

# KEY NOTES

NEWS FROM  
THE PERDIDO KEY ASSOCIATION



## April 2024

### **Perdido Key Beaches Ready for Summer!**

With a flurry of recent activity, Perdido Key beaches are fully open for the 2024 summer season following repairs and renovation. These include:

***National Seashore*** – The Perdido Key Area of Gulf Islands National Seashore/Johnson Beach was fully reopened on March 1, 2024 following reconstruction after 2020’s Hurricane Sally. Changes included three new parking lots off Johnson Beach road, seven new beach crossovers on the Gulf of Mexico and Big Lagoon, and a 1/2-mile multi-use trail for pedestrians and bicycles on the last half mile of Johnson Beach Road. Parking is no longer allowed along Johnson Beach Road. Further information on visiting is available from the [March 22, 2024 NPS News Release at Visiting Gulf Islands National Seashore during Peak Season 2024 - Gulf Islands National Seashore \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#).

***Perdido Key State Park West Use Area*** – Closed for only a few months, the West Use Area of Perdido Key State Park reopened on March 1, 2023. Unlike the East Use Area that was fully restored from Hurricane Sally damage and reopened at the end of 2023, the West Use Area restrooms have not been restored (with portable units available) and the western-most boardwalk access remains closed.

***Beach Access #2 Reopened*** – Escambia County’s Beach Access #2 reopened on March 15, 2024 after construction removed its vandalized restrooms (portable units continue in use), created several more parking spaces and paved the parking area with a permeable surface. A similar renovation will be made to Beach Access #3 at some point in the future.

### **Vacation Rental Legislation**

The Florida legislature has passed SB280 that, according to a press report, “wipes out city and county regulations approved since 2016 over vacation rentals ...” The bill includes limiting occupancy to two persons per bedroom with an additional two in a common area and capping fines for violations at \$500. “Local governments still can respond to noise and safety concerns involving vacation rentals.” Critics of the bill oppose the loss of local authority over vacation rentals and are hoping Governor DeSantis will veto the bill. For more on this issue, see the

March 25, 2024 *USA Network Florida* article “Vacation rental bill divided lawmakers. Now it’s drawing calls for DeSantis to veto it” by John Kennedy at [Lawmakers passed bill to shift control of vacation rentals to state \(tallahassee.com\)](#).

### **Pensacola Bay City Ferry Reopened**

The Pensacola Bay City Ferry was reopened for Friday through Sunday service beginning at 9 AM and costing \$30 a ticket, with some discounts available. For more on this issue, go to the March 2, 2024 *Pensacola News Journal* article “From trails to tours, here's what's coming to the Gulf Island National Seashore this season” by Edward Bunch III at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/2024/03/02/national-park-service-resumes-pensacola-bay-city-ferry-for-2024-season/72791423007/> .

### **Foley a Good Spot to Retire**

A survey by GOBankingRates of 100 cities with significant populations of 65 and older adults concluded that Foley, Alabama was “the best place for a cost-effective retirement as well as being an attractive location.” Factors considered included average home value, health care costs and other expenses as well as whether Social Security benefits were taxed. For more on this issue, see the March 3-11, 2024 *Mullet Wrapper* article “Foley named nation’s top cost-effective retirement spot” by Guy Busby at [Mullet Wrapper: Foley named nation’s top cost-effective retirement spot in Gulf Shores & Orange Beach](#).

### **NPS Seabird Nesting**

Shorebirds have begun to arrive at Gulf Islands National Seashore with the first nest found in the Fort Pickens Area on March 6, 2024. The National Seashore provides important habitat for ground-nesting shorebirds such as snowy plovers and black skimmers. Visitors to the Perdido Key and Fort Pickens entrances can pick up free “Save a Chick” stickers while supplies last. The stickers are also reminders to respect the mandatory 25 MPH speed limit that helps protect birds and other wildlife. Pedestrians and bicyclists are also asked to respect restricted areas and understand bird behavior. For more on this issue, see the Gulf Islands National Seashore March 7, 2024 *News Release* “Shorebird Nesting Season Begins at the National Seashore” by Brent Everitt at [Shorebird Nesting Season Begins Again at the National Seashore - Gulf Islands National Seashore \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#).

### **Flora-Bama a Best Beach Bar!**

Southern Living named two area establishments among the “18 Best Beach Bars in the South.” One was Peg Leg Pete’s on Pensacola Beach where the editors noted “A pirate-themed bar at the beach just makes sense.” For the Flora-Bama on Perdido Key, they noted: “There’s something truly special about this Gulf Coast beach bar that sits on the state line of Alabama and Florida. For 60 years, this legendary shoreside shack has been known for slinging excellent bushwackers, booking great live music, and welcoming everyone in.” The research and report covered bars from the “Florida panhandle to North Carolina’s Atlantic waters to the Texas Gulf Coast.” For more on this issue see the March 18, 2024 *Pensacola News Journal* article “2 Pensacola-area beach bars land on Southern Living list. Can you guess which” by Brittany Misencik at [Southern Living finds 18 best beach bars in the South \(pnj.com\)](#).

## **New Flights to Tampa/Norfolk**

Breeze Airways will begin twice weekly (Mondays and Fridays) nonstop flights from Pensacola International Airport to Tampa FL with flights continuing to Norfolk VA on June 28, 2024. This will be the eighth airline servicing Pensacola. For more information, see the March 26, 2024 *Pensacola News Journal* article “City welcoming new airline Breeze Airways this summer. Here are the destinations” at [Breeze Airways joins Pensacola International Airport \(pnj.com\)](https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2024/03/26/breeze-airways-joins-pensacola-international-airport/72973441007/?utm_source=ppen-DailyBriefing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily-briefing&utm_term=Content%20List%20-%20Stacking%20-%20optimized&utm_content=1063NJ-E-NLETTER65).

