

KEY NOTES

NEWS FROM
THE PERDIDO KEY ASSOCIATION



August 2020

New Beach Access Moves Ahead

At its July 22, 2020 meeting, the Escambia County Board of Adjustment (BOA) denied the Seafarer Condominium appeal of the Development Order for construction of a new beach access location at 16477 Perdido Key Drive, just east of the Crab Trap Restaurant. The County has conducted initial site work to remove debris from the former condominium site and asphalt parking area. Prior to construction of a beach access location, the County needs additional approvals from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Perdido Key Habitat Conservation Plan and to develop a management plan. There is also an appeal filed with the Circuit Court on approval of conditional use of the site and the Seafarer has the option to appeal the recent BOA denial with the Circuit Court.

US Treasury Approves Multi-Use Path Funding

On June 25, 2020 the US Treasury approved Amendment #1 to the RESTORE Act Direct Component Multi-Year Implementation Plan put forward by the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners. The Amendment increases funding for the east portion of the Perdido Key Multi-Use Path from \$960,000 to \$4.5 million and was the final fiscal requirement needed to build the Path. Construction of the west portion of the Path is likely to begin in early 2021; construction of the east portion should begin later in 2021 following completion of design and engineering requirements. For more on the issue, go to <https://myescambia.com/news/news-article/2020/06/29/u.s.-treasury-department-approves-county-restore-multiyear-implementation-plan>.

New Crosswalk and Light at the Flora-Bama

The new crosswalk and light on Perdido Key Drive at the Flora-Bama has been operational for over a month. Hopefully many have found the installation an improvement to pedestrian safety and traffic flow at the often congested location. The following paragraph regarding the new crosswalk and light was provided by the Escambia County Transportation Engineer:

“The new pedestrian crosswalk signal at Flora-Bama was completed on June 26, 2020 by Florida Department of Transportation in an effort to eliminate fatalities and improve pedestrian access to commercial destinations on both sides of Perdido Key Drive. The crosswalk is raised 3-inches above the grade of Perdido Key Drive to create a raised crossing and improve safety through reduced speeds. The crosswalk is designed for 25 MPH as posted approaching the intersection. The signal is timed to allow for a minimum of 30 seconds of green time for vehicles between pedestrian crossings. Pedestrians who push button are advised by an audible signal to “Wait.” Once cars are stopped on red, the signal says “Crosswalk is on,” then once the countdown signal starts, it says “10, 9, 8, 7” and so on. The timing of the pedestrian crossing is timed per national standards for the distance of the crossing. Escambia County Traffic Operations Division has now taken ownership and operations of this signal. Understanding this is a new signal, new raised crossing, and this location has multiple events, we expect that it will take a few months for our residents and visitors to adjust to this improvement. Since it has gone into operation, no reported crashes or injuries. This project also supports the goal of the Perdido Key Master Plan to create a walkable and bikeable community.”

Perdido Key Property Owner Survey Forms

Thanks to the many Perdido Key property owners who participated in the 2020 Perdido Key Property Owner Survey! The survey forms have been collected and will be tabulated and analyzed by personnel from the University of Alabama College of Communications & Information Science.

Perdido Key Drive/Johnson Beach Road Intersection

Escambia County officials hosted a public workshop on Thursday, June 11, 2020 at the Lost Key Golf Club on possible safety and traffic flow improvements at the Perdido Key Drive/Johnson Beach Road intersection. A large turnout overflowed the meeting area and benefited from an informative presentation by Escambia County Traffic Engineer Christine Fanchi who showed the pros and cons of three alternatives, i.e., leaving the intersection as is, installing a traffic signal or constructing a roundabout. Project boards were posted to allow attendees to examine the alternatives more closely and express their preferences. While the most costly option at about \$500,000, the roundabout seemed to have the most support. As expressed by Ms Fanchi, one roundabout advantage would be “traffic

calming” (slowing traffic down) to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists crossing Perdido Key Drive between the “to be constructed” Perdido Key Multi-Use Path and Johnson Beach Road path. For more information about the workshop, see the June 12, 2020 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Perdido Key residents show support for roundabout at Perdido Key Drive and Johnson Beach Road” by Madison Arnold at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2020/06/12/perdido-key-support-roundabout-perdido-key-drive-johnson-beach-road/5347329002/>.

