



Okefenokee Swamp Park, Inc.
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EIN: 58-0515884

2024-2025 Georgia Sea Grant State Fellowship Opportunity

Host Office Name: Okefenokee Swamp Park, Inc.

Fellowship Supervisor: Levi Welling, Director of Operations, (office) 912-283-0583, (cell) 904-548-8234, levi.welling@okeswamp.org

The Okefenokee Swamp Park, Inc. (OSP) is a non-profit organization that facilitates access to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) while promoting an appreciation for its wildlife, culture, and natural beauty. The Okefenokee is home to hundreds of species of flora and fauna – some threatened and endangered – including alligators, sandhill cranes, gopher tortoises, indigo snakes, more than 600 plant species, and a population of amphibians that are critical bioindicators of global health. The Okefenokee’s watershed covers over 1,400 square miles and drains across three major basins: the iconic Suwannee River, the St. Marys River, and Cypress Creek. The Okefenokee also provides unmatched carbon sequestration services, maintaining the largest remaining undisturbed peat deposit on the North American Coastal Plain.

In 2022, the OSP facilitated 72,185 swamp visits, offering diverse experiences like bike and train tours, kayak rentals, Swamp Creation & Living Exhibits, K-12 field trips, and summer camps. The OSP is actively involved in policy advocacy, civic engagement, and community mobilization to resist extractive industries and safeguard the swamp. During years of collaborative effort, the OSP has helped the Okefenokee NWR advance toward a potential nomination for the UNESCO World Heritage List. The OSP is also a key advisor in the Okefenokee Protection Alliance, a coalition of 40+ organizations fighting to protect the swamp from mining threats.

Position Description

The OSP Sea Grant State Fellow will lead outdoor excursions and provide interpretive education in and around the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. The Fellow must maintain a well-rounded knowledge of flora, fauna, geology, geography, hydrology, general ecology and fire ecology of the Okefenokee Swamp and surrounding region of the Southeastern Coastal Plain in general.

The Fellow must be able to correctly identify Okefenokee plants and wildlife while leading visitors via motorized boat, canoe/kayak, bicycle, or walking trails. The OSP will provide on-the-job training for the Fellow to operate a tiller-driven motorized boat and to paddle a canoe or kayak. The OSP will also provide Guide Training from U.S. Fish & Wildlife as it becomes available. The Fellow will be required to speak comfortably before diverse members of the public including varying ages, cultural/socioeconomic backgrounds, interests, and personalities. The Fellow will be required to stand, walk, and sometimes lift. The standard tour is 90 minutes; however, some educational tours may last longer.

This opportunity might strongly appeal to a student/recent graduate interested in the convergence of conservation and economic development. The OSP is at the forefront of several initiatives centered around activating a natural resource economy in the region. For instance, as a result of collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Georgia lawmakers, and community members, the Department of the Interior recently authorized the National Park Service to nominate the Okefenokee NWR to the UNESCO World Heritage List. The pending nomination may yield a final result in 2026. Furthermore, the OSP has initiated the master planning process for its Nature Center, one of three campuses within the larger Okefenokee Experience capital project. This tri-county project aims to showcase the ecological, cultural,

and historical significance of the swamp. These efforts outline the OSP's commitment to fostering an interdependent economic development model, bringing together non-profit institutions, the private sector, and governmental authorities to collectively activate sustainable development that drives conservation.

The OSP employs a relatively small team of 28 full-time and 18 part-time staff. During their one-year term, the Sea Grant State Fellow will play a key role in enhancing and expanding our organizational capacity. We look forward to collaborating with a motivated Fellow who shares our passion for ecological conservation. We believe our team can offer a distinct perspective on the community engagement strategies essential to supporting long-term conservation efforts.

Sea Grant State Fellow Qualifications:

1. Proficient knowledge of ecology, biology, or related field of study.
2. Excellent communication, interpersonal, and organizational skills.
3. Pro-active orientation, professional presentation, and ability to act as a team player.
4. Valid Motor Vehicle Operator's License and/or reliable transportation and good driving record.
5. Ability to lift, carry, push or pull 60+ lbs and walk on various terrain in all climate conditions.
6. First aid and CPR certification (training provided).

The Sea Grant State Fellow is responsible for reading the Okefenokee Swamp Park/Okefenokee Adventures personnel handbook and adhering to all policies. The Fellow must abide by guidelines set by the Director of Operations and in alignment with the contractual covenants set by the Okefenokee NWR. The Fellow is also expected to participate in collegial activities designed to make the Okefenokee Swamp Park/Okefenokee Adventures organization productive and positive.

Work Hours:

This is a full-time, on-site position at 40 hours per week lasting 12 months. The fellowship may begin in August/September and end in July/August (start and end dates negotiable). Standard work hours are Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. However, some weekend and evening work will be required as determined by business needs or special events.

Statement of commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion:

The OSP prioritizes cultivating a workplace culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We believe that each individual is entitled to equal employment opportunity without regard to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, marital status, age, disability, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, veteran status or any other characteristic protected under federal, state, or local anti-discrimination laws. Our equal employment opportunity practices extend to recruitment, hiring, selection, compensation, benefits, transfer, promotion, training, discipline, and all other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.