

KEY NOTES

NEWS FROM
THE PERDIDO KEY ASSOCIATION



October 2019

Successful International Coastal Cleanup Day

International Coastal Cleanup Day was held on a windy September 21 and drew about 40 volunteers who cleaned Perdido Key beaches from the Alabama border to the Perdido Key Area of Gulf Islands National Seashore. PKA members used a kayak to scour the Old River side of the State Park and removed trash from its shoreline. The annual event was based at Perdido Key State Park and hosted by the Perdido Key Association, Friends of Pensacola State Parks, and Florida State Parks.

Road Swap Approved

The swap of Perdido Key Drive from State of Florida to Escambia County control and Beulah Road from County to State control was unanimously approved at the September 5, 2019 Escambia County Board of County Commissioners meeting. The change will allow state funding for road construction to help alleviate traffic congestion brought on by expansion of the Navy Federal Credit Union complex and other growth in the Beulah area. On Perdido Key Drive the change should allow more rapid improvement in traffic safety control measures; as envisaged by Escambia County District 2 Commissioner Doug Underhill, this may include converting crosswalk signals from yellow to red lights, providing crossing guards at the Flora-Bama, and developing designs for a signal/roundabout at the Perdido Key Drive-Johnson Beach Road intersection. These efforts may help expedite fulfillment of the Perdido Key Master Plan. FDOT funding already committed for construction of the Perdido Key Multi-Use Path along Perdido Key Drive and the proposed Flora-Bama traffic light is expected to continue. For more on the road swap, see the September 7, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article "Escambia County votes to take over Perdido Key Drive and give portion of Beulah Road to the state" by Jim Little at

<https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2019/09/05/escambia-county-takes-over-perdido-key-drive-gives-part-beulah-road-fdot/2224763001/> and the Escambia County/FDOT

“Roadway Transfer Agreement” at

http://agenda.myescambia.com/docs/2019/REGBCC/20190905_4350/16640_CR%2099_SR%20292%20Transfer%20Agreement%20%28with%20Legal%20Stamp%29.pdf.

Progress on Pensacola Pass Management Plan

At its September 5, 2019 meeting, the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners approved a resolution supporting a State of Florida FDEP study grant for the Pensacola Pass Management Plan and appropriated the required matching funds (\$103,750) for the project. The grant will move forward plans to deposit sand dredged from Pensacola Pass onto the Perdido Key Area of the Gulf Islands National Seashore instead of off-shore. The generally westward migration of sand in the region should help replenish the beaches of Perdido Key. For more information on the Pensacola Pass Inlet Management Plan, see the February 7, 2018 *Pensacola News Journal* article “New plan would ‘naturally replenish’ erosion on Perdido Key beaches” by Melissa Nelson Gabriel at

<https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/pensacola/beaches/2018/02/08/perdido-key-erosion-plan-naturally-replenish/308582002/>.

Revised Erosion Status for Perdido Key Beaches

The June 2019 Florida Department of Environmental Protection document “Critically Eroded Beaches in Florida” altered the declared status of Perdido Key beaches. Whereas all beaches from the National Seashore to the Alabama border had previously been designated as “critically eroded,” only the eastern three miles are now so designated – with the western portion no longer considered eroded. As in previous documents, the Perdido Key Area of the Gulf Islands National Seashore is designated as “non-critically eroded.” “Critically Eroded Beaches in Florida” is available at <https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/FDEP-Critically-Eroded-Beaches-2019.pdf>.

No Cause Found for Perdido Key Condo Fire

The Florida State Fire Marshall’s Office has closed its investigation into the cause of the June 19, 2019 fire that destroyed 27 residences on Perdido Key not far from the Florida-Alabama border. The size and severity of the fire reportedly made it impossible to determine the cause. There were no fatalities or major injuries from the fire, thanks to the actions of citizens and first responders. For more on this issue, see the September 6, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article “State Fire Marshall stumped on cause of Perdido Key condo fire” by Kevin Robinson at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2019/09/06/perdido-key-condo-fire-state-fire-marshall-unable-determine-cause/2232362001/>.

