

KEY NOTES

NEWS FROM
THE PERDIDO KEY ASSOCIATION



August 2019

Beach Access Debate

Disagreement over public beach access to the 4-acre property just east of the Crab Trap Restaurant on Perdido Key continues. According to Tim Day, Escambia County's natural resources management director, a recent proposal for 44 parking places at the site was not accepted because it would interfere with the property's dunes. Escambia County Commissioner Jeff Bergosh (District 1) said he anticipates the facility will be open by winter while Commissioner Doug Underhill (District 2) believes "federal authorities will eventually reject any proposal the county puts forward" and favors county purchase of beach access land elsewhere on Perdido Key. For more information, see the July 22, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article "Opening of controversial Perdido Key beach parking lot delayed for environmental changes" by Melissa Nelson Gabriel at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/pensacola/beaches/2019/07/22/controversial-perdido-key-beach-parking-plan-delayed-environmental-impacts/1778110001/>.

World Oceans Day Make-up Event

PKA and the Friends of Pensacola State Parks conducted a modest World Oceans Day event on Saturday, July 20, 2019; the original event scheduled for June 7 was cancelled because of expected thunderstorms. At the replacement event, World Oceans Day posters and art work by students from the Helen Caro Elementary School were exhibited along the central boardwalk area of the Perdido Key State Park West Use Area. It was a rainy day so beach attendance was low, but visitors attending seemed to appreciate the posters and student art work and also received World Oceans Day tote bags.

Oil Spill Questions and Concerns?

The Florida state oil spill specialist would like to know what questions and concerns people in the Escambia County area have about the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill and its after-effects. Please send your queries and comments to Escambia County Sea Grant Representative Rick O'Connor at roc1@ufl.edu.

August Alabama Fishing

In a July 30, 2019 press release, the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources reminded anglers of a number of changes to saltwater fishing regulations that will take effect on August 1, 2019. These include size and/or catch limits for cobia, spotted sea trout and flounder; non-stainless steel hook requirements for Gulf Reef Fish and sharks; plus, a red snapper season extended to August 5, 2019. For additional information, go to <https://www.outdooralabama.com/fishing/saltwater-fishing>.

Gulf Shores Pursuing Intracoastal Waterway Pedestrian Bridge

As part of its request to the federal Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grant Program, Gulf Shores hopes to fund a pedestrian bridge “either attached to the current Intracoastal Waterway Bridge or a freestanding bridge east of Tacky Jack’s at the site of the old cantilever bridge.” It is one of several Gulf Shores transportation improvement initiatives discussed in the July 17-31, 2019 *Mullet Wrapper* article “City seeks funds to add pedestrian bridge over Intracoastal Waterway” by John Mullen, available at <https://mulletwrapper.net/city-seeks-funds-to-add-pedestrian-bridge-over-intracoastal-waterway/>.

New Pensacola Bay Bridge Opening Delayed to August 4

Traffic could begin using one span of the new Pensacola Bay Bridge by August 4 for eastbound traffic and August 8 for westbound, though the openings may have additional delays. According to FDOT, the current delay was due to bad weather and “an ambitious schedule from the contractor.” As the shifts take place, drivers should be particularly alert for altered traffic patterns. For more on the issue, see the July 26, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Traffic switch to new Pensacola Bay Bridge gets delayed at last-minute” by Melissa Nelson Gabriel at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2019/07/26/pensacola-bay-bridge-traffic-switch-delayed-fdot-august/1837750001/>.

Safer Inside Vehicles than Outside

According to recent estimates by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the number of bicyclist deaths rose 10% and pedestrian deaths 4% in 2018 compared to 2017 while deaths of auto drivers and passengers declined 1% – continuing a three year decline. Automakers have improved vehicle safety features, but few have introduced systems that detect and brake for pedestrians and bicyclists. For more on this issue, see *The Greenville News* July 4, 2019 article “Cars get safer, but not for people outside them” by Chris Woodward at <http://greenvillenewssc.sc.newsmemory.com/?publink=4e914f138>.

