Florida Trail Founder Jim Kern Offers $20,000 Match for BLAZE Campaign

Jim Kern invites supporters to double their donations through his $20,000 matching challenge and help more people discover the Florida Trail.



Gainesville, Florida Nov 3, 2026 (Issuewire.com) - Sixty years after founding the Florida Trail

Association, Jim Kern is challenging supporters to join him in investing in its future. Kern will match the next $20,000 donated to BLAZE: FTA's Next Chapter, dollar for dollar, creating the opportunity to raise $40,000.

Kern founded the Florida Trail Association in 1966 with a vision of a continuous footpath the length of Florida, from Gulf Islands National Seashore near Pensacola to Big Cypress National Preserve. Today, he is asking members, hikers, and supporters to help introduce more people to the trail and the organization behind it.

BLAZE: FTA's Next Chapter is a community awareness campaign introducing more people to the Florida National Scenic Trail and FTA's work to build, maintain, protect, and promote it. The campaign encourages people to discover the trail, become members, volunteer, and support its future.

"Beginning today, I am asking: Support the idea of a continuous foot path the length of Florida. Support BLAZE: FTA's Next Chapter. I will match the next $20,000 donated because I believe in this trail and the people who make it possible," Kern wrote in a letter to members and supporters.

His message also asks supporters to bring someone into the Association and tell someone about the Florida Trail.

Alongside the matching challenge, FTA is inviting the public to join Kern in signing a separate letter to elected officials. The letter encourages state and federal leaders to learn about the Florida National Scenic Trail, understand FTA's work, and consider how they can help protect this natural and economic asset for Florida.

Supporters can donate, sign the letter, or do both. Donations will be matched dollar for dollar while matching funds remain.

Donate and have your gift matched:
https://floridatrail.org/KernCampaign

Read and sign the letter to elected officials:
https://change.org/KernCampaign

About the Florida Trail Association

Founded in 1966, the Florida Trail Association builds, maintains, protects, and promotes the Florida National Scenic Trail. Through its members, volunteers, chapters, and partnerships with communities, land managers, and its primary agency partner, the U.S. Forest Service, FTA connects people with opportunities to experience and care for wild Florida. Learn more at https://floridatrail.org.



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