

KEY NOTES

NEWS FROM
THE PERDIDO KEY ASSOCIATION



March 2024

PKA Annual Membership Meeting!

Approximately 30 people attended the Perdido Key Association Annual Membership Meeting on Saturday, February 24, 2024 at the Eden Condominium with others joining on Zoom. Featured speaker Christian Wagley, the coastal organizer for Healthy Gulf, provided a terrific presentation on several issues but focused on potential threats from a proposed industrial fish farm offshore from Pensacola and conservation of the rare Rice's whale. PKA President Stan Capua addressed a number of Perdido Key issues such as continued work to restore full beach access to Perdido Key State Park and the Perdido Key Area of Gulf Islands National Seashore (Johnson Beach), progress on the Perdido Key Multi-Use Path, and other construction and development related issues; other Board members provided updates on the Perdido Key Drive/Johnson Beach Road roundabout and changes to Beach Access #2. "We Are Perdido" leader Steve Brendtro was in attendance and provided an update on the status of the Perdido area incorporation initiative. The meeting minutes will be posted shortly on the Archive page of the PKA website.

Beach Access #2 Closed for Maintenance

Perdido Key's Beach Access #2 is temporarily closed for maintenance to include removal of its restrooms, replacement of the current parking surface with permeable pavement, installation of Mobi-mat beach access walkway and connection to the Perdido Key Drive crosswalk. Beach Access #3 will be similarly upgraded at a later date.

Lifeguards on Perdido Key Beaches

Escambia County may be adding lifeguards and lifeguard towers to Perdido Key beaches. Details must still be worked out, but the lifeguard stations will most likely be at or in between Beach Access #2 and Beach Access #3. The lifeguard towers cost \$244,350 and will be paid for from the Local Option Sales Tax fund. For more on this issue, see the February 7, 2023 *Pensacola News Journal* article "Perdido Key may get lifeguards following rash of water rescues last summer" by Mollye Barrows at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/escambia-county/2024/02/07/escambia-county-plans-to-put-lifeguards-on-perdido-key-beach/72490899007/>.

Good News at Gulf State Park Pier

Access to the most seaward portion of the fishing pier at Gulf State Park has not been possible since it was destroyed by Hurricane Sally in 2020, though access to the remaining portion of the pier has been available for some time. On January 29, 2024, however, a giant liftboat took up station at the pier to recover fallen debris and set replacement pilings to restore the pier to full service. Gulf State Park officials are hopeful repairs will be completed by the end of summer 2024. Drawn from the February 7-21, 2024 *Mullet Wrapper* article "Pier & Shore Fishing Outlook" by David "The Pierpounder" Thornton.

Snowbirds and Perdido Key

Perdido Key is home to many cold-weather refugees this time of year. As one snowbird recently stated: "I love it up here... It's so nice, laid-back and relaxed. It's not as crowded as South Miami or the Villages or places like that." According to District 1 Commissioner Jeff Bergosh, snowbirds are vital to the area economy: "They help provide jobs and revenue during the winter to help sustain the economy. Most of them are here for months at a time and are vital parts of the community while they are here." For more on Perdido Key and its snowbirds, see the February 12, 2024 *Pensacola News Journal* article "Perdido Key snowbirds are key to winter business survival on Gulf Coast" by Troy Moon at

<https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/2024/02/12/perdido-key-tourism-depends-on-northern-snowbirds-for-winter-survival/72509967007/#:~:text=%22They're%20incredibly%20important%20and,community%20while%20they%20are%20here.%22>.

Best Florida Beaches!

As mentioned in a recent Perdido Key Area Chamber of Commerce posting, *Southern Living* recently posted a list of best Florida beaches with Perdido Key listed 16 out of 20. Comments about Perdido Key include: "Hugging the northwest stretch of the Florida Panhandle, this island has long been a destination for families seeking solace from touristy cities as well as easy access to nature. Credit its appeal to white-sand beaches, emerald waters, and proximity to Big Lagoon State Park, Perdido Key State Park, and Johnson's Beach." To access the January 20, 2024 *Southern Living* article "20 Florida Beaches That Could Pass For The Caribbean" (fact checked by Jennifer Hawk), go to <https://www.southernliving.com/travel/florida/florida-beaches-look-like-caribbean>.

