



July 2023

River Road Closure July 11

The long anticipated closure of River Road to install a “new box culvert under the roadway” and replace the associated wooden bridge will begin on Tuesday, July 11, 2023, noting that utility work on the project has already begun. It is anticipated pedestrian traffic will “be maintained through the work zone and closure for the duration of the work.” “The road is expected to re-open by October 2023 and all work at this location is expected to be complete by November 2023.” For more on the issue, see the June 27, 2023 *Escambia County News Article* “River Road Closure, Culvert Repairs to Begin July 11” at <https://myescambia.com/news/news-article/2023/06/27/river-road-closure-culvert-repairs-to-begin-july-11>.

Multi-Use Path Construction Begins July 5

After weather delays and concern for 4th of July holiday traffic, according to Escambia County construction of the east portion of the Perdido Key Multi-Use Path will begin on July 5, 2023. The “first leg of the project will be to construct the connector path between Johnson Beach Road and the crossing of Perdido Key Drive” and should take 2-3 weeks to complete. Work will then shift to the portion of the path from River Road near Perdido Key State Park along Perdido Key Drive to River Road under the Theo Baars Bridge. Construction is expected to take about one year.

More Drownings in Northwest Florida

Rip currents are deadly and beach sign warnings need to be followed. A total of five individuals drowned between June 22 and 24 in separate locations in Northwest Florida, with three at Panama City Beach. This brings the Bay County toll to seven in nine days, “the highest number of beach fatalities for any single locale in the U.S. for 2023.” Double red flags were posted near some of the Panama City Beach deaths. For more on this issue, see the June 26, 2023 *USA Today* article “Panama City Beach leads the nation in 2023 beach deaths as 3 more tourists die Saturday” by Nathan Cobb and Dinah Voyles Pulver at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/06/26/three-tourists-die-panama-city-beach-swimming-deaths/70357619007/>.

Pensacola Area Tornadoes

One person died during the recent outbreak of severe storms when two tornadoes struck Escambia County, one not far from downtown Pensacola and the other on Pensacola Beach. The storms also caused some flooding and substantial property damage. As discussed in his blog, a tornado narrowly missed Commissioner Jeff Bergosh's condo home on Pensacola Beach while he was in residence. For more on this issue, see the June 16, 2023 *al.com* article "2 tornadoes in Pensacola area: 1 dead, 1 struck by lightning, homes damaged" by Warren Kulo at <https://www.al.com/news/2023/06/2-tornados-in-pensacola-area-1-dead-1-struck-by-lightning-homes-damaged.html>.

Vandalism and Beach Access

Escambia County authorities and Perdido Key beachfront property owners have had to deal with considerable vandalism the last couple of years, with much of it associated with beachfront signage issues. County signs providing beach rules and regulations at public beach access locations have been cut down while "no trespassing" signs on private beaches have been destroyed. Similarly "no trespassing" signs on a vacant private beachfront lot have been defaced with obscenities and repeatedly destroyed in recent months. While effective when intact at protecting the property, beach goers are taking advantage of the sign's destruction.

Perdido Key and PKA

2023 has brought substantial challenges to Perdido Key. Construction of new housing units is proceeding apace, beach signage regulations have been changed, public access rights to some private beachfront properties are under review and effort is being made to incorporate a substantial portion of Escambia County as a municipality that includes Perdido Key. With all of this at play, the Perdido Key Association (PKA) continues to operate for charitable and educational purposes in providing information needed to promote the welfare and orderly development, combat deterioration and maintain the natural beauty of Perdido Key. PKA Directors testify before the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners on issues relevant to Perdido Key as well as participate in community events such as World Oceans Day in June and International Coastal Cleanup Day in September. Please pass on membership information to your friends and associates who can join by mail or online at the PKA website (<https://perdidokeyassociation.org>).

Warrington Preparatory Academy

Community leaders gathered at a meeting hosted by Florida State Senator Doug Broxton to express support for "Warrington Preparatory Academy," formerly Warrington Middle School. Senator Broxton said "This is our chance to make a big statement to the community, to the Navy and to all the parties across the state who have been looking at what's happened here in Pensacola." Dr. Eddie Ruiz, superintendent of Charter Schools USA's Florida schools that will run Warrington Prep, said "... local lawmakers are rolling up their sleeves and making their efforts known." For more on this issue, see the June 15, 2023 *WEAR* news release "Community leaders unite to support Warrington Preparatory Academy's future success" by Tanner Stewart at <https://weartv.com/news/local/community-leaders-unite-to-support-warrington-preparatory-academys-future-success>.

World Oceans Day Celebration on Perdido Key

Lots of children and adults helped celebrate World Oceans Day 2023 at the Perdido Key Visitors Center on Thursday, June 8, 2023. Sponsored by the Perdido Key Area Chamber of Commerce with several organizations including PKA setting up display tables and booths, attendees gained a greater understanding of the need to protect and preserve our oceans and the water and shore areas that help make Perdido Key such a great place to live and visit. Among the activities, Florida State Park AmeriCorps representative Justin Franks provided a well received demonstration on sea turtle nesting and the work by volunteers to ensure the success of the 2023 nesting season.

Perdido Key State Park Repairs

Reconstruction continues at Perdido Key State Park after a break at the opening of sea turtle nesting season. Current repair efforts are focused on the Perdido Key Visitors Center access but will shift to the East Access area. Once the East area is completed, it will be reopened and the West Access area currently open for emergency use will be closed for repairs.

