST CALENDAR YEAR'S PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

CSO's Mission: (Consistent with your Articles and Bylaws)

The Friends of the GTM Reserve mission is to support and enhance environmental education, stewardship of natural and cultural resources, and scientific research of the GTM NERR through volunteer initiatives, citizen involvement, and community partnerships.

Describe Last Calendar Year's Results Obtained: Brag! (List or discuss the past calendar year's accomplishments and contributions. Cite specific support from last calendar year's Annual Program Plan.)

In the past calendar year, Friends of GTM (Guana Tolomato Matanzas) made significant strides in organizational growth and development. Here are the key accomplishments:

1. ****Hiring of a New Executive Director**:** Friends of GTM welcomed a new executive director who brought fresh leadership and vision to the organization, ensuring continued progress and alignment with the mission.
2. ****Initiating a Communication Initiative**:** To enhance outreach and engagement with stakeholders, Friends of GTM launched a comprehensive communication initiative. This included updating their digital presence, improving social media strategies, and increasing the frequency and quality of updates to members and the community.

3. **Successful Strategic Planning and Budget Approval**: The organization completed a successful strategic planning process that outlined clear goals and objectives for the future. This plan was accompanied by the approval of a new budget, ensuring that resources were allocated effectively to support these goals.

4. **Recruiting a New Treasurer**: Friends of GTM strengthened its leadership team by recruiting a new treasurer, who brought valuable financial expertise and oversight to the organization's operations.

5. **Partnership with the Guy Harvey Foundation**: A new partnership was established with the Guy Harvey Foundation, focusing on collaborative efforts in marine conservation and education. This partnership aimed to enhance the impact of both organizations through shared resources and initiatives.

6. **Securing Funds for a New UTV**: The organization successfully secured funding to purchase a new Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV). This addition to their equipment inventory will support conservation efforts, including habitat restoration and management activities.

7. **Partnership with the Surfing's Evolution and Preservation Foundation**: Friends of GTM formed a partnership with the Surfing's Evolution and Preservation Foundation, aimed at promoting coastal conservation and the cultural heritage of surfing. This collaboration was designed to leverage shared interests and engage a broader audience.

8. **Supporting a Graduate Fellow at UNF**: Friends of GTM continued its commitment to education by supporting a graduate fellow at the University of North Florida (UNF). This fellowship provided funding for research and professional development in fields relevant to GTM's mission.

9. **Fully Funding a Research Project with Villanova University**: In a significant achievement, the organization fully funded a research project in collaboration with Villanova University. This project, titled Roots & Rakes, received nearly \$200,000 in funding and aimed to advance scientific understanding and practical conservation outcomes.

Roots and Rakes is a project in direct response to the outcomes of Experimenting with Elevation, in which we determined that boat wakes may be driving oyster shell accumulation along the banks of the Intracoastal Waterway in the GTMNERR. These oyster shell berms, or rakes, can impact marsh health and nutrient cycling, thereby resulting in increased wetland vulnerability. Using pilot sites along the intracoastal waterway, we hope to explore the impacts of shell rakes on marsh health and nutrient cycling.

These accomplishments reflect Friends of GTM's dedication to conservation, education, and community engagement, positioning the organization for continued success and impact in the years to come.

Describe the CSO's Plans for the Next Three Calendar Years:

Over the next three years, Friends of GTM (Guana Tolomato Matanzas) has set forth an ambitious and strategic plan to enhance its impact and sustainability. Here are the key initiatives and goals outlined in their plan:

1. **Increasing Membership**: Friends of GTM aims to grow its membership base significantly. This will involve targeted outreach campaigns, membership drives, and the implementation of new benefits and engagement opportunities for members. By expanding the community of supporters, the organization hopes to increase volunteer involvement and financial contributions.

2. ****Automating Parking Fees****: To streamline operations and improve visitor experience, Friends of GTM plans to automate the collection of parking fees. This initiative will involve installing automated payment systems at parking areas, reducing manual labor and making the process more convenient for visitors.
3. ****Establishing a Line of Merchandise****: The organization intends to create and launch a line of branded merchandise. This will include apparel, accessories, and other items that promote the Friends of GTM brand. Merchandise sales will provide an additional revenue stream and help raise awareness of the organization's mission.
4. ****Increasing Summer Camp Revenues****: By enhancing and expanding their summer camp programs, Friends of GTM aims to boost revenues from these educational offerings. This will involve introducing new camp themes, improving marketing efforts, and possibly extending the duration or number of sessions available.
5. ****Establishing Significant Community Partnerships and a Business Consortium****: Friends of GTM plans to develop significant partnerships with community organizations and businesses. This includes forming a consortium of businesses that will support the reserve over the next ten years. Such collaborations will provide mutual benefits and foster a strong network of local support for conservation efforts.
6. ****Developing a Fundraising Plan for a New Research and Education Building****: In partnership with the University of North Florida (UNF), Friends of GTM will develop a comprehensive fundraising plan to support the construction of a new research and education building. This facility will serve as a hub for scientific research, environmental education, and community engagement.
7. ****Creating and Offering Public Courses****: Collaborating with local experts, Friends of GTM will develop and offer a series of educational courses to the public. Planned courses include fishing clinics, birding workshops, and "Estuary 1001," which will provide participants with a foundational understanding of estuarine ecosystems. These courses aim to enhance community knowledge and appreciation of local natural resources.

