

KEY NOTES

NEWS FROM
THE PERDIDO KEY ASSOCIATION



March 2023

PKA Annual Membership Meeting

About 30 members attended the PKA Annual Membership Meeting on February 25, 2023 at the Eden Condominium; Zoom attendance was also planned but connection seemed spotty. Matt Posner, Director of the Pensacola & Perdido Bays Estuary Program, provided valuable information on the health of our region's waterways as well as the activities of his organization. He emphasized that seagrass was important to our estuaries but its health varied by location with the Perdido area in fair shape but Pensacola Bay less fortunate. He also spoke of the recent partial oyster harvest closure in Pensacola Bay because of bacteria but pointed out that local oysters being sold were safe. The Pensacola & Perdido Bay Estuary Program is currently part of Escambia County government and recently completed its first Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan for the Pensacola and Perdido Bay watersheds, available at <https://www.ppbep.org/the-plan/ccmp>. The organization is also seeking "National Estuary Program" designation that would make it eligible for federal funding. PKA president Charles Krupnick continued the meeting with a report on PKA finances, noting the cost of goods and services had increased significantly in the past few years, as well as covering Association activities in 2022 such as appearances at Escambia County Board of County Commissioner and Chamber of Commerce meetings and the June World Oceans Day event. The meeting featured a discussion on the current "We are Perdido" incorporation initiative with initiative leader Steve Brendtro in attendance. The audience was encouraged to renew their PKA membership for 2023 if they had not done so already as well as to consider becoming a PKA Director. A draft of the Annual Membership Meeting minutes will be posted on the Archive page of the PKA website in the near future.

Perdido Incorporation Initiative

Progress on the "We are Perdido" incorporation initiative can be followed on social media at <https://Facebook.com/weareperdido/>. To view the January 23, 2023 public meeting on the initiative at Liberty Church, go to the "We are Perdido" website at <https://weareperdido.org/>.

Both Spans of Pensacola Bay Bridge Open

The second span of the new Pensacola Bay Bridge (Gen. Daniel “Chappie” James, Jr. Bridge) was opened to traffic on February 14, 2023 after extensive delays caused in part by Hurricane Sally. Only two lanes of the three lanes on each span are currently in use as work continues to complete the project. For more on this issue, see the February 14, 2023 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Westbound span of Pensacola Bay Bridge is open. PPD has already made 21 traffic stops” by Kevin Robinson at

<https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/2023/02/13/pensacola-bay-bridge-to-gulf-bridge-three-mile-bridge-fully-opens/69899483007/>.

Perdido Key Multi-Use Path

Progress has been made to begin construction of the west portion of the Perdido Key Multi-Use Path. Fully funded by a \$4.5 million grant from the RESTORE program, in January 2023 the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners awarded \$450,000 to a contractor to lead the construction effort. Completion is anticipated in 2024.

Update on Perdido Key State Park

Work has begun on repairs to the Perdido Key State Park East Use Area. When the East Use Area is completed, the West Use Area currently open for emergency use will be closed for repairs.

Update on National Seashore/Johnson Beach

Contracting packages are being created to utilize the “Johnson Beach Access Management and Habitat Protection” RESTORE grant to restore beaches and dunes and reduce disturbance to habitat at the Perdido Key Area of Gulf Islands National Seashore. When completed, roadside parking will be prohibited but three parking lots will be built on the north side of the road along with eight new dune crossovers. A .9 mile boardwalk trail will be constructed on the left side of Johnson Beach Road for pedestrians and cyclist entering the park as well as additional enhancements such as a park entrance sign and reader boards on the Perdido Key Multi-Use Path. Construction could begin in fall 2023.

Bids on OLF-8

Developer D.R. Horton made a \$33 million cash offer for over 500 acres of OLF-8, the former Naval outlying landing field in Beulah. It was followed by a \$35 million cash offer from Breland Companies that Horton met with a \$38 million counteroffer. Each offer has a number of provisions for the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners to consider along with concerns for how accepting one of the bids might impact the \$14 million Triumph Gulf Coast grant for OLF-8 roads and infrastructure. For more on the issue, see the February 17, 2023 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Bidding war: Escambia County gets multiple multi-million-dollar offers on OLF 8” by Jim Little at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/escambia-county/2023/02/17/escambia-county-olf-8-projects-has-offers-from-multiple-developers/69911299007/>.

