

KEY NOTES

NEWS FROM
THE PERDIDO KEY ASSOCIATION



June 2021

Tuesday June 8 World Ocean Day Celebration at the Visitors Center!

The Perdido Key Area Chamber of Commerce will host the World Oceans Day 2021 Celebration with an open house at the Perdido Key Visitors Center, 15500 Perdido Key Drive (by the Fire Station). The free event will run from 10 AM until 2 PM on Tuesday, June 8, and feature Florida Fish and Wildlife, Niuhi Dive Charters, and Ocean Strike Team presentations on invasive lionfish, indigenous animals provided by Alabama Gulf Coast Zookeepers, plus ocean and environmentally related displays and activities from Clean Horizons, Escambia County Marine Resources, Perdido and Pensacola Bays and Estuaries staff, ECUA, Friends of Pensacola State Parks, Friends of the Southwest Library and PKA. Go to <https://business.perdidochamber.com/events/details/world-ocean-day-22267?calendarMonth=2021-06-01> for more information on the event.

World Oceans Day is celebrated on June 8 every year. As coordinated worldwide by the United Nations and The Ocean Project, "World Oceans Day is a global day of ocean celebration and collaboration for a better future." A healthy ocean is critical for our survival, providing most of the oxygen we breath, helping to feed us, regulating our climate, cleaning the water we drink, providing a "pharmacopoeia of medicine" and limitless inspiration (drawn from sevensesamedia.org). For more on World Oceans Day worldwide, go to <https://oceanic.global/projects/united-nations-world-oceans-day-2021/> and <https://theoceanproject.org/2021/03/world-ocean-day-2021/>.

As was done to observe World Oceans Day 2020, ocean related slides will be posted on the PKA website from June 2 through June 7 2021 with a different presentation each day. We hope you will check out the slides and come to the 2021 World Oceans Day Celebration on June 8!

Road Work near the Theo Baars Bridge

Road work at the Sorrento Road-Gulf Beach Highway intersection near the Perdido Key Publix began on Monday, May 17, 2021. The improvements planned include a new

southbound left-turn lane, new eastbound right-turn lane, extension of the westbound left-turn lane, in addition to drainage and roadway lighting improvements. For more information of this FDOT project (Project Number 439964-1), go to <https://nwflroads.com/projects/439964-1>.

Pensacola Bay Bridge is Open!

After an eight-month closure from damage sustained by barges broken free by Hurricane Sally in September 2020 with its severe impact on residents and businesses in Gulf Breeze, Pensacola Beach and elsewhere, one span of the new Pensacola Bay Bridge (officially the “General Daniel ‘Chappie’ James Jr. Bridge”) reopened on Friday May 28, 2021 just in time for the Memorial Day holiday weekend. For more on the bridge opening, see the May 28, 2021 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Pensacola Bay Bridge finally open after 8-month closure; drivers can expect some delays” by Emma Kennedy at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2021/05/28/pensacola-bay-bridge-reopen-traffic-memorial-day-hurricane-sally-skanska/7466670002/>.

Multi-Use Path Construction Continues

Construction continues on the Perdido Key Multi-Use Path on the north side of Perdido Key Drive. Concrete for the path now extends from the west end of Perdido Key State Park near the Eden Condominium and Surf Style store to the Seafarer Condominium. The path is for pedestrians and bicycles only and not for motorized transportation. As the path enters service in the months and years ahead, action to ensure its proper use will be a continuing challenge.

Crosswalk Signal Repairs Completed

The five crosswalks on Perdido Key Drive were updated in April 2020 with improved “pedestrian-activated flashing in-roadway signs, a bidirectional pedestrian-activate LED crossing sign, a ‘Pedestrian Crossing Ahead’ sign and a ‘Pedestrian Crossing Ahead’ pavement message.” Hurricane Sally destroyed the installations in September 2020. With funding approved by the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners for material necessary to repair the crosswalks, the crosswalks are back in commission. Information on the 2020 upgrade drawn from the April 13, 2020 Escambia County news article “Perdido Key Drive Pedestrian Crossing Upgrade Project Completed.”