These strategic initiatives are designed to ensure the long-term sustainability and growth of Friends of GTM, enhancing their ability to conserve natural resources, educate the public, and engage the community in meaningful ways.

CSO's LAST CALENDAR YEAR STATISTICS:

Total Number of CSO General Membership: 225

Total Number of Board of Directors: 12

Total Volunteer Hours for the Board of Directors: 792

ORCP & CSO RELATIONSHIP:

Don't duplicate by describing accomplishments and contributions in the summary. Brag in the above Results Obtained. Describe the relationship here.

Manager's Comments on the CSO & ORCP Relationship and Support:

Provide your perspective on:

- Changing developments of the managed area(s) provided by the CSO.

- CSO-led summer camps are highly effective in providing education about the GTM NERR and the CSO has worked hard this year to increase staffing so more campers can attend.
- The CSO increased outreach activities to promote the organization and its mission to support the Reserve, including booths at the Guana dam, trailhead and at local farmers markets

- **Effectiveness of the organization in fulfilling their purpose to support the managed area(s).**

While the funding information requested and provided herein shows details on how the Friends supported the public use access area at the Guana Preserve, it is not obvious how much the Friends supported the core components of a National Estuarine Research Reserve; Research, Stewardship, and Education. Program expenditures supported the stakeholder-driven Research Program via equipment, training, a fellowship for a University of North Florida student and a contract supporting scientists from Villanova University and University of Central Florida to investigate the health of coastal marshes. Particularly helpful this year was the acquisition of a utility vehicle to conduct marine turtle nesting surveys and maintain public use areas. Additionally, the CSO provided funding for a new radio tower when the old tower was condemned and no longer functional. The radio tower provides a mechanism for on-site communication among park rangers, which is critical for public safety.

- **Effectiveness of the Board of Directors in completing their Annual Program Plan.**

The turnover of the Executive Director interrupted much of last year's plan, though some activities like summer camp, management of the on-site concessionaire, and the Friends annual fundraiser were achieved. ORCP looks forward to reviewing next year's program plan.

- **The relationship between ORCP team and CSO. What went well? Are there areas of improvement?**

The Friends of the GTM Reserve continues to be a critical component to effectively and efficiently running the GTM National Estuarine Research Reserve through open communication with Reserve staff along with trust and a mutual desire to accomplish the goals of the GTM Management Plan.

CSO President's Comments on the CSO & ORCP Relationship and Support:

Provide your perspective on the relationship between the ORCP and CSO. What went well? Are there areas of improvement?

The relationship between Friends and the GTM NERR continues to be one built on transparency and communication. We believe the following are what makes the relationship between the Friends and GTM a success:

- GTM leadership team works effectively with Friends staff and board, resulting in clear messaging and a solid understanding of the needs of the Reserve.
- Friends staff and board are knowledgeable of GTM management and work plans, therefore ensuring the Friends provide needed support and resources.
- The Friends strategic plan is developed annually in conjunction with GTM leadership and in response to the GTM work plan.
- The Friends follow a written set of core values that dictate its actions and decision-making:
 - **Support of Science.** The GTM Research Reserve's mission is to achieve the conservation of natural biodiversity and cultural resources by using the results of research and monitoring to guide science-based stewardship and education strategies. With that, it is our role as their Citizen Support Organization to support the use of science as the guiding principle in how we advocate and communicate on behalf of the GTM Research Reserve.
 - **Agility and Responsiveness.** As a Citizen Support Organization of the GTM Research Reserve, Friends exist to bridge the gap in funding and provide resources

when they are needed most. To do that, we must be agile, responsive, and willing to change course quickly to support the GTM NERR's most urgent needs.

SUMMARIZE FINANCIAL ACTIVITY FOR LAST CALENDAR YEAR, DIRECT SUPPORT & REVENUES:

Program Service Expenses are costs related to providing your organization's programs or services in accordance with your mission. Describe and provide expenses that directly support the managed area(s). For established nonprofit organizations, program service expenses generally represent most of the overall expense of the organization. For the last calendar year provide description and total \$ for each that apply. Replace examples with your information.

