



August 2023

River Road Closure Moved to September 11

River Road closure to vehicles has been delayed from July 11 to September 11, 2023 and the end of tourist season. The road will be closed for approximately three months to replace the culvert running underneath the roadbed. Pedestrians are expected to be able to use the road for the duration of the work.

New Beach Lighting Ordinance

The Escambia County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) updated the Perdido Key Habitat Conservation Plan with a new “Perdido Key Barrier Island Lighting Ordinance.” It requires Perdido Key properties south of Semmes Road to utilize “wildlife-friendly lighting for exterior lights to protect sea turtle and beach mice habitats.” Once filed with the state, the new regulations will be effective for new construction while existing properties will have until January 1, 2028 to comply. The new regulations also affect Pensacola Beach. For more on this issue, see the July 20, 2023 *Escambia County News Article* “Escambia BCC Amends Barrier Island Lighting Ordinance” at <https://myescambia.com/news/news-article/2023/07/20/escambia-bcc-amends-barrier-island-lighting-ordinance>.

\$3.6 million Funding Proposed for Perdido Key Beach Access

The Escambia County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) is pursuing an amendment to its RESTORE Multi-Year Implementation Plan (MYIP) that includes \$3.6 million for “Perdido Key Beach Public Access Property Acquisition.” If approved by the BCC and US Treasury, the funds would be used for “property acquisition, design, permitting and construction of public infrastructure improvements to facilitate public access to the Gulf of Mexico...” The amendment also includes proposals for Bob Sikes Fishing Pier Rehabilitation, Cantonment Community Center Construction Assistance, CRA Infrastructure Economic Development Program, South Navy Boulevard Improvements and Bayou Grande Watershed Management Plan. The public has 45 days to comment on the amendment following the BCC’s July 18, 2023 meeting before final Board action and transmission to the US Treasury. For more on the amendment, see the July 18, 2023 *BCC Agenda Item 2023-9474* at <https://civicclerk.blob.core.windows.net/stream/ESCAMBIACOFI/abf1032d-8a60-4b6c-b943->

[73bc8525d5fe.pdf?sv=2022-11-02&st=2023-07-24T00%3A30%3A35Z&se=2024-07-24T00%3A35%3A35Z&sr=b&sp=r&sig=pVA0PnUPxm1vZ2Hdx9SEuC%2B%2FvnqadikD3HQdxFfzl4k%3D](https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/escambia-county/2023/07/28/going-in-circles-escambia-county-studies-new-perdido-key-roundabout-for-traffic-problems/70476016007/).

Pervious Surfaces for Beach Access #2 and #3

Escambia County plans to resurface the Perdido Key public parking areas at Beach Access #2 and Beach Access #3 with “pervious pavement,” the same surface found on Beach Access #4 that was opened in 2022. The permeable surface should be a significant improvement over the loose material currently in use at both locations that forms potholes and puddles after rainfall and use.

Perdido Key Roundabout

The roundabout at the intersection of Perdido Key Drive and Johnson Beach Road has been controversial in the several months since its construction. Long traffic lines are familiar to the Perdido area during tourist season but may have increased after the roundabout was put in service. District 1 Commissioner Jeff Bergosh has been investigating its origins and uncovered a 2018 Florida state study recommending against a roundabout at the intersection. For more on the issue, see the July 28, 2023 *Pensacola News Journal* article “\$1.4 million roundabout opened last year on Perdido Key. Why some say it’s a waste.” by Mollye Barrows at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/escambia-county/2023/07/28/going-in-circles-escambia-county-studies-new-perdido-key-roundabout-for-traffic-problems/70476016007/>.

Gulf of Mexico Fish Farm Presentation

An industrial-scale open water fish farm is proposed for the Gulf of Mexico about 25 miles south of Perdido Key and Pensacola Beach. The fish farm would be in line with a federal government initiative promoting new aquaculture projects. According to environmental activist Christian Wagley, fish farms may result in excessive nutrients in the Gulf of Mexico leading to potential red tide outbreaks and disease from the farms spreading to the wild. Those interested can attend a presentation to the Escambia County Marine Advisory Committee by the owner of Manna Farms, the firm proposing the fish farm, on Monday August 14, 2023 at 5:30 pm at the Escambia County Central Office Complex (3363 West Park Place, Pensacola, just north of Fairfield Drive). For earlier reporting on the issue, see the July 20, 2022 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Pensacola may get one of Florida’s first offshore fish farms, and some are already worried” by Colin Warren-Hicks at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2022/07/20/manna-fish-farms-seeking-open-gulf-mexico-farmnear-pensacola/10051025002/>.

ECUA May End Free Recycling Pickup

ECUA is considering adding a charge for curbside recycling pickup service because some subscribers are using recycling cans for normal waste and raising the cost to recycle. According to ECUA Executive Director Bruce Woody: “Half of what comes in the door is garbage.” New rates are expected to be finalized soon. For more on the issue, see the July 17, 2023 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Free curbside recycling in Escambia County and Pensacola may soon be thing of the past” by Jim Little at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/escambia-county/2023/07/17/pensacola-recycling-options-may-change-as-ecua-looks-to-raise-fees/70405308007/>.

