



**Florida Department of Environmental Protection
CITIZEN SUPPORT ORGANIZATION
2022 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: [\(904\) 823-4526](#)

Website Address (required if applicable): <https://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.*

2021 introduced a "new normal" post-COVID, and the Friends of the GTM Reserve adapted and accomplished much to support the NERR.

Friends officers and directors provided support by attending monthly business meetings, representing the GTM NERR at community events (both in-person and virtual), and in groups such as the Management Advisory Group. In addition, Friends used social media to raise awareness of the GTM NERR and created partnerships with community and corporate stakeholders. The Friends board held their annual Strategic Planning Retreat in November, where they reviewed the Strategic Plan and approved the annual operations budget.

Due to the Friend's ability to financially manage grants, the GTM NERR has expanded its research, education, and stewardship programs. Grants included: NERRS Science Collaborative grants, education grants, and water quality research grants. The Friends were also able to fully fund a Graduate Research Fellow from the University of North Florida, Anne Hurley. Ms. Hurley's research is titled "*Algae of GTM NERR: Cyanobacterial Diversity and Ephyphyte Responses to Nutrient Additions*". This project began in Fall 2021 and will continue into 2023.

Staff at the GTM NERR have attended certification classes, workshops, and conferences relevant to the GTM NERR mission, published research papers, and maintained memberships in organizations and groups using funds provided by Friends and their supporters.

The Friends provide software and technology support to the GTM NERR's staff through grants from Adobe, Grammarly, and Canva, and through the purchase of software platforms including Little Green Light CRM, Zoom, and Padlet. The Friends also provide Wi-Fi and internet access for the public at the GTM Visitor Center, Guana Dam, and dormitories.

The Friends continued to create a culture of collaboration between Friends members, officers, directors, and the GTM Research Reserve staff to improve and support program outcomes. The Friends organized meet-and-greets with GTM program managers, Friends board members, and essential volunteers to accomplish this. Program managers also had the opportunity to brainstorm with Friends members and officers to help build partnerships in the community and build support for the programs.

The Friends have entered the fifth year of their partnership with Guana Outpost South to provide recreational amenities and improve the visitor experience at the GTM NERR. Amenities include kayak rentals, stand-up paddleboard rentals, bike rentals, bait and tackle, and recreational merchandise. Proceeds from the partnership help fund programs at the Reserve.

The Friends of the GTM Reserve increased their engagement with community organizations to build recognition and partnerships for the GTM NERR. Organizations include St. Augustine Visitors and Convention Bureau, Rotary International, St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, the Cultural Council of St. Johns County, St. Johns County Audubon, Jacksonville Running Club, Local Initiatives Support Corporation of Jacksonville (LISC), the Duval County Newtown Success Zone, and St. Johns County Schools. The Friends Corporate Partnership Program continues to provide unrestricted funding for GTM NERR programs from businesses in the region, including Baptist Health, Rayonier, Universal Solar Direct, Herbie Wiles Insurance, MJW Consolidated, Anderson Financial Partners, UltraTech, Panorama Properties, and Northrop Grumman. The Friends also continued fundraising for the sea turtle patrol through the Adopt-A-Nest Program.

The Friends continued their support of the GTM for All Initiative, which seeks to improve accessibility and enhance programming for people who may not have the ability to access the Reserve and its programs. Communities include people with physical and developmental disabilities, students with autism and from Title I schools, the elderly, and people with mobility issues. The Friends provided funding for education programs, training, and certifications. In addition, the Friends have hosted events for the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities program in conjunction with the GTM NERR Education team. With the support of Friends, GTM NERR created curricula and programming for students who are deaf or are low-hearing and purchased specialized equipment for students who are blind or are low-vision so that they can participate in water quality research with the education team.

As on-site activities resumed, GTM volunteers picked up where they had left off pre-COVID to assist and support GTM NERR staff. Volunteer activities in 2021 included: guided beach and trail hikes, ranger support, amphibian monitoring, sea turtle patrol, public outreach at festivals and community events, and outreach tabling at the GTM NERR trailhead and Visitor Center.

Looking forward, we anticipate that 2022 will bring an increase in events, activities, and programming that benefit the GTM NERR and the community.

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

2022 Objectives and Goals

The Friends of the GTM Reserve board of directors has defined the following objectives and goals based on the GTM Research Reserve's Management Plan, program work plans, and most relevant needs. Goals shall be assessed as of the end of the calendar year.

Objective 1 Governance Best Practices: Improve existing nonprofit guidelines and develop governance best practices in order to become a stronger and more sustainable Citizen Support Organization for the GTM Research Reserve.