Building improvement, construction, or renovations	\$1,596.94
Cultural resources (e.g., historic structure restoration/ renovation)	\$0
Natural resources (e.g., native plants, natural lands restoration)	\$239,966.37
Maintenance equipment (e.g., mowers, chippers, blowers, chainsaws)	\$0
Other facilities and landscape maintenance	\$7,411.85
Vehicles (e.g., trucks/cars, UTVs, golf carts, accessible devices, etc.)	\$728.80
Amenities (e.g., water fountains, benches, picnic tables, recreational equipment, kiosks etc.)	\$135.99
ORCP employees or volunteers support (e.g., interns, training, uniforms, awards, or recognition)	\$36,987.14
Big ticket visitor center exhibits or interpretation updates	\$0
Managed area exhibits, displays, signage	\$3,894.68
Managed area publications, brochures, maps, etc	\$475.60
Programming/interpretation support material purchases	\$28,823.46
Other program services	\$180,606.77
Total Program Service Expenses	\$500,627.60*

Visitor Services Revenue

Describe revenues and the sources generated from fundraising on managed area property. Replace examples with your information.

Gift shops, craft stores, and concession sales	\$3000.00
Merchandise sales (e.g., plants, firewood, ice, t-shirts, hats, etc.)	\$1,410.22
Programs and Special Events (e.g., fundraising workshops, seasonal events, concerts, etc.)	\$111,970.34
Vending (e.g., drink machines, penny press, laundry, Wifi, etc.)	\$0
Rentals (e.g., bikes, canoe, kayak, SUPs, etc.)	\$0
Managed area donation boxes	\$1,637.90
Other visitor services revenue	\$272,498.08
Total Visitor Services Revenue	\$390,516.54*

NET ASSETS: \$766,868.74*


Organizations end of last year's Total Liabilities minus Total Assets. This is not the above's Visitor Service Revenue minus Program Service Expenses.

CSO AUDIT THRESHOLD:

Last Calendar Year's Total Expenses (including grants) \$ 721,006.10*

Are the CSO's annual total expenses \$300,000 including grants? Then Section 215.981(2), Florida Statute requires an independent CPA audit using Government Audit Standards ([U.S. GAO Yellow Book](#)). The audit is **due by September 1** (or 9 months after the CSO's calendar year ends) to the Florida Auditor General and to the Department.

**2023 FINANCIAL NUMBERS HAVE NOT YET BEEN AUDITED*

This information is complete to the best of my knowledge pursuant to Section 20.058 Florida Statutes		
Title	Name Signature	Date
CSO President	Steve Swann 	05-17-24

ORCP Manager	Lia Sansom 	05-21-24
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CSO's Code of Ethics is attached

CSO has attached the most recent Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 990, 990-EZ, or 990-N receipt. All IRS Form 990's must be *complete* with Part III Program Service and *all* appropriate Schedules (A, O and others as appropriate). If filing an IRS extension, attach the IRS 8868 receipt and the most recent complete 990 and schedules.

CODE OF ETHICS

FRIENDS OF GUANA TOLOMATO MATANZAS NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE, INC.

PREAMBLE

- 1) It is essential to the proper conduct and operation of the Friends of the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve, Inc. (herein "CSO") that its board members, officers, and employees by independent and impartial and that their position not be used for private gain. Therefore, the Florida Legislature in Section 112.3251, Florida Statute (Fla. Stat.), requires that the law protect against any conflict of interest and establish standards for the conduct of CSO board members, officers, and employees in situations where conflicts may exist.
- 2) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the state that no CSO board member, officer, or employee shall have any interest, financial or otherwise, direct or indirect, or incur any obligation know of any nature which is in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of his or her duties for the CSO. To implement this policy and strengthen the faith and confidence of the people in Citizen Support Organizations, there is enacted a code of ethics setting forth standards of conduct required of the Friends of the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve, Inc. board members, officers, and employees in the performance of their official duties.

STANDARDS

The following standards of conduct are enumerated in Chapter 112, Fla. Stat., and are required by Section 112.3251, Fla. Stat., to be observed by CSO board members, officers, and employees.

1. Prohibition of Solicitation or Acceptance of Gifts

No CSO board member, officer, or employee shall solicit or accept anything of value to the recipient, including a gift, loan, and reward, promise of future employment, favor, or service, based upon any understanding that the vote, official action, or judgment of the CSO board member, officer, or employee would be influenced thereby.

2. Prohibition of Accepting Compensation Given to Influence a Vote

No CSO board member, officer, or employee shall accept any compensation, payment, or thing of value when the person knows, or, with reasonable care, should know that it was given to influence a vote or other action in which the CSO board member, officer, or employee was expected to participate in his or her official capacity.

3. Salary and Expenses

No CSO board member or officer shall be prohibited from voting on a matter affecting his or her salary, expenses, or other compensation as a CSO board member or officer, as provided by law.