Gulf State Park Pier Renovation

Gulf State Park Pier has been closed for modernization. Its reopening, originally scheduled for mid-July 2020, has been delayed to sometime in August. The renovation will include replacing decking and handrails and installing turtle-friendly lighting. “At the octagon located on the south end of the pier, a new 50-by-18-foot elevated observation deck will be constructed above the existing pier deck, which will give visitors approximately 850 additional square feet of viewing space.” For more on the issue, see the April 14, 2020 Gulf State Park news press release “Gulf State Park Pier Will Close for Renovation, Maintenance” at <https://www.outdooralabama.com/articles/gulf-state-park-pier-will-temporarily-close-renovations-and-maintenance>.

Hurricane Season 2020 off to Quick Start

Perdido Key and surrounding areas received strong winds, big surf and heavy rains from Tropical Storm Cristobal in June while Hurricane Hanna battered south Texas and northern Mexico in July; now Tropical Storm Isaias has Florida in its path. According to NOAA and other predictions, the 2020 hurricane season is expected to have an above average number of tropical storms and hurricanes.

At a June 23, 2020 public meeting at the Perdido Key Visitors Center, Escambia County Public Safety personnel briefed those attending on a number of hurricane related issues, including: reaching out to insurance firms before hurricane season; area bridges close when sustained winds reach 39 mph; utilities typically remain operational as long as possible with “nature” responsible for most outages; Perdido Key and Orange Beach emergency responses are coordinated; local evacuations are correlated with storm levels; and, because of COVID-19, sheltering for those evacuating will be a major concern. For Escambia County’s “Be Ready Escambia,” go to <https://myescambia.com/our-services/public-safety/beready>; for the *Weather Channel* article “2020 Hurricane season expected to be more active than normal, Colorado State University outlook says” by Jonathan Belles and Brian Donegan go to <https://weather.com/safety/hurricane/news/2020-06-04-atlantic-hurricane-season-outlook-june-csu-noaa-the-weather>.

Vacation Rentals

Escambia County vacation rentals were closed during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, but reopened by Memorial Day weekend; area hotels were not closed. Since reopening, vacation rentals have maintained essentially normal occupancy rates while hotel rates have been down, especially during weekdays. For more on this issue, see the *Pensacola News Journal* July 23, 2020 article “Escambia County summer hotel bookings fall short of tourism leaders’ hopes” by Madison Arnold at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2020/07/23/escambia-county-summer-hotel-bookings-fall-short-tourism-leaders-hopes/5488189002/>.

World Oceans Day 2020

The World Oceans Day (WOD) event conducted annually by the Perdido Key Association, Friends of Pensacola State Parks, and local Florida State Park personnel was held digitally in 2020 because of COVID-19 concerns. Information and activities on ocean related topics were posted on the News page of the Perdido Key Association website at <https://www.perdidokeyassociation.org> from June 1 through June 8 with a new presentation posted each day. A number of people participated in the event as indicated by increased visits to the PKA website and hopefully gained greater understanding of the wonder and value of our oceans.

Inputs to OLF-8

DPZ, the design firm that helped with the Perdido Key Master Plan, has been selected for the planning process for OLF-8, i.e., the 640 acre former Navy Outlying Field 8 adjacent to the Navy Federal Credit Union complex in the Beulah area of western Escambia County. Because of concerns for COVID-19, DPZ’s “charrette” process has been replaced with a request for public input to a new website at <https://colab.dpz.com/olf8/> and Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/myolf8/>. For more on the issue, see the *Pensacola News Journal* July 24, 2020 article “You can share input on the fate of OLF-8” by Madison Arnold at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2020/07/24/beulah-olf-8-master-plan-share-input-new-website-facebook-page/5496206002/>.