Drilling Ban Bill Passes House

The current moratorium on oil and gas drilling off Florida expires in 2022, but the US House of Representatives has passed a bill that would prevent drilling indefinitely. H.R. 205, called the “Protecting and Securing Florida’s Coastline Act of 2019,” was co-sponsored by Representative Matt Gaetz from Florida’s First Congressional District who

noted that “Florida’s precious coastline is a national treasure and a vital military asset.” The proposed ban or similar one proposed by Florida Senator Marco Rubio is likely to have a difficult time gaining support in the US Senate and within the current Administration to become law. For more on this issue, see the September 11, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article “House passes bill to permanently ban drilling off Florida’s Gulf Coast” by Jim Little at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2019/09/11/house-passes-bill-permanently-ban-drilling-off-floridas-gulf-coast/2293950001/>.

15 Years Since Ivan

September 16, 2019 marked the 15th year from when Hurricane Ivan devastated Perdido Key and surrounding areas. To commemorate the disaster, the *Pensacola News Journal* published the article “15 years later, Hurricane Ivan remembered as one of the costliest storms to hit Panhandle” on September 12, 2019 with links to a variety of photos and commentary about the event at <https://www.pnj.com/story/weather/hurricanes/2019/09/12/hurricane-ivan-15th-anniversary-look-back-one-panhandles-costliest-hurricanes/2290761001/>.

Health Advisories in Local Waters

A health advisory was issued for a portion of Pensacola Beach following two tests showing high levels of bacteria; it was later rescinded when there was “adequate reduction in bacteria levels.” A health alert was issued for Eleven Mile Creek when toxins produced by blue-green algae were detected. For more on these issues, see the September 23, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Casino Beach swim advisory lifted after new tests show lower bacteria levels” by Melissa Nelson Gabriel at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/pensacola/beaches/2019/09/23/casino-beach-swim-advisory-lifted-after-new-tests-show-lower-bacteria-levels/2418817001/> and the September 26, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article “After dog dies in Eleven Mile Creek, tests confirm presence of toxins, health alert issued” by Kevin Robinson at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2019/09/26/florida-officials-issue-health-alert-eleven-mile-creek-after-dogs-death/3779524002/>.

Oil Spill Tar Balls could last Decades

Beaches have the capacity to clean themselves after an oil spill by breaking up the oil and allowing microbial organisms to degrade it. But according to Florida State University researcher Markus Huettel, oil from the 2010 BP disaster remains on area beaches as “buried tar mats” that will likely create tar balls for decades to come. For more on this issue, see the September 24, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Tar balls on Pensacola Beach from BP spill could last at least 30 years, study says” by Melissa Nelson Gabriel at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/pensacola/beaches/2019/09/24/pensacola-beach-tar-balls-bp-spill-take-30-years-degrade-study-shows/2419497001/>.

5G Controversy

Providers of wireless services are installing small cell transmitters throughout Escambia County to pave the way for the coming 5G technology. There is controversy, however, on where the transmitters can be located and whose permission is required to do so. For more on the issue see the August 13, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article “5G cell towers could be coming to your front yard. Here’s why Pensacola can’t stop them” by Jim Little at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2019/08/13/pensacola-5-g-cell-towers-city-says-has-no-say-over-small-cell-nodes/1989821001/> and the September 13, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article “See if you live near a proposed small cell transmitter in Pensacola” by Jim Little at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2019/09/13/5-g-cell-towers-map-see-where-theyre-located-pensacola/2311473001/>.

National Seashore Admission Fee Hike

Gulf Islands National Seashore announced a \$5 increase in entrance fees for 2020, from \$20 to \$25 per vehicle, \$10 to \$15 per person, \$10 to \$15 per motorcycle and \$40 to \$45 for the park-specific annual pass. The increase will be used to fund park maintenance and applies to all 112 parks that charge an entry fee. For more on the issue, see the September 27, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Why fees at Gulf Islands National Seashore will go up starting in 2020” by Melissa Nelson Gabriel at https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/pensacola/beaches/2019/09/27/gulf-islands-national-seashore-says-fees-increase-starting-2020/3789169002/?utm_source=pnj-Daily%20Briefing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily_briefing&utm_term=list_article_thumb.