Beach Mouse and Endangered Species Act

As part of its recognition of passage of the Endangered Species Act 50 years ago, *Panhandle Outdoors* released an article about the Perdido Key beach mouse and its importance to Perdido Key. Written by Escambia County Sea Grant Representative Rick O'Connor, the article provides details on the mouse and its role in "promoting the health of our coastal dunes and beaches and the threats to its survival." For more on our mouse, go to the June 9, 2023 UF/IFAS *Panhandle Outdoors* article "50 Years of the Endangered Species Act; Part 2 – The Perdido Key Beach Mouse" at <https://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/nat/2023/06/09/50-years-of-the-endangered-species-act-part-2-the-perdido-key-beach-mouse/>.

Golf Carts in Florida and Foley

Golf carts are a favored means of transport for many in Florida and Alabama but subject to government regulations. Some roadways in Florida are approved for golf cart use but, if allowed, effective July 1, 2023 HB 949 will change the age requirement for their use on public roads. Specifically, "if you're under 18, you have to be at least 15 with a learner's permit or 16 with a driver's license. If you're 18 and older, you have to have valid government-issued identification." In Alabama, the city council of Foley has expanded the streets on which golf cart use is authorized. This will require lowering the speed limit on the streets affected to 25 mph to conform to Alabama state law. For more on these issues, see the May 12, 2023 *Tallahassee Democrat* article "Who can drive a golf cart in Florida? New law changes legal age" by Ana Goñi-Lessan at <https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/local/state/2023/05/12/who-can-drive-a-golf-cart-in-florida-new-law-legal-age/70211376007/#:~:text=If%20you're%20under%2018,have%20valid%20government%20Dis%20identification> and the May 31-June 14, 2023 *Mullet Wrapper* article "Foley plans to open even more streets to golf cart traffic" at <https://mulletwrapper.net/foley-plans-to-open-even-more-streets-to-golf-cart-traffic/>.

Wildlife at Perdido Key's West End

Orange Beach has had early sea turtle nesting success with 22 loggerhead and two Kemp's Ridley nests as of mid-June 2023. In addition, the city's "Coastal Resources Dept. is now tracking over 200 least tern nests in a small beach area at Gulf State Park at Alabama Point [the west end of Perdido Key island]." The area is a nesting area for other shorebirds as well including the threatened snowy plover. For more on this issue, see the June 14, 2023 *Mullet Wrapper* article "Orange Beach closely monitoring Tern nests at Alabama Point East" at <https://mulletwrapper.net/orange-beach-closely-monitoring-tern-nests-at-alabama-point-east/>.

Atlantic Sargassum

The 5,000 miles mass of sargassum seaweed in the Atlantic Ocean remains a threat to Caribbean and Florida beaches, though the risk to the Pensacola area remains low. Globes of sargassum have made landfall in places such as Key West and Canaveral National Seashore. The seaweed contains bacteria, some similar to those causing cholera, that may be dangerous to humans as well as fish that feed in the sargassum. According to marine biologist Linda Amara-Zettler, *Vibrio* bacteria are "opportunistically pathogenic" and "will seize the chance to invade an attractive space, such as a cut." Some bacteria may also be adapting to plastic pollution found in seaweed. Avoid sargassum if you can particularly if you have an open wound and wash your hands if you can't. For more on this issue, see the June 28, 2023 *BBC* article "The real story behind the Atlantic's record breaking seaweed blobs" by Sarah Griffiths at <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20230622-what-is-causing-the-atlantics-seaweed-blobs> and the June 21, 2023 *Florida Rambler* article "Seaweed Update. What's Next?" by Bob Rountree at <https://www.floridarambler.com/environment/sargassum-seaweed-florida-beaches/>.

Combating Burmese Pythons

Invasive Burmese pythons continue to devastate native wildlife in the Florida Everglades. One effort to combat them is to tag and release male pythons and track them as they search for breeding females. The python hunters use the males to locate and destroy the females before they can lay eggs and release another generation of up to 100 more pythons. For more on the effort, see the June 10, 2023 *Fort Myers News-Press* article "Scout pythons help scientists battle spread of giant snakes as program passes 10th year" by Chad Gillis at https://www.news-press.com/story/news/environment/2023/06/04/massive-female-pythons-targeted-as-innovative-program-passes-10-years/70151411007/?utm_source=newspress-dailybriefing-strada&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dailybriefing-headline-stack&utm_term=hero&utm_content=pftm-fortmyers-nletter65.

July Calendar

July 01 – Pensacola International Billfish Tournament conclusion at Palafox Pier

July 01 – Firecracker 5K in downtown Pensacola

July 01 – Freedom Run at the Flora-Bama

July 01,02 – 4th of July Weekend Party at OWA

July 02,16,30 – Blues on the Bay at Community Maritime Park downtown Pensacola

July 03 – Blue Wahoos Summer Celebration at Blue Wahoo Stadium downtown Pensacola

July 03 – Independence Day Street Party at The Wharf

July 03,04 – Grand Bay Watermelon Festival in Grand Bay, Alabama

July 04 – Fourth of July events in Pensacola, Pensacola Beach and elsewhere
July 04 – Shark Run at the Flora-Bama
July 04-09,18-23 – Blue Wahoos at Blue Wahoo Stadium in downtown Pensacola
July 05 – Blue Angels Air Show at Pensacola Beach
July 07 – Guided Pier Walk at Gulf State Park Pier
July 07 – Allen Turner Pro Late Model #1 100 Laps at Five Flags Speedway
July 12-16 – Blue Marlin Grand Championship of the Gulf Coast in Orange Beach
July 16 – Pensacola R&B Picnic at Pensacola Interstate Fairgrounds on Mobile Hwy
July 20-23 – Alabama Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo on Dauphin Island
July 29 – Salsa Music Festival at Maritime Park Amphitheater downtown Pensacola

Blue Angels practice at NAS Pensacola July 11-12 and 25-26

Bands on the Beach at Pensacola Beach every Tuesday, 7-9 PM April to October

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