4. Prohibition of Misuse of Position

A CSO board member, officer, or employee shall not corruptly use or attempt to use one's official position or any property or resource which may be within one's trust, or perform official duties, privilege, benefit, or exemption.

5. Prohibition of Misuse of Privileged Information

No CSO board member, officer, or employee shall disclose or use information not available to members of the general public and gained by reason of one's official position for one's own personal gain or benefit or for the personal gain or benefit of any other person or business entity.

6. Post-Office / Employment Restrictions

A person who has been elected to any CSO board or office or who is employed by a CSO may not personally represent another person or entity for compensation before the governing body of the CSO of which he or she was a board member, officer, or employee for a period of two years after he or she vacates that office or employment position.

7. Prohibition of Employees Holding Office

No person may be, at one time, both a CSO employee and a CSO board member at the same time.

8. Requirements to Abstain From Voting

A CSO board member or officer shall not vote in official capacity upon any measure which would affect his or her special private gain or loss, or which he or she knows would affect the special gain or any principal by whom the board member or officer is retained. When abstaining, the CSO board member or officer, prior to the vote being taken, shall make every reasonable effort to disclose the nature of his or her interest as a public record in a memorandum filed with the person responsible for recording the minutes of the meeting, who shall incorporate the memorandum in the minutes. It is not possible for the CSO board member or officer to file a memorandum before the vote, the memorandum must be filed with the person responsible for recording the minutes of the meeting no later than 15 days after the vote.

9. Failure to Observe CSO Code of Ethics

Failure of a CSO board member, officer, or employee may result in the removal of that person from their position. Further, failure of the CSO to observe the Code of Ethics may result in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection terminating its Agreement with the CSO.

Acknowledgement and General Information for Taxpayers Who File Returns Electronically

Thank you for taking part in the IRS e-file Program.

Friends of Guana Tolomato Matanzas
505 Guana River Road
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

- [X] Your Form 8868, Application for Extension of Time to File an Exempt Organization Return for tax year ending December 31, 2023 is being filed electronically with the IRS by the services of The Forde Firm LLC.
- [X] Your extension was accepted by the IRS on 03/28/24 and the Submission Identification Number assigned to your extension is 59429920240880066039.

Since you are filing your extension electronically, PLEASE DO NOT SEND A PAPER COPY OF YOUR EXTENSION TO THE IRS. IF YOU DO, IT WILL DELAY THE PROCESSING OF THE EXTENSION.

Acknowledgement Process

The IRS will notify your electronic return originator when they accept your extension, usually within 48 hours. If your extension was not accepted, IRS will notify your electronic return originator of the reasons for rejection.

2024 FLORIDA NOT FOR PROFIT CORPORATION ANNUAL REPORT

DOCUMENT# N00000006437

Entity Name: FRIENDS OF GUANA TOLOMATO MATANZAS NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE, INC.

FILED
Mar 07, 2024
Secretary of State
4616376308CC

Current Principal Place of Business:

450 GUANA RIVER ROAD
PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FL 32082

Current Mailing Address:

450 GUANA RIVER ROAD
PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FL 32082

FEI Number: 91-2081432

Certificate of Status Desired: No

Name and Address of Current Registered Agent:

BAYER, DENNIS K
306 SOUTH OCEANSHORE BLVD
FLAGLER BEACH, FL 32136 US

The above named entity submits this statement for the purpose of changing its registered office or registered agent, or both, in the State of Florida.

SIGNATURE:

Electronic Signature of Registered Agent

Date

Officer/Director Detail :

Title SECRETARY
Name FEENEY, WILLIAM
Address 450 GUANA RIVER ROAD
City-State-Zip: PONTE VEDRA BEACH FL 32082

Title PRESIDENT
Name SWANN, STEVE
Address 450 GUANA RIVER ROAD
City-State-Zip: PONTE VEDRA BEACH FL 32082

Title EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Name VIGER, DALE
Address 450 GUANA RIVER ROAD
City-State-Zip: PONTE VEDRA BEACH FL 32082

Title TREASURER
Name STEELE, ROBERT
Address 450 GUANA RIVER ROAD
City-State-Zip: PONTE VEDRA BEACH FL 32082

Title VP
Name DEO, YASH
Address 450 GUANA RIVER DRIVE
City-State-Zip: PONTE VERDA BEACH FL 32082

I hereby certify that the information indicated on this report or supplemental report is true and accurate and that my electronic signature shall have the same legal effect as if made under oath; that I am an officer or director of the corporation or the receiver or trustee empowered to execute this report as required by Chapter 617, Florida Statutes; and that my name appears above, or on an attachment with all other like empowered.

SIGNATURE: DALE VIGER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

03/07/2024

Electronic Signature of Signing Officer/Director Detail

Date