## **Nothing to Sneeze At!**

For an entertaining background on our area’s seasonal affliction from pollenating plants, go to the March 15, 2024 *UF/IFAS Coast Wildlife* article “Tis the Season...” by Rick O’Connor at <https://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/nat/2024/03/15/tis-the-season/>.

## **More Rabies in Florida?**

Rabies exposure cases during the first three months of 2024 in Escambia (56) and Santa Rosa (11) counties are greater than last year with almost 1500 cases reported statewide. For information on how to stay safe from this deadly disease, see the March 14, 2024 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Rabies exposure case in Escambia, Santa Rosa counties are up. How to stay safe” by Brandon Girod and Cheryl McCloud at

[https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2024/03/14/florida-rabies-escambia-santa-rosa-county/72973441007/?utm\\_source=ppen-DailyBriefing&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=daily-briefing&utm\\_term=Content%20List%20-%20Stacking%20-%20optimized&utm\\_content=1063NJ-E-NLETTER65](https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2024/03/14/florida-rabies-escambia-santa-rosa-county/72973441007/?utm_source=ppen-DailyBriefing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily-briefing&utm_term=Content%20List%20-%20Stacking%20-%20optimized&utm_content=1063NJ-E-NLETTER65).

## **Oil Spills Now and Then Now**

In February 2024 a barge being towed from Panama to Guyana in the south Caribbean Sea became lodged on a coral reef near Trinidad and Tobago and has leaked thousands of gallons of fuel oil to the environment. The island nation has declared a state of emergency with the spill threatening its fish, coral reef and mangrove ecosystems; oil has reached Bonaire more than 500 miles east of Trinidad and Tobago. On March 24, 1989, the oil tanker *Exxon Valdez* ran aground in Alaska’s Prince William Sound and spilled millions of gallons of oil. The spill killed or injured birds and sealife while affecting Alaska native communities and commercial fishing. Information drawn from Ocean Conservancy’s Shamini Selvaratnam March 13, 2024 and Andrew Hartsig March 24, 2024 e-mails as well as the February 28, 2024 *AP* article “Oil spill from capsized barge near Tobago soils beaches hundreds of miles away” by Dánica Coto at [Oil spill from capsized barge near Tobago reaches shores of Bonaire | AP News](https://www.apnews.com/Oil-spill-from-capsized-bergo-near-Tobago-reaches-shores-of-Bonaire-1063NJ-E-NLETTER65).

## **Respecting Sea Grass**

“Seagrass does not get the respect it deserves” according to Ocean Conservancy’s Michelle Frey in a March 1, 2024 e-mail. She noted there are 60 species of seagrass worldwide and listed “three things we may not know about seagrasses:” *Seagrass* keeps the ocean floor together – literally, just like planting trees and shrubs helps prevent erosion; *Seagrass* can store large amounts of carbon by pulling carbon dioxide from the ocean, perhaps 40 times better than a comparable area of land forest; and, *Seagrasses need our help* – we lose two

football fields of seagrass every hour, meaning less habitat for marine life, reduced carbon sequestration, and lost food sources for endangered species such as sea turtles.

### **Blue Angels 2024 Schedule**

This year's Blue Angels 2024 Air Show schedule is available at [show-2024.pdf \(navy.mil\)](#); the practice schedule is available at [Blue Angels Practice Schedule | Visit Pensacola](#). The Blue Angels airshow at Pensacola Beach will be on July 13, 2024 and the Homecoming Air Show at NAS Pensacola on November 1-2, 2024.

### **Bands on the Beach 2024 Schedule**

Why not spend Tuesday evenings from April through October on Pensacola Beach listening to free concerts? The 2024 schedule for "Bands on the Beach" is available at [Bands On The Beach 2024 Schedule Announced \(scenepensacola.com\)](#).

Blue Angels practice at NAS Pensacola on April 2,3,9,10,16,17,23,24,30

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

### **April 2024 Calendar**

Apr 5 – Rum Runners 5K in downtown Pensacola

Apr 5-7,16-21,23-28 – Pensacola Blue Wahoos at Blue Wahoo Stadium

Apr 6 – Tour de Fort bicycle, hiking and archeological tour of Ft. Pickens

Apr 6 – Discovery Day at Dauphin Island Sea Lab

Apr 6-7 – Pensacola JazzFest in Seville Square

Apr 6-7 – Spring Kite Festival in Fort Walton Beach

Apr 8 – Solar Eclipse

Apr 7 – Fort Morgan Beach Cleanup

Apr 11-13 – Paddlefest at Big Lagoon State Park

Apr 12-13 – Pensacola Beach Firefighters Challenge

Apr 13 – 850 R&B Music Festival at Pensacola Fairgrounds

Apr 14 – Blues on the Bay at Community Maritime Park in Pensacola

Apr 19 – Pensacola Beach Crawfish Festival

Apr 20 – Free Day at Gulf Islands National Seashore and start of National Park Week

Apr 20 – Spring Home & Garden Festival at OWA

Apr 21 – Earth Day celebration at Bayview Park Pensacola

Apr 25 – Yacht Rock Review at Concerts in the Village in Destin

Apr 26-28 – Mullet Toss 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