Towing Rates Increase

It will be more expensive to park illegally and have vehicles towed. In March 2021 Escambia County approved an increase in “the towing fee for most cars in the county from \$100 to \$150 a day and increase the cap for storage from \$20 a day to \$40 a day.” Future changes to the fees will be tied to the federal consumer price index. Pensacola is likely to follow with a similar though not identical policy. Towing rates had not changed in the area since 2009 and were a frequent discussion topic at Escambia County Board of County Commissioner meetings. For more on this issue, see the May 28, 2021 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Need a car towed in Pensacola? That might soon cost

more as towing rate rises by 76%” by Jim Little at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/pensacola/2021/05/28/pensacola-towing-rates-could-rise-76-percent-after-council-vote/7475389002/>.

Short-Term Rental Issue Off the Table for Now

The Florida legislature adjourned on April 30, 2021 without considering bills that would give the state government more control over vacation rentals; Senate Bill 522 and House Bill 219 were not adopted into state law. Removing local government’s ability to regulate vacation rentals, an effort that could affect homeowner associations as well, has been a controversial proposal in the legislature for several years. For more on the issue go to the May 3, 2021 *Anna Maria Sun* article “Vacation rental bills defeated” by Joe Hendricks at <https://www.amisun.com/2021/05/03/vacation-rental-bills-defeated/> and the March 12, 2021 *News Service of Florida* article “Vacation rental plan ‘clearly a work in progress’ in Florida legislature” at <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/politics/fl-ne-florida-vacation-rental-bill-overhaul-20210312-w5qi7fvbqkm35dwa6u-story.html>; for a website sponsored by the City of Anna Maria to “preserve local regulation of vacation rentals,” go to <https://www.homerulefl.com/>.

Concurrency Rules for Escambia County?

One of the challenges facing growing regions like Northwest Florida is having infrastructure keep pace with development and deciding who will pay for it. Developers of new housing projects in Florida may not be required to contribute to the cost of new roads, sidewalks and schools that the residents of the project will eventually need; the capital improvement costs would likely be borne by taxpayers. Having developers provide “impact fees” as is being discussed in Santa Rosa County would directly contribute to infrastructure creation and likely raise prices of the homes or other structures involved in the project. Escambia County Commissioners are now considering “concurrency rules” requiring “that each development be evaluated for its impact on schools and county roads, and if the project would cause the schools or the roads in the area to go over their designed capacity, the developer would have to pay to increase the capacity.” Commissioner Jeff Bergosh who made the initiative, “... doesn’t support impact fees, but believes concurrency rules, which change depending on the area of the county in which the development is taking place, are a better system to have developers pay for upgrading infrastructure required for new development.” For more on the proposal, see the May 21, 2021 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Escambia County mulls rule change to make developers pay for infrastructure upgrades” by Jim Little at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/escambia-county/2021/05/21/concurrency-rules-developers-table-escambia-county-florida/5180774001/>.

Parks and Parking at Capacity

Popular area parks such as Big Lagoon and Perdido Key State Parks and the Perdido Key Area of Gulf Islands National Seashore (Johnson Beach) often reach their capacity limits and must turn people away as occurred during Memorial Day weekend. With the summer season beginning, local residents may need to plan ahead and go early to make use of these exceptional local attractions.

PKA Facebook Page under New Management!

The Perdido Key Association Facebook page will be a more active social media location than in the past. New PKA Board member John Rossman is now managing the page and encourages PKA members and others to visit it and comment on Perdido Key relevant issues. Current topics for discussion could certainly include beach access and parking concerns, progress and plans for the Perdido Key Multi-Use Path, and recent proposed legislation on vacation rentals. The Facebook page is accessible from the Home page of the PKA website as well as <https://www.facebook.com/PKA.org/>. The Code of Conduct for the page encourages entries to “focus on Perdido Key issues and not be a vehicle for personal, political or commercial advantage.” Please check it out!