Utility Rate Hike

Effective October 1, 2019, ECUA customers will pay an additional 2.3% for water and sewer service and 5% for trash collection. This is an average increase of \$1.65 for water and sewer and \$.90 for trash collection. For more on this issue, see the August 28, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article “ECUA customers will see higher bills as Board approves rate increase” by Jim Little at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2019/08/28/ecua-customers-see-higher-bills-october-rate-increase-approved/2140175001/>.

Sun Trail Funding

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is requesting proposals for grants to be used for non-motorized trails. This is the type of grant that might be used to augment already designated funding for the Perdido Key Multi-Use Path. PKA will be following this issue, with proposals required by December 20, 2019. Further information is available in the “Florida Administrative Register – Volume 45, Number 181, September 17, 2019.”

New Pensacola Bay Bridge in Operation

After several delays, the first span of the new Pensacola Bay Bridge was opened for traffic in early September. Because of new and changing traffic patterns, motorists should exercise caution when approaching, exiting and using the new bridge. For more on this issue, see the September 6, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article “First phase of Pensacola Bay Bridge transition off to smooth start” by Jake Newby at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/2019/09/05/new-pensacola-bay-bridge-traffic-transition-off-smooth-start/2219873001/>.

Alabama Red Snapper Season into October

Alabama has added three days to its recreational season for red snapper. The extended season will begin at 12:01 AM on Friday, October 4 and run to midnight on Sunday, October 6, 2019. For more information, see the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources newsletter *Outdoor Alabama* at <https://www.outdooralabama.com/node/2726>.

Pensacola Beach Preservation Ordinance Approved

The two year long effort by the Save Pensacola Beach citizens group to have an ordinance that supports the results of the 2018 referendum against efforts to change leased lands on Pensacola Beach to fee-simple met with success at the September 5, 2019 meeting of the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners. The Commissioners unanimously approved the ordinance that “codifies the building limit of 4,126 units and requires unanimous approval of both the Santa Rosa Island Authority and the County commission to change the building cap in the future. It also prohibits any of the 4,126 units from begin transferred to another property.” In addition, the ordinance requires unanimous County and Island Authority approval to change zoning on properties zoned for conservation or recreation and adds 224 acres of protected land to the 372 already preserved by state law. For more on the issue, see the September 6, 2019 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Pensacola Beach preservation ordinance approved unanimously” by Jim Little at https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2019/09/05/pensacola-beach-preservation-ordinance-approved-unanimously/2224756001/?utm_source=pnj-Daily%20Briefing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily_briefing&utm_term=hero.

October Calendar

Oct 02-05 – Alabama Coastal BirdFest in Fairhope et al.
Oct 03-06 – Pensacola Beach Songwriter’s Festival
Oct 04-06 – Destin Seafood Festival
Oct 05 – Peanut Festival at Gabber Farm in Jay
Oct 06 – Turkey Shoot signup at Elberta VFW
Oct 10-13 – National Shrimp Festival in Gulf Shores
Oct 11-13 – Pensacola Greek Festival at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church
Oct 12 – Pensacola Dragon Boat Festival at Bayview Park

Oct 13 – Pensacola Half Marathon and 5K at Community Maritime Park
Oct 17-27 – Pensacola Interstate Fair at fairgrounds on Mobile Highway
Oct 18 – Perdido Trunk or Trick/Flicks on the Field at Pensacola Greyhound Track
Oct 18-19 – Ice Flyers at Pensacola Bay Center
Oct 18-20 and 25-27 – Othello at University of West Florida
Oct 26 – Breast Cancer Awareness Walk at Community Maritime Park
Oct 26 – Santa Rosa Farmers Market Fall Festival in Milton
Oct 31 – Trunk R Treat at The Wharf
Oct 31 – Flora-Bama Halloween Party and Costume Contest

Blue Angels practice on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at NAS Pensacola
The following websites provide additional information about Gulf Coast events

<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