- **Goal 1.1:** Recruit members who bring a diversity of thought and experience to the conversation
- **Goal 1.2:** Develop, launch, and analyze a comprehensive member value survey
- **Goal 1.3:** Improve committee structure and effectiveness
- **Goal 1.4:** Conduct an annual Executive Director performance review

Objective 2 Culture of Collaboration: Create a culture of collaboration between the Friends members and GTM Research Reserve staff in order to improve and support program outcomes.

- **Goal 2.1:** Hold two collaboration events with program managers, Friends board members, key volunteers, and management advisory group members to better understand program needs and resources available.
- **Goal 2.2:** Host program managers at Friends board meetings to understand how the Friends can assist with their program needs
- **Goal 2.3:** Participate in at least two GTM program efforts and/or field experiences
- **Goal 2.4:** Assist GTM leadership in land acquisition efforts as needed

Objective 3 Engagement with Individuals and Businesses: Increase engagement with individuals, families, businesses, and organizations to drive fundraising and volunteerism that supports the GTM Research Reserve programs.

- **Goal 3.1:** Develop and foster relationships with six community stakeholder groups
- **Goal 3.2:** Develop and implement a member stewardship program
- **Goal 3.3:** Hold four members-only receptions focusing on GTM management priorities

Objective 4 Outreach and Communications: Develop a strong outreach and communications program that aligns with the GTM Research Reserve and leverages the expertise and reach of our Friends members.

- **Goal 4.1:** Develop a volunteer outreach program and participate in six external events
- **Goal 4.2:** Develop a volunteer speaker's bureau and make presentations for at least six organizations
- **Goal 4.3:** Redevelop and launch an updated website
- **Goal 4.4:** Provide content for external publications and internal blog/social media posts

Objective 5 Financial Sustainability: Ensure the financial sustainability of the Friends to provide continued support for the GTM Research Reserve's programs.

- **Goal 5.1:** Meet revenue and expense goals as detailed in the 2022 Friends budget
- **Goal 5.2:** Increase the number of Friends members by fifteen percent over the previous year
- **Goal 5.3:** Secure ten corporate sponsors and/or philanthropic partners
- **Goal 5.4:** Create a Parking Solutions ad hoc committee

Objective 6 Diversity and Equity: Promote and champion diversity, equity, and inclusion by proactively recruiting, engaging, and serving the people who comprise the Reserve's diverse community of stakeholders who rely on and benefit from the Reserve's ecosystem services.

- **Goal 6.1:** Develop and implement an outreach program for underserved communities
- **Goal 6.2:** Develop and implement an outreach program to engage with disenfranchised end-users of GTM's amenities

CSO's LAST CALENDAR YEAR STATISTICS:

Total Number of CSO General Membership: 268

Total Number of Board of Directors: 15

Total Volunteer Hours for the Board of Directors (Work with your ORCP volunteer manager): 925

ORCP & CSO RELATIONSHIP:

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

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

Provide your perspective on:

- ***Changing developments of the managed area provided by the CSO.***
During the first half of 2021, most of the reserve staff continued to work from home, except resource management and public use staff, the manager, and other support staff. Office space was expanded so each employee could work in a space that kept them a minimum of six feet from others to prevent the spread of germs once all employees returned in May and June 2021. The Friends were immensely helpful in this by funding office furniture and barriers to completing this project.
- ***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. Funds spent in these categories often get relegated to "other". Approximately 30% of program expenditures supported the stakeholder-driven Research Program via equipment, training, and a fellowship for a University of North Florida student to investigate water quality conditions and impacts on the locally popular Guana Lake and River. Almost 40% supported education programs via equipment, software, and contractors to help pivot hands-on environmental learning to the hybrid virtual and in-situ programs demanded as COVID restrictions eased but some audiences still require/desire remote access. Another 10% supported staff and volunteers in expanding invasive species control and native species tracking in the Guana Preserve.
- ***Effectiveness of the Board of Directors in completing their Annual Program Plan.***
The staff and Board of the Friends of the GTM Reserve accomplished the goals that drove their program plan, even if many of the events could not take place.
- ***The relationship between ORCP 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 ORCP and CSO. What went well? Are there areas of improvement?