News from Baldwin County

Baldwin County added 47,000 people (26%) in the last decade to surpass Montgomery County as the fourth largest county in Alabama. Madison County (Huntsville) grew by nearly 7,000 people and with Baldwin County accounted for more than 90% of Alabama’s population growth. For more on Baldwin County’s growth, see the May 20, 2021 *Mullet Wrapper* article “Baldwin now state’s 4th largest county” at <https://mulletwrapper.net/baldwin-now-states-4th-largest-county/>.

Southeast Beach Express will begin commercial aircraft operations out of Jack Edwards Airport in Gulf Shores on June 4, 2021. The 30 passenger jets will provide round trip service to Atlanta, Cincinnati and Baton Rouge on Thursdays and Sundays. For more on the new service, see the May 20, 2021 *Mullet Wrapper* article “Commercial flights from Jack Edwards to start in June” at <https://mulletwrapper.net/commercial-flights-from-jack-edwards-to-start-in-june/>.

Parking at the Alabama’s Gulf State Park beach locations on Perdido Key is no longer free. Fees required are \$3 for two hours, \$5 for four hours, and \$10 for all day parking.

First Sea Turtle Nests of the Season

The first two sea turtle nests of the 2021 season were identified on May 27 at Gulf Islands National Seashore, one at the Perdido Key Area (Johnson Beach) and the other at the Ft. Pickens Area. National Seashore Biologist Jennifer Manis reminds beach goers that: “Adult and hatchling sea turtles can easily become disoriented by artificial light sources like flashlights, headlights, and sky glow from neighboring cityscapes. Artificial light draws turtles away from the Gulf of Mexico and inland. These disoriented turtles then often die from dehydration, predators, or vehicle strikes.” For more on this issue, see the Gulf Islands National Seashore news release “First Sea Turtle Nest of the 2021 Season” from Stephanie Wade at <https://www.nps.gov/guis/learn/news/first-sea-turtle-nest-of-2021-season.htm>.

Endangered Kemp’s Ridley Sea Turtle

The Kemp’s Ridley is one of four species of sea turtles found in the Perdido Key area; the others are loggerhead, leatherback, and green sea turtles. They weigh less than

100 pounds and are no more than two feet in length. Only a few thousand remain and face threats as bycatch from commercial and recreational fishing as well as from habitat loss and oil spills. Of the 609 sea turtles found dead after the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster, 481 were Kemp's Ridleys. Following turtle friendly lighting guidance regulations and nesting precautions will help all sea turtles survive. Information for this entry was drawn from the e-mail "The world's most endangered sea turtle" by Nicholas Mailos, Senior Director of Ocean Conservancy's Trash Free Seas; for more on local sea turtle issues, go to Escambia County's Natural Resources Management page "Sea Turtles on the Beach" at <https://myescambia.com/our-services/natural-resources-management/marine-resources/sea-turtles/sea-turtles-on-the-beach>.

June Calendar

June 01-06,15-20,29-30 – Blue Wahoos at Blue Wahoo Stadium

June 04 – Grand Fiesta Parade downtown Pensacola

June 05 – Fiesta Boat Parade on Pensacola Bay

June 08 – World Oceans Day 2021 Celebration at Perdido Key Visitors Center

June 10-12 – Orange Beach Open fish tournament

June 11 – Flicks on the Field at Pensacola Greyhound Track, *Dolphin Tale*

June 11-12 – Flora-Bama Fishing Rodeo on Perdido Key

June 12 – Flag Day 5K Run Walk in Gulf Breeze

June 12 – Paddle Pickup kayak cleanup at Big Lagoon State Park

June 12 – Hope for the Hungry food pack-out for Haiti at Fort Walton Beach

June 18-21 – Bud Light Fishing Rodeo on Pensacola Beach

June 19 – "Michael Jackson – A Thrilling Tribute" at the Saenger Theater

June 26 – Escambia County 200th Anniversary Cleanup at Ft. Pickens

June 26 – Pensacola Hunter Jumper Association Horse Show 7750 Mobile Highway

June 30 – Pensacola International Billfish Tournament at Palafox Pier & Yacht Harbor

Blue Angels practice at NAS Pensacola June 01,02,08,09,15,16,30

Bands on the Beach every Tuesday evening 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>

Perdido Key Association Board of Directors