



Florida Master Naturalist Program Friends Group Checklist

Any group using the FMNP as a premise for organizing events or activities should submit the required paperwork to become an official FMNP Friends Group. Once the necessary information is provided, the State Office will endorse each Friends Group on the FMNP Website and provide ongoing support.

To establish a new FMNP Friends Group, please follow the directions below and submit the checklist items to the FMNP State Office at info@masternaturalist.org:

1. Find a FMNP Friends Group Facilitator:

A “Facilitator” is a current Master Naturalist Lead Instructor or UF/IFAS Extension Agent that is responsible for providing oversight and ensuring that FMNP Friends Group operations are within the spirit of the Florida Master Naturalist Program and comply with UF/IFAS standards.

The facilitator is the primary point of contact between the FMNP State Office and the FMNP Friends Group. They should be committed to assisting the group on a continual basis.

The facilitator does not need to be responsible for creating the group nor managing subsequent group events; this is the responsibility of the leadership and members within the group (the facilitator may or may not choose to be an active leader/member).

2. Ask your Facilitator to submit a written request (email) to create a new FMNP Friends Group, including:

- a. **Proposed location and name:** Names should indicate general location (city, county, or multi-county region) and include “Friends” in the name. (Example: Friends of Pinellas Master Naturalists, Suncoast Friends Chapter, Friends of Volusia County FMNP, Orlando Friends Group).
- b. **Facilitators name and contact information**
- c. **List of individuals** who would like to be Friends Group members and potential Group Leaders (to establish initial Group support)

3. Solicit potential members and schedule your first meeting once the FMNP State Office approves your request:

The State Office can assist you in soliciting interested members by distributing an initial email to all FMNP Participants in your region. Draft a short email requesting a response from potentially interested members, from which you can create your own email list for subsequent use. Email requests should be forwarded to the FMNP Statewide Coordinator at least 2 weeks in advance of your scheduled meeting.

4. **Review the “Statement of Agreement”** (include these items in your bylaws):

To remain in active status as a FMNP Friends Group and use the FMNP as a premise for organizing events or activities, your group must agree to:

- a. Conduct your group according to your approved bylaws
- b. Maintain the required leadership positions
- c. Hold a minimum of 3 meetings per year

Note: “meetings” can be defined by your group, but generally include any organized group activities that are open to all members – e.g., business meetings, field trips, speaker presentations, volunteer events, etc.

- d. Commit to a minimum of 25 hours of volunteer service per group per year. Report the hours and activity in the FMNP Volunteer Monitoring System (VMS).

Note: 25 hours per group per year is quite easy to achieve in multiple ways:

- Example x: *A 1-hour beach clean-up with 25 group members = “25 volunteer hours”*
- Example y: *One of your members represented the group at an educational booth for 25 hours = “25 volunteer hours”*

5. **Draft written group guidelines (or “bylaws”):**

“Bylaws” are simply instructions to guide your group. Having written group bylaws has been proven to promote longevity and success among groups. Your group bylaws can be very simple and contain as much or little detail as you agree upon. You can copy and modify one of these examples of group bylaws: [detailed](#) or [simple](#), or create your own.

6. **Choose Group Leadership:**

At least 3 group leaders are required: President, Vice President, and Secretary. Treasurer is also required if your group will be generating and/or managing funds. You may choose to have additional positions or board members as agreed upon in your group and dictated in your bylaws.

7. **Submit written bylaws, list of group leadership, and Statement of Agreement** to the FMNP State Office for approval. Upon approval, your information will be added to the FMNP Website.

CONGRATULATIONS on your new FMNP Friends Group!