

KEY NOTES

NEWS FROM
THE PERDIDO KEY ASSOCIATION



May 2020

Escambia County Reopening Public Beaches

At their April 28, 2020 special meeting, the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) voted 5 to 0 to reopen County public beaches on May 1, 2020; the beaches have been closed since March 21, 2020 because of the COVID 19 pandemic. The decision follows an April 21, 2020 letter from local health care leaders recommending reopening the beaches with restrictions and decisions by nearby counties to reopen their beaches. Escambia County public beaches will return to essentially normal operating hours, but will require social distancing such as 6 feet separation and not gathering in groups of more than 10 people. Pavilions will remain closed and gathering underneath piers prohibited. The Escambia County BOCC is requesting that Gulf Islands National Seashore and Perdido Key State Park beaches also be opened, where most public beaches on Perdido Key are located. The BOCC also took steps to reopen County parks with particular discussion about team sports. For more on these issues, see the *Pensacola News Journal* April 28, 2020 article “Pensacola, Perdido Key beaches will reopen Friday with social distancing guidelines” by Jim Little at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2020/04/28/coronavirus-pensacola-beach-reopen-friday-perdido-key-beach-social-distancing-guidelines/3040229001/>.

Florida and Alabama Limited Reopening

Governor Ron DeSantis announced Florida’s Phase 1 plan for limited reopening of state commerce and other activities on May 4, 2020. As detailed in a *USA Today Network* article: “Restaurants are allowed to reopen both their indoor and outdoor seating areas with restrictions. Both indoor and outdoor seating must include six feet of space between tables. Indoor seating will be limited to just 25% of capacity. Similarly, retail stores will be allowed to reopen with 25% capacity. Elective surgeries will also be allowed to resume.” “Bars, gyms and places where personal services are done, such as hair salons, will remain closed. Schools remain closed and will continue distance

learning. Visits to senior living facilities are prohibited.” In addition, groups of greater than 10 people where social distancing cannot be maintained should be avoided. As exceptions, “Safer at Home” restrictions will remain in effect for south Florida counties Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach; the elderly and those with underlying conditions should remain sheltered in place. For more on reopening Florida, see the April 29, 2020 *USA Today Network* article “Coronavirus Florida: DeSantis unveils phased reopening plans for restaurants, businesses” by John Kennedy at <https://www.news-press.com/story/news/politics/2020/04/29/coronavirus-desantis-unveils-reopening-plans-state-says-fear-has-trumped-facts/3052147001/> and the *Pensacola News Journal* April 29, 2020 article “What can open, what must stay shuttered” by Jim Little at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2020/04/29/coronavirus-florida-emergency-orders-what-can-open-what-closed/3048661001/>. Alabama is taking broadly similar actions to reopen its beaches and other activities as detailed in the April 28, 2020 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Gov. Ivey lifts some stay-at-home orders, others continued. Read the order” by Brian Lyman at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2020/04/28/kay-ivey-opening-alabama-reopening-business-address-today-coronavirus-safer-at-home-order/3033519001/>.

Blue Angels and Thunderbirds Joint US Tour

Both the Navy Blue Angels and Air Force Thunderbirds have been in the Pensacola area in recent days beginning a national tour. The precision flying teams will visit many US cities in the next few weeks as part of “Operation America Strong.” President Trump said the air shows were “paying tribute to our front-line health care workers confronting COVID. And it’s really a signal to all Americans to remain vigilant during the outbreak.” The recent flyovers of New York City and surrounding areas were featured on national network news broadcasts. The Thunderbirds were activated in 1953 and are based at Nellis AFB near Las Vegas; the group has flown F-16 aircraft since 1983. For more on the tour, see the April 23, 2020 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Blue Angels and Thunderbirds to go on multi-city ‘Operation American Strong’ flyover tour” by Jake Newby at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2020/04/23/blue-angels-thunderbirds-team-up-multi-city-flyover-tour/3010733001/>.

Perdido Key Crosswalks Upgrade Completed

Escambia County has completed upgrades to the five crosswalks on Perdido Key Drive. The crosswalks now have “pedestrian-activated flashing in-roadway lights, a bi-directional pedestrian-activated flashing LED crossing sign, a ‘Pedestrian Crossing Ahead’ sign and a ‘Pedestrian Crossing Ahead’ pavement message.” For more on the upgrade, see the April 13, 2020 Escambia County news article “Perdido Key Drive Pedestrian Crossing Upgrade Project Completed” at <https://myescambia.com/news/news-article/2020/04/13/perdido-key-drive-pedestrian-crossing-upgrades-project-completed>.

