

KEY NOTES

NEWS FROM
THE PERDIDO KEY ASSOCIATION



July 2019

Perdido Key's Disastrous Fire

At 4 AM on June 19, 2019, a quick-moving fire broke out at the Key Harbour condominiums on Perdido Key, not far from the Flora-Bama. Windy conditions and the close proximity of wooden structures to each other contributed to the destruction of many condos at Key Harbour, Pescador Landing, and a single dwelling west of Key Harbour; other units suffering damage as well. Thanks to the efforts of first responders and citizens, guests and residents were alerted and there were no fatalities, though two people were hospitalized. Escambia County Fire Rescue, Escambia County Sheriff's Office, and other county first responders, along with emergency services from Orange Beach, Pensacola and other locales helped keep the damage from becoming even more disastrous than it was. The Red Cross was ready to assist and donations to help those displaced by the fire can be made to the Perdido Bay United Methodist Church.

The cause of the fire is under investigation though some have mentioned an air conditioning unit. Others have expressed concern about aspects of the response, such as insufficient water pressure and lack of adequate equipment. Escambia County Commissioner Doug Underhill told *AL.com* the county's fire and rescue department had recently "got its first new fire truck in 10 years and was approximately 25 to 30 firefighters short across the county." "In spite of the fact we're undermanned and under equipped, the firefighters were great in bringing the fire under control." "But it's a real shame that as a society we're banking on these men and women going above and beyond for less money and poor equipment." "That has to change." For more on the fire, see the June 19, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article "Let's Just Get Out: Fire rips through Perdido Key destroying 26 condos and displaying dozens" by Kevin Robinson and Colin Warren-Hicks at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2019/06/19/perdido-key-fire-massive-fire-destroys-14-condos-2-hospitalized/1497669001/> and the June 26, 2019 *AL.com* posting "Where is the water?' Angry Perdido Key residents blame county for unprepared fire department"

by Christopher Harris at <https://www.al.com/news/2019/06/where-is-the-water-angry-perdido-key-residents-blame-county-for-unprepared-fire-department.html>.

World Oceans Day Event Cancelled

Because of threatened thunderstorms on June 7, 2019, the World Oceans Day Event for this year was cancelled. As the weather on Perdido Key sometimes does, not a drop of rain actually fell that day at Perdido Key State Park where the event would have been held. PKA and State Park personnel are planning a smaller event for Saturday, July 20, with Ocean Environment displays and student art from the Helen Caro Elementary School to be held at the Perdido Key State Park West Use Area from 9 AM until 2 PM.

Perdido Key Multi-Use Path Changes

The Perdido Key Multi-Use Path (sometimes called Shared-Use Path) will provide a safe refuge for pedestrians and cyclists. The eight foot wide concrete path will be at ground level on the north side but separate from Perdido Key Drive; it will not have any boardwalks as originally conceived. Another modification to the path design extends the previously planned terminus at the base of the Theo Baars Bridge along the west side of the bridge to join the River Road pedestrian/bicycle path – a change that will allow a Perdido Key Drive/River Road loop without having to cross busy Perdido Key Drive. Ground is expected to be broken on the path in mid-2020.

The Heron and the Snake

Early one June morning, residents of a condominium facing the Old River watched a blue heron patrolling the water line suddenly move up the shore. The heron proceeded to attack a water moccasin, beating it on the ground and then swallowing it head first; the first try did not work well with the snake still writhing, so the heron beat it some more and then swallowed it again – this time successfully. The heron followed its triumph by moving to a branch on a nearby tree and standing on one leg to digest its *tasty* meal.

Pensacola 15th Most Desirable

Pensacola was 15th in the 25 “Best Places to Live” ranking published by *US News and World Report*. The ranking takes into account “affordability, job market and population growth due to net migration.” Honolulu and Colorado Springs ranked 1 and 2 in the list. For more on the ranking, see the June 3, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Pensacola named 15th ‘most desirable’ place to live in U.S.” at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2019/06/03/pensacola-named-15th-most-desirable-best-place-live-u-s/1327394001/>.