First Turtle Hatchings

Most of the first hatchlings from the 38 sea turtle nests on Gulf Islands National Seashore were believed to have made it safely to the sea. Gulf Island’s remaining nests and the 24 in Escambia County are expected to follow soon. Most sea turtles in the Pensacola area are loggerhead, though Gulf Islands has a green turtle nest and Escambia County two Kemp Ridley nests. For more on this issue, see the *Pensacola News Journal* July 28, 2020 article “Gulf Islands sees first sea turtle hatching Sunday night, Escambia County expects hatchlings soon” by Madison Arnold at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2020/07/28/gulf-islands-has-first-sea-turtle-nest-hatch-escambia-county-expects-more-soon/5519692002/>.

Manatee Sightings

As of mid-July 2020, 40 manatee sightings have been reported in the Pensacola region. If you see a manatee, please report to Escambia County Sea Grant Representative Rick O'Connor at roc1@ufl.edu.

Python Captures Reach 5,000

Of the estimated 100,000 to 300,000 Burmese pythons in the Everglades, 5,000 have been captured since a bounty program began. For more on pythons in Florida, see the *US News and World Report* July 29, 2020 article "Slithery milestone: 5,000 pythons captured in Everglades" from the *Associated Press* at <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/florida/articles/2020-07-29/slithery-milestone-5-000-pythons-captured-in-everglades>.

E-scooters and Micro-mobility Vehicles in the News

The Santa Rosa Island Authority (SRIA) has asked the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners to pass an ordinance restricting the use of e-scooters and micro-mobility vehicles on a large portion of Pensacola Beach. A major concern is the vehicles can be left unattended and block paths, creating hazards for others and particularly those using ADA mobility devices. The State of Florida passed a law "denying local entities the ability to ban the use of scooters but allow them to regulate their use"; the SRIA draft ordinance is based on one from "Panama City that had stood up to legal scrutiny." For more on the issue see the June 11, 2020 *Perdido Key Journal* article "SRIA supports strict ordinance to ban e-scooters on much of Pensacola Beach" by Madison Arnold at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2020/06/11/sria-supports-strict-ordinance-ban-e-scooters-much-pensacola-beach/5338217002/>.

Key Notes July 2020 was not distributed because of illness.

August Calendar

Aug 01: 156th Commemoration of the Battle of Mobile Bay at Dauphin Island
Aug 01: Northwest Florida Kidney Walk at Blue Wahoo Stadium
Aug 01: Pensacola Jr. Anglers Billfish Tournament Santa Rosa Yacht Club
Aug 01-02 et al.: August Sunset Cruises at Pensacola Bay Cruises Pensacola
Aug 01,02: Pensacola Hunter Jumper Association Horse Show at 7750 Mobile Hwy
Aug 03-05: Innerlight Surf Camp and Lessons Pensacola Beach
Aug 03,10,17,24,31: Sparks after Dark fireworks at The Wharf
Aug 16: Battle of the Fairway at One Club & Craft Farms in Gulf Shores
Aug 16: Jaripeo Mexican Rodeo and Family Outing at 7750 Mobile Hwy
Aug 21,28: Summer Safety Tips (Escambia County) at Perdido Key Visitors Center
Aug 22: Gulf Coast Culture Fest at Seville Square

Aug 22: Community Safety Day at OWA

Aug 22,23: Coastal Hunter Jumper Horse Show at 7750 Mobile Hwy

Aug 27-29: Pensacola Ladies Billfish Tournament at Santa Rosa Yacht Club

The following websites provide additional information about events taking place in our great Gulf Coast region:

<https://www.visitpensacola.com/>

<http://mygulfoastchamber.com/>

<http://www.visitperdido.com/>

<http://mulletwrapper.net/>

<https://myescambia.com/>

<http://www.emeraldcoastfl.com//>

<http://alabama.travel/festivals-and-events>

Perdido Key Association Board of Directors