Port of Pensacola

2022 was a good year for cargo activity at the Port of Pensacola. Bulk concrete from Central America, wind energy components from Asia and South America, and products from the agricultural sector were among the items passing through the port. For more on the issue, see the February 1, 2023 *Pensacola News Journal* article by Kevin Robinson “Port of Pensacola had a record year in 2022. What’s driving it, and will growth continue?” by Kevin Robinson at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/2023/02/01/port-of-pensacola-tenants-cemex-pate-stevedore-bring-in-record-cargo/69859852007/>.

Short Term Rental Discussions

Pensacola and Pensacola Beach officials and property owners have discussed short term/vacation rental issues in recent weeks. “Florida law prevents municipalities from banning vacation rentals or regulating the required length of stay, but cities can pass rules regulating the rentals as businesses.” Those in favor of some regulation voice concern about how short-term rentals can undermine the character of neighborhoods while those opposed to regulation can cite income loss and private property rights. For more on the issue, see the January 31, 2023 *WEAR* report “Pensacola Beach residents calling for short-term rental regulations” by Kelsey Coffey at <https://weartv.com/news/local/pensacola-beach-residents-calling-for-short-term-rental-regulation> and the February 17, 2023 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Are regulations needed to keep short-term rentals accountable? Pensacola wants more data” by Jim Little at <https://news.yahoo.com/regulations-needed-keep-short-term-101046778.html>. Related issues on local control and citizens’ rights being considered in the Florida legislature can be found at the *1000 Friends of Florida* article “2023 Florida Legislative Update” at <https://1000fof.org/legis/2023-legislative-session/>.

Local Affordable Housing Ranked

A SmartAsset.com study of affordable places to live in Florida listed a number of locations in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties, including Brent, Bellview, Milton, West Pensacola and East Milton. The study considered factors such as “closing costs, real estate taxes, homeowners’ insurance and mortgage rates across the state.” For more on the issue, see the February 13, 2023 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Escambia, Santa Rosa areas dominate SmartAsset’s most affordable places to live in Florida” by Brandon Girod at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/community/2023/02/13/most-affordable-places-to-live-florida-west-pensacola-milton-brent-bellview/69891943007/>.

Alligator Attack Fatality

An elderly woman was killed by an alligator while walking her dog in Fort Pierce, Florida. The 10 foot alligator came out of nearby water and attacked the dog, but turned on her when she protected the dog. According to FWC (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission), since 1948 out of 442 unprovoked alligator bites in Florida only 26 resulted in fatalities. Also, according to FWC, if attacked by an alligator “the best thing to do is fight back” since it may let go and retreat. For more on the issue, see the February 21, 2023 *BBC News* article “Alligator kills 85-year-old woman in Florida” by Chloe Kim at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-64720198>.

Shark Attacks in 2022

According to the International Shark Attack File, five people died from shark attacks in 2022 (one in Hawaii, two in South Africa and two in Egypt). 57 unprovoked attacks were also reported. Florida had 32 provoked bites and 16 unprovoked bites. For more on the issue, see the February 6, 2023 *Treasure Coast Newspapers* article “Shark attacks: Florida researchers release 2022 statistics on shark bites and deaths” by Ed Killer at <https://www.tcpalm.com/story/news/local/florida/2023/02/06/shark-attack-uf-university-florida-gainesville-museum-natural-history-florida-program-shark-research/69866763007/>.

Environmental Opportunities and Issues

Escambia County’s Sea Grant Representative Rick O’Connor is looking for volunteers to help with this year’s Florida Horseshoe Crab Watch. If interest contact Rick at 850 475-5230, extension 111.

A “Living Shoreline Course” will be conducted at the UF/IFAS Extension Office in Milton on March 7 and 8, 2023. For more information, call 321 985-3412.