Gridlock to Pensacola Beach

Waits up to an hour and a half on the bridges to Pensacola Beach have resulted in calls for toll booth changes. In May 2019, procedures were altered so cash lanes were reduced from three to two, with the two right lanes made available only for Sun Pass users. Some now want to go back to the previous setup with the hope of improving

traffic flow. Proposals are also being made for “toll-by-plate” that would add a \$2.50 monthly administrative fee to the \$1.00 cash payment. For more on the traffic issue, see the June 17, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Pensacola Beach ‘nightmare’ traffic weekend leads to calls for toll booth changes” by Melissa Nelson Gabriel at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/pensacola/beaches/2019/06/17/pensacola-beach-weekend-traffic-toll-booth-lanes-gulf-breeze-police/1479696001/>.

Gaetz gives up on Fee-Simple

Rep. Matt Gaetz, the District 1 of Florida representative to the US House of Representatives, stated he had “lost the argument” to change the land use arrangement on Pensacola Beach and Santa Rosa Island from leasing to fee-simple. In his first term in Congress, Gaetz sponsored a bill to overturn the 1947 federal deed agreement that gave the island to Escambia County. Some of those in favor of keeping the current arrangement continue to press the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners for an ordinance reflecting the results of the 2018 county referendum supporting current arrangements. For more on the issue, see the June 2, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Rep. Matt Gaetz said fee-simple bill is dead at Pensacola town hall” by Jim Little at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2019/06/01/rep-matt-gaetz-said-fee-simple-bill-dead-pensacola-town-hall/1301473001/>.

PKA Issues

PKA Board members are beginning preparations for the 2020 Perdido Key Owner Survey and would welcome PKA member input on the survey questions. The 2015 survey is available for review at the PKA website at <https://perdidokeyassociation.org/>. The 2015 survey has been an important factor in ensuring Escambia County and other decision-makers are aware of Perdido Key property owner opinion about the future of our wonderful island. Please send your ideas to perdidokeyassociation@gmail.com.

There will not be a PKA Board meeting in July; the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 12, 2019. The PKA sponsored Adopt-A-Highway of Rt. 98 cleanup will be held on Saturday, July 27, 2019 (a change from July 20); volunteers are welcome and can meet at the Greer’s CashSaver parking lot on Rt. 98 and Bauer Road at 8 AM.

July Calendar

July 01-03, 11-16, 22-26: Blue Wahoos at Blue Wahoo Stadium
July 02, 09, 16, 23, 30: Arcadia Mills Archeology Site visits in Milton
July 03-04: Watermelon Festival in Grand Bay, Alabama
July 04: Independence Day celebrations with fireworks at Seville Square, Pensacola Beach, OWA, Fairhope, Navarre Beach, Destin and elsewhere
July 04: Shark Run at the Flora-Bama
July 04: Belmont-DeVillers Museum Independence Day Festival
July 06: Independence Day Street Party at The Wharf
July 10-13: Red, White, and Blue Week at Pensacola Beach

July 13: Blue Angels Pensacola Beach Air Show
July 14: Jalipeo (Mexican Rodeo) at Escambia County Equestrian Center
July 16: Neighborhood Watch Academy at Escambia County Sheriff's Offices
July 18: Escambia County Board of County Commissioners Public Forum and Meeting
July 19-21: Alabama Deep Sea Fishing Festival, Dauphin Island
July 20: Ocean Environment displays at Perdido Key State Park West Use Area
July 27: PKA Adopt-A-Highway cleanup of Rt. 98

Blue Angels practice on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at NAS Pensacola
Bands on the Beach on Tuesdays at Gulfside Pavilion Pensacola Beach
The following websites provide additional information about events taking place in our great Gulf Coast region:

<https://www.visitpensacola.com/>
<http://mygulfcoastchamber.com/>
<http://www.visitperdido.com/>
<http://mulletwrapper.net/>
<https://myescambia.com/>
<http://www.emeraldcoastfl.com//>
<http://alabama.travel/festivals-and-events>
<http://www.cityofmobile.org/calendar/>

Perdido Key Association Board of Directors