Toxic Algae on Mississippi’s Gulf Coast

Mississippi’s Gulf Coast beaches were closed for swimming in early July because of an outbreak of toxic blue-green algae (a cyanobacteria). For more on the issue, see the July 7, 2019 *Monroe News-Star* article “All Mississippi beaches closed as toxic algae

bloom blankets the state's coast" by Greg Hilburn at <https://www.thenewsstar.com/story/news/2019/07/07/breaking-mississippi-closes-all-beaches-toxic-algae-bloom-blankets-states-coast/1667999001/>; for additional information on Mississippi beach closures, go the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality website at <https://www.mdeq.ms.gov/mdeq-maintains-water-contact-warnings-across-mississippi-gulf-coast/>.

Problems with Sargassum Seaweed

As if 2018's problems with blue-green algae and red tide blooms were not enough, Florida is also combating large amounts of dead sargassum on many of its Atlantic beaches and off-shore waters – leading to noxious odors and problems for boating and fishing. Sargassum seaweed is an important part of the oceanic food chain, often forming "acre-sized" patches floating in open water that provide food and shelter for small and large creatures. It is abundant off Florida's Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic coasts and throughout the Caribbean. According to Edie Widder of the Ocean Research and Conservation Association of Fort Pierce, "although it is difficult to prove unequivocally, it seems likely that global warming and nutrient pollution are probably fanning the flames of this particular conflagration." For more on this issue, see the May 30, 2019 *Treasure Coast Newspapers* article "Sargassum seaweed: The good, the bad and the ugly" by Ed Killer at <https://www.tcpalm.com/story/sports/fishing-boating/2019/05/30/sargassum-affecting-anglers-but-what-turtles/1269828001/>.

Plastic Free July and Orlando Parks

"Key Notes" is obviously a month behind with this notification; nonetheless, "Plastic Free July" is a world-wide challenge to reduce the use of single-use plastics by individuals and organizations (for more information, go to <https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/>). With a similar goal, effective October 1, 2019 Orlando will ban "plastic straws, bags, cutlery and Styrofoam food containers at its city parks and venues" with some exemptions available for those with disabilities and special events. For more information, see the June 5, 2019 *Associated Press Wire Services* article "Orlando Bans Plastics at Parks, Venues starting Oct. 1" at <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/florida/articles/2019-06-05/orlando-bans-plastics-at-parks-venues-starting-oct-1>.

Gulf Dead Zone Forecast

Researchers at Louisiana State University have predicted the second largest Gulf of Mexico summer "dead zone" on record – spreading to about the size of New Hampshire. "A dead zone occurs at the bottom of a body of water when there isn't enough oxygen in the water to support marine life." It is caused by nutrients moving from the Mississippi River into the Gulf of Mexico. According to University of Michigan aquatic ecologist Don Scavia, "The bottom line is that we will never reach the dead zone reduction target of 1,900 square miles until more serious actions are taken to reduce the loss of Midwest fertilizers into the Mississippi River system." For more on the issue, see the June 10, 2019 *USA Today* article "Near record 'dead zone' predicted in Gulf of

Mexico this summer” by Doyle Rice at

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/06/10/dead-zone-near-record-zone-forecast-gulf-mexico/1407088001/> .

August Calendar

Aug 01-03: Jennifer Claire Moore Foundation Professional Rodeo at Foley Horse Arena

Aug 01-05,13-17,23-27: Blue Wahoos at Blue Wahoo Stadium Pensacola

Aug 02: Back to School Bash at The Wharf

Aug 03: Commemoration of the Battle of Mobile Bay at Ft. Morgan in Gulf Shores

Aug 07-10: Emerald Coast Boat Week and Poker Run in Destin

Aug 09: Flicks on the Field at Pensacola Dog Park showing Captain Marvel

Aug 16-17: South Alabama Pro Rodeo Classic in Ozark, Alabama

Aug 17: Paddle at the Porch races in Destin

Aug 17: USS Alabama and USS Drum Living History Crew Drill Battleship Park Mobile

Aug 24: Community Safety Day at Downtown OWA

Aug 31: Gulf Coast Summer Fest – Jazz Edition at Maritime Park Pensacola

Aug 31: Labor Day Car Show and Fireworks at OWA

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/>

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

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

<http://www.cityofmobile.org/calendar/>

Perdido Key Association Board of Directors