Enjoy a ‘Night with Nature’ from 5:30 to 8:30 PM on March 3, 2023 at the Roy Hyatt Environmental Center, 1300 Tobias Road in Cantonment.

“National Invasive Species Week” from February 20-26, 2023 was a “nationwide event to raise awareness about invasive species, the threat they pose, and what can be done to prevent their spread.” For more on the national effort go to <https://www.nisaw.org/>; for localized emphasis go to <https://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/nat/>.

The first two parts of the *UF/IFAS Panhandle Outdoors* series on “Reducing Health Advisories in Our Coastal Waters” are available as follows: February 9, 2023 “Part 1 Septic Maintenance” at <https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/escambiaco/2023/02/09/reducing-health-advisories-in-our-coastal-waters-part-1-septic-maintenance/> and February 16, 2023 “Part 2 Septic Conversion” at <https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/escambiaco/2023/02/16/reducing-health-advisories-in-our-coastal-waters-part-2-septic-conversion/>, both by Rick O’Connor.

The Biden administration is considering a lease sale for offshore wind energy as part its effort to halt climate change. For more on the issue, go to the February 22, 2023 *AP News* article “Biden considers 1st offshore wind auction in Gulf of Mexico” by Jennifer McDermott at <https://apnews.com/article/galveston-gulf-of-mexico-lake-charles-climate-and-environment-business-3504e385c83b7594beb38727715f7727>.

The UN is resuming its meetings “to produce a unified agreement for the conservation and sustainable use of those vast marine ecosystems” in the nearly two-thirds of the world’s oceans outside national boundaries. For more on the effort, see the February 19, 2023 *AP News* article “UN ocean treat talks resume with goal to save biodiversity” by Christina Larson at <https://apnews.com/article/science-politics-international-agreements-climate-and-environment-united-nations-a1fc54e48fb875b759e1df1c147cc4a8>.

Monarch butterflies on California's coast increased in 2021 and 2022 following a deep decline in 2020. Levels are still far below those of past decades because of loss of milkweed plants from development. For more on the issue, see the *AP News* article "Monarch butterflies wintering in California rebound" by Olga R. Rodriguez at <https://apnews.com/article/science-california-climate-and-environment-butterflies-7327c96f182c872f3ed15134b6b1b48f>.

Bands on the Beach for 2023

The lineup for the popular "Bands on the Beach" free concerts held on Tuesday evenings at Pensacola Beach is available at

<https://www.pnj.com/story/entertainment/2023/02/01/pensacola-beach-bands-on-the-beach-2023-dates-lineup-announced/69862524007/>.

March Calendar

Mar 01-06 – Sun Belt Basketball Championship Games at the Pensacola Bay Center

Mar 04,05 – Ballyhoo Festival at Gulf Coast Zoo in Gulf Shores

Mar 08 – PowHer Hour at Orange Beach Event Center

Mar 08 – Women Mean Business Leadership Luncheon at Grand Lagoon Yacht Club

Mar 11 – McGuire's St. Patrick's Day Prediction 5K Run at McGuire's in Pensacola

Mar 11,12 – Orange Beach Festival of Arts at Orange Beach Coastal Arts Center

Mar 11,12,19,24,25,26 – Ice Zone Public Skate at the Pensacola Bay Center

Mar 11,12,24,25,26 – Pensacola Ice Flyers at Pensacola Bay Center

Mar 17 – Various St. Patrick's Day activities

Mar 17 – Kites on the Coast at Pensacola Beach

Mar 17-19 – Boat and Yacht Show at The Wharf

Mar 18 – Flora-Bama's Beach Run-Walk 5K and Half-Marathon at the Flora-Bama

Mar 18 – Mustang & Mega Car Show at OWA

Mar 25 – I Pink I Can Run 4-Mile Run/Walk for breast cancer at the Flora-Bama

Mar 27 – Perdido Key Chamber High Heel Classic Golf Scramble at Pensacola Country Club

Mar 31 – Easter Egg Hunt & Kids Fun Day at the Flora-Bama

The following websites provide additional information about events 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