

Friends of the GTM Reserve

Strategic Plan 2018-2019

Background and History

The Friends of the GTM Reserve was established as the Citizen Support Organization (CSO) for the GTM Research Reserve on December 29, 2000, as per a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the Friends of the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve, Inc. and the State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (OCAMA). The agreement granted exclusivity to the Friends to serve as the CSO for the GTM Research Reserve located in St. Johns and Flagler County Florida. Under the MOA, OCAMA granted the Friends authorization to provide the following kinds of services for the benefit of the GTM Research Reserve: fund raising events, official meetings of the CSO membership, volunteer activities and projects, and public educational and interpretive activities or events.

Articles of Incorporation for the Friends were filed on September 27, 2000 and the ending date of its first tax year was September 30, 2000.

On December 24, 2003, Articles of Merger were filed with the State of Florida to merge the Friends of the GTM Reserve with the Friends of Guana River State Park upon dissolution of Guana River State Park and its absorption into the GTM Research Reserve boundary.

The Friends of the GTM Reserve received their IRS Tax Determination Letter on August 23, 2007.

The Mission

Support and enhance environmental education, stewardship of natural and cultural resources, and scientific research at the GTM Research Reserve through volunteer initiatives, citizen involvement, and community partnerships.

The Vision

A GTM Research Reserve that is fully funded and supported in order to achieve the conservation of natural biodiversity and cultural resources using science-based strategies.

Core Values

The following core values are at the heart of the Friends of the GTM Reserve. We exist to support the GTM Research Reserve and can only do so if we hold ourselves to a defined set of ideals that align with the Reserve's mission.

Support of Science. The GTM Research Reserve 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 be a leader in environmental stewardship and “walk 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.

Focus Areas

To accomplish the mission, the Friends have five focus areas. Everything we do to achieve our mission and sustain our success falls under one of these areas:

Fundraising

Member Development

Outreach and Communications

Organizational Excellence

Program Support

2018 Objectives and Goals

For the 2018-2019 Fiscal Year, 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 2019 fiscal year.

Objective #1: 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: Update and refine existing Finance Policy

Goal 1.2: Complete an independent financial audit

Goal 1.3: Develop Employee Handbook

Goal 1.4: Develop Board Evaluation Policy

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

Goal 2.1: Hold quarterly Meet-and-Greets with the Friends board of directors, key volunteers, and GTM Research Reserve Program Managers

Goal 2.2: Schedule biannual coordination meetings between GTM Research Reserve Program Managers and Friends Committee Chairs

Objective #3: Increase engagement with corporate and community partners, foundations, and local professionals in order to drive fundraising that supports the GTM Research Reserve programs.

Goal 3.1: Create a corporate membership program

Goal 3.2: Develop a community partnership

Goal 3.3: Secure two new corporate partners

Goal 3.4: Secure funding from two new foundations

Objective #4: 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 and implement a legislative outreach program to educate state and federal representatives on the value of the GTM Research Reserve

Goal 4.2: Participate in four outreach events in collaboration with the GTM Research Reserve

Goal 4.3: Develop a targeted outreach program in St. Augustine

Goal 4.3: Develop a Cultural Resources awareness program in collaboration with the GTM Research Reserve

Objective #5: Increase number of Friends members in order to increase revenue, improve committee engagement, and grow the GTM Research Reserve volunteer program.

Goal 5.1: Increase the number of Friends members by ten percent over previous fiscal year

Goal 5.2: Conduct a member survey

Goal 5.3: Hold two stewardship events for top tier Friends members

Objective #6: Ensure financial sustainability of the Friends in order to provide continued support of the GTM Research Reserve's programs

Goal 6.1: Meet revenue and expense goals as detailed in the 2018-2019 Friends budget

Goal 6.2: Develop Grants Administration strategy to support GTM Research Reserve grants