Big Lagoon State Park Ribbon-Cutting

Hurricane Sally in 2020 caused significant damage to Big Lagoon State Park including the large pavilions and other structures along the Big Lagoon beachfront. While the main road has been resurfaced and the greatly improved boat launch facility has been open for several months, access beyond the boat launch area was restricted until recently for facility reconstruction. To commemorate the reopening of almost all the park for public access, Florida State Park officials and local authorities participated in a “Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony to Celebrate Opening of Amenities” on July 7, 2023. Big Lagoon State Park is a wonderful wilderness area within the surrounding developments and a great place to spend a day or more. For more information, see the July 26, 2023 *Mullet Wrapper* article “Big Lagoon State Park observation tower back open to public” at <https://mulletwrapper.net/big-lagoon-state-park-observation-tower-back-open-to-public/>.

Perdido Bay Boat Ramp Construction Begins

Escambia County has begun constructing the “Perdido Bay Boat Ramp and Multi-Use Area” at 10836 Lillian Highway. As published in the *Mullet Wrapper*, “The new 40-acre facility located on Heron Bayou will include a two lane boat ramp, 62 parking spaces for vehicles with trailers, 22 parking spaces for vehicles without trailers, and a stormwater treatment facility” with anticipated completion in late-2023 or early-2024. For more on this issue, see the Escambia County Public Projects entry “Perdido Bay Boat Ramp” at <https://myescambia.com/open-government/projects/project-details/perdido-bay-boat-ramp/> and the June 27, 2023 *Mullet Wrapper* article “Work begins on Escambia County’s 1st public boat access to Perdido Bay” at <https://mulletwrapper.net/work-begins-on-escambia-countys-1st-public-boat-access-to-perdido-bay/>.

The Wharf to Expand

The Wharf commercial complex in Orange Beach will add over 33,000 square feet of retail, office and entertainment space, a beer brewery and 26,000 square feet of green and open space with an outdoor stage. For more on this issue, see the June 17, 2023 *OBA* article “The Wharf at Orange Beach Set to Expand with New Development” by Ken Cooper at <https://www.obawebsite.com/the-wharf-at-orange-beach-set-to-expand-with-new-development>.

More on Rice’s Whale

Rice’s whales inhabit the northern portion of the Gulf of Mexico and were identified as a separate species in 2021. Only 51 remain and are protected under the 1972 Marine Mammal Recovery Act from activities that might result in their “unintentional harming or killing,” such as from Eglin Air Force Base exercises. A proposal by NOAA to limit the speed of boats in the zone inhabited by Rice’s whale, i.e., between water depths of 100 and 400 meters, to less than 10 knots along with other regulations has drawn criticism from local private and public sectors because of the effect the new rules would have on commercial and recreational fishing. For more on the issue see the July 3, 2023 *Northwest Florida Daily News* article “Okaloosa County Commission wary of proposed Rice’s whale conservation plan” by Collin Bestor at <https://www.nwfdailynews.com/story/news/local/2023/07/03/okaloosa-county-commission-rices-whale-protection-plan-goes-too-far/70379687007/>.

Hurricane Ian Spreads Invasive Species

Hurricane Ian in 2022 caused widespread damage to Southwest and Central Florida but has also facilitated the spread of invasive animals and plants such as the poisonous cane toad and water hyacinth. For more on this issue, see the July 7, 2023 *Fort Myers News-Press* article "Invasive species, helped by Hurricane Ian, have expanded their range in Florida: USGS" by Chad Gillis at <https://www.yahoo.com/news/invasive-species-helped-hurricane-ian-133102599.html>.

Gulf Waters above 100°!

Water in the Gulf of Mexico near the Florida Keys have been nearing or exceeding record temperatures with measurements as high as 101.1°. Excessively high temperatures can cause bleaching to coral reefs and endanger other animal and plant life in the oceans. Another recent report issue related to our climate is the possible loss of the Gulf Stream and other portions of the "Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)" that transports warm tropical waters northward keeping Europe warm for its latitude, among other environmental effects. According to a recent study, an AMOC collapse could occur by the mid-21st century. For more on these issues, see the July 25, 2023 *USA Today* article "101.1 degrees? Water temperatures off Florida Keys among hottest in the world" by Dinah Voyles Pulver at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2023/07/25/water-temperatures-in-florida/70463489007/> and the July 25, 2023 *USA TODAY* article "Atlantic Ocean current could collapse soon. How you may endure dramatic weather changes." by Doyle Rice at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/weather/2023/07/25/atlantic-current-collapse-possible-in-two-years-study-suggests/70434388007/>.

August Calendar

Aug 01 – Wild Wild Wharf western music and activities at The Wharf

Aug 01-06,15-20,29-31 – Blue Wahoos at Blue Wahoo Stadium in downtown Pensacola

Aug 04 – Free fee day at Gulf Islands National Seashore, including Johnson Beach

Aug 04-05 – Hope for the Hungry Concert at Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center

Aug 04-05 – Slippery When Wet-The Ultimate Bon Jovi Tribute at OWA Theater

Aug 05 – Beyond Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience at Pensacola Intrastate Fairgrounds

Aug 05 – 159th Commemorative Battle of the Battle of Mobile Bay on Dauphin Island

Aug 12 – End of Summer Bash at OWA

Aug 13 – Blues on the Bay: Still Standing Elton John Tribute at Community Maritime Park

Aug 18 – Elvis Revisited at Alabama Gulf Coast Music Hall on the Foley Beach Express

Aug 18-19 – The Neon Queen-A Tribute to Abba at the OWA Theater

Aug 26 – Pensacola Touch-A-Truck & Career Expo at Community Maritime Park

Aug 27 – KC and the Sunshine Band at the Saenger Theater in downtown Pensacola

Blue Angels practice at NAS Pensacola August 01,16,22,23,29

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