The relationship between the Friends and the GTM NERR continues to be one built on transparency and communication. With the return to in-person programming, we focused on keeping the lines of communication open between the Friends and GTM staff. As the GTM NERR adapted their programs to a post-COVID world, the Friends also adapted by investing in resources and tools the Reserve staff needed to respond in an ever-changing situation. 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, the 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.
- **Financial Sustainability.** Bridging the gap in funding for the GTM Research Reserve requires that the Friends of the GTM Reserve be financially sustainable and focused on revenue creation. Decisions regarding expenses, investments, and activities will always be scrutinized through the lens of long-term financial sustainability and growth.
- **Environmental Stewardship.** Protection of our natural resources and stewardship of the coastal ecosystem is key to the goals set by the GTM Research. It is the role of the Friends to support the GTM in environmental stewardship by “walking the walk” of sustainability through its actions and practices.
- **Integrity and Accountability.** To meet the needs of the GTM Reserve, the Friends of the GTM Reserve must be a trusted entity in the community and fully transparent with its practices and procedures.
- **Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Biodiversity makes for a stronger ecosystem, and human diversity makes for a stronger community. The Friends of the GTM Reserve seek out diversity of thought, ability, perspective, background, and experience to build organizational strength and create a GTM for All.

As we move into 2022, the Friends are optimistic that we will continue in-person fundraising, outreach, and programming that build and sustain the community of supporters for the GTM Research Reserve.

SUMMARIZE FINANCIAL ACTIVITY FOR LAST CALENDAR YEAR, SPECIFIC MANAGED AREA(S) SUPPORT:

Program Service Expenses are costs related to providing your organization's programs or services in accordance with your mission. For CSO's 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 totals \$ for each that apply.

Building improvement, construction or renovations	\$30,125.11
Cultural resources (e.g., historic structure restoration/ renovation)	\$0.00
Natural resources (e.g., native plants, natural lands restoration)	\$75,284.15
Maintenance equipment (e.g., mowers, chippers, blowers, chainsaws)	\$1,573.16
Other facilities and landscape maintenance	\$2,202.87
Vehicles (e.g., trucks/cars, UTVs, golf carts, accessible devices, etc.)	\$4,050.41
Amenities (e.g., water fountains, benches, picnic tables, recreational equipment, kiosks etc.)	\$753.16
Managed area employees or volunteers support (e.g., interns, training, uniforms, awards, or	\$44,527.34
Big ticket visitor center exhibits or interpretation updates	\$74,000.00
Managed area exhibits, displays, signage	\$7,367.03
Managed area publications, brochures, maps, etc.	\$40,383.60
Programing/interpretation support material purchases	\$9,121.66
Other program services	\$24,111.72
Total Program Service Expenses	\$313,500.21
**GTM Liability Expense	\$123,312.93
Total Operating Expenses (Overhead including CSO staff, fees, memberships, postage, rent, utilities, etc.)	\$115,241.09

****An additional \$123,312.93 has been debited to the liability account to be used at the discretion of the Reserve Manager based on the net accrual of revenue less direct expenses from this fiscal year. Revenue and expense line items that contribute to this account have been agreed upon in the MOU and by the Board of Directors and Reserve Manager.**

Visitor Services Revenue

Managed area gift shops, craft stores and concession sales	\$ 0
Merchandise sales (e.g., plants, firewood, ice, t-shirts, hats, etc.)	\$ 0
Programs and Special Events (e.g., fundraising workshops, seasonal events, concerts, etc.)	\$ 11,651.51
Vending (e.g., drink machines, penny press, laundry, Wifi, etc.)	\$ 0
Rentals (e.g., bikes, canoe, kayak, SUPs, etc.)	\$ 0
Donation boxes	\$ 674.03
Other visitor services revenue	\$ 301,706.88
Total Visitor Services Revenue	\$ 314,032.42

Other Revenue

Public Interest Funding	\$ 0
Other Revenue	\$ 343,111.21



Balance

Beginning Net Assets	\$382,574.52
Ending Net Assets	\$485,959.98

CSO AUDIT:

Total of Last Calendar Year’s Expenses (including grants) \$ 552,054.23

Section 215.981(2), Florida Statute requires an independent CPA audit using Government Audit Standards ([U.S. GAO Yellow Book](#)) when the CSOs annual expenses are \$300,000 including grants. 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.

This information is complete to the best of my knowledge pursuant to Section 20.058 Florida Statutes			
Title	Name	Signature	Date
CSO President	John Reed		June 1, 2022
ORCP Site Manager	Lia Sansom		June 1, 2022

- 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 990 and schedules.

Signature: John Reed
John Reed (Jun 1, 2022 16:43 EDT)
Email: reedjg@gmail.com

Signature: 
Email: lia.sansom@dep.state.fl.us