Nonstop Pensacola-Philadelphia

Frontier Airlines has announced it will begin nonstop service between Pensacola International Airport and Philadelphia International Airport on May 22, 2024. For more on this issue, see the February 7, 2024 *Pensacola News Journal* article "Frontier Airlines launching nonstop flights between Pensacola and Philly" at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/2024/02/07/pensacola-international-airport-to-philadelphia-flights-coming-soon/72506988007/>.

Turtle Watch 2024

In 2023 "Escambia County recorded 13 loggerhead turtle nests and one green turtle nest on Pensacola Beach, along with two loggerhead turtle nests on Perdido Key." Escambia County Natural Resources Management and Marine Resources staff and volunteers contributed many

hours toward marine turtle nesting surveys and monitoring activities in the County during the year's sea turtle nesting season. They will begin sea turtle patrols again on May 1, 2024 through the end of August looking for "signs of sea turtle nests, hatchlings, or turtles in distress." For more on these efforts, see the February 22, 2024 *Pensacola News Journal* article "Escambia County staff, volunteers dedicate thousands of hours to protecting sea turtles" at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/neighborhoods/giving/2024/02/22/escambia-county-staff-volunteers-step-up-for-nesting-sea-turtles/72660328007/>.

Oyster Predators

Beside people, what else eats oysters in our area? According to a recent *UF/IFAS* article, one of the top predators is oyster drills, small snails that use enzymes to soften the oyster shell and then "drill into the shell and siphon out the oyster meat." Blue crabs as well as fish such as black drum also enjoy oyster meals. Local oyster farmers obviously pay attention to the habits of these and other species to protect their oyster beds. For more on this issue, see the February 23, 2024 *UF/IFAS* article "Oyster Predators in the Florida Panhandle" by Thomas Derbes II at <https://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/nat/2024/02/23/oyster-predators-in-the-florida-panhandle/>.

Feb 18 was World Whale Day

World Whale Day was begun in 1980 by Greg Kauffman to celebrate the humpback whales that visited Maui each winter and to raise awareness about threats to their survival. The North Pacific population of humpback whales was only about 1,000 members in 1980 so the species was facing extinction. Today more than 21,000 humpback whales visit Maui each year in part because of the efforts of the Kaufman-founded Maui Pacific Whale Foundation (PWF). Other species of whale have recovered as well but some still remain vulnerable. For more on this issue, go to the February 16, 2024 *EcoWatch* article "World Whale Day Celebrates Humpbacks and Raises Awareness of Threats" by Christen Hemingway Jaynes at <https://www.ecowatch.com/world-whale-day-2024.html>.

March 2024 Calendar

Mar 01,02,15,16,29,30 – Pensacola Ice Flyers at Pensacola Bay Center downtown Pensacola
Mar 02 – Perdido Beach Resort Half Marathon, Fun Run & 5K in Orange Beach
Mar 05-11 – Sun Belt Conference Basketball Tournament at Pensacola Bay Center
Mar 06 – Rum Runners 5K in downtown Pensacola
Mar 08-09 – Carmina Burana at University of West Florida Center for Fine and Performing Arts
Mar 09 – McGuire's St. Patrick's Day Prediction 5K Run downtown Pensacola
Mar 09 – Mustang and Mega Car Show at OWA
Mar 09,10 – Orange Beach Festival of the Arts
Mar 15-17 – 2024 Wharf Boat & Yacht Show at The Wharf
Mar 16 – Flora-Bama Beach Run for America's Warriors
Mar 16 – Cards on the Coast at Sanders Beach Corrine Jones Resource Center in Pensacola
Mar 22 – Perdido Key Area Chamber High Heel Classic Golf Scramble at Lost Key Golf Club
Mar 23 – Belligrath Easter Egg Hunt
Mar 28 – Lighted Night Market on the Lost Key at Villagio on Perdido Key
Mar 30 – Bayou Hills Run at Bayview Park in Pensacola
Mar 30 – Elberta German Sausage Festival in Elberta
Mar 31 – Easter

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