Gulf Power and Florida Power & Light to Merge

Pensacola area utility Gulf Power was formerly part of Southern Company but was sold to NextEra, the parent company of Florida Power & Light (FPL) in January 2019. As revealed in its filing with Florida's Public Service Commission, NextEra expects "FPL and Gulf Power will begin to operate as an integrated electric system in 2022." For more on the issue, see the *Pensacola News Journal* April 22, 2020 article "Gulf Power and Florida Power and Light plan to merge in 2020" by Jim Saunders at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2020/04/22/gulf-power-florida-power-and-light-plan-merger-2022-nextera-pensacola/3003125001/>.

Private Rosamond Johnson Ceremony Rescheduled

Because of the COVID 19 pandemic, the annual ceremony at Rosamond Johnson Beach on the Perdido Key Area of the Gulf Islands National Seashore honoring Army Private Rosamond Johnson has been postponed. Usually conducted the first weekend in May, the ceremony has been rescheduled for Veterans Day, Wednesday, November 11, 2020.

Earth Day at 50 years

Earth Day was celebrated worldwide on April 22, 2020 – its 50th year, but mostly online because of the COVID 19 pandemic. "The theme for Earth Day 2020 is climate action. The enormous challenge — but also the vast opportunities — of action on climate change have distinguished the issue as the most pressing topic for the 50th anniversary." For commentary about Earth Day concerns and activities, consider the following websites: "Earth Day 2020 goes digital amid coronavirus pandemic" by Jessica Flores at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/04/19/earth-day-2020-digital-coronavirus-social-distancing/5135783002/>; "Earth Day at 50: Best Ways to change the world" by Gaia Vince at <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20200422-climate-change-art-the-best-ways-to-change-the-world>; and, Earth Day 2020 organization websites at <https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-2020/> and <https://twitter.com/EarthDayNetwork>.

Perdido Key Loses a Good Friend

Bill Stromquist died in late-April 2020. Many PKA members knew Bill for his sharp wit and extensive and lengthy Perdido Key community involvement. He was Executive Director of the Perdido Key Chamber of Commerce for 10 years and most recently served as the Chamber's Board Treasurer; he assisted with the Perdido Key Neighborhood Plan and helped coordinate rebuilding Perdido Key's infrastructure after Hurricane Ivan. Bill also served on the Escambia County Board of Adjustments, was President of the Friends of Southwest Branch Library and Treasurer of the Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo Board. A true "concerned citizen," his service and companionship will be long remembered.

More Nature Lessons on PKA Website

PKA has continued to update the “Home Activities” entry on the News page of the PKA website with additional lessons on nature-focused activities provided by Rick O’Connor, Escambia County’s Sea Grant Representative. The website is available at <https://perdidokeyassociation.org/>.

Visit Local Museums Online

Virtual tours of local museums and other activities were identified in the April 15, 2020 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Pensacola pride: Virtual museum tours, beach webcams you can enjoy from home” by Jake Newby at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2020/04/15/coronavirus-pensacola-virtual-tours-video-chat-backgrounds-available/5136652002/>.

Where did Don Carlos, Siquenza, and Gongora Drives come from?

Perdido Key road names usually have recognizable association with the island’s coastal setting, such as Sailfish Court, Saltmeadow Drive and Gulfview Lane, but what about those three roads east of the Theo Baars Bridge: Don Carlos Drive, Siquenza Drive and Gongora Drive? Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora was born in 1645 in what is now Mexico City. He was a brilliant scientist and mathematicians, but also a secular priest and free thinker often at odds with Spanish church and government authorities. He prepared the first map of New Spain (Mexico) and, as royal cartographer on General Andres de Pez’s 1693 mission to the northwest coast of the Gulf of Mexico, mapped Pensacola Bay and the mouth of the Mississippi River. Although Tristan del Luna founded a settlement on Pensacola Bay in 1559, it was soon abandoned but Góngora’s favorable report influenced Pensacola’s more enduring settlement by the Spanish in 1698. So Perdido Key roads reflect both coastal life and history! Information drawn from various sources, including *Wikipedia*.

With most public events cancelled or postponed, this month’s Key Notes does not include an event Calendar

Perdido Key Association Board of Directors