

# KEY NOTES

NEWS FROM  
THE PERDIDO KEY ASSOCIATION



## NOVEMBER 2024

### Hurricane Devastation

Florida took a body blow from Hurricane Milton on October 9, 2024 when the storm came ashore at Siesta Key with Category 3 winds, dumping huge amounts of rain crossing the Gulf Coast and Central Florida, spawning multiple tornadoes in Southeast Florida and then exiting Florida with damaging winds and surf on the Atlantic Coast near Daytona Beach. Had the storm come ashore 70 miles further north into Tampa Bay, destruction would likely have been even worse. Two weeks earlier Hurricane Helene severely damaged Florida coastal towns like Cedar Key and Steinhatchee and then brought strong winds and flood producing rains to inland mountain hamlets, towns and metropolitan areas like Valdosta GA, Asheville NC and Greenville SC. At least 250 lives were lost from the two storms. Rebuilding will take years and perhaps not even be pursued in some cases. For a recent assessment of damage from the storms, see the October 21, 2024 *Scienceinsider* article “Daunting’. Hurricane-battered researchers assess damage from Helene and Milton” by Christie Wilcox and Phie Jacobs at <https://www.science.org/content/article/daunting-hurricane-battered-researchers-assess-damage-helene-and-milton>.

### River Road RV Park Proposal

Old River Resort RV Park on Perdido Key Drive is proposing an RV park for River Road just north of the Florencia condominium. Current documents specify 26 RV sites, 12 bungalows, various amenities including pool and restaurant along with a parking area on the other side of River Road. The proposal has not been reviewed by the Escambia County Development Review Committee. For more on this issue, see the article October 9, 2024 *Pensacola News Journal* article “RV park and restaurant could be coming to Perdido Key” by Edward Bunch III at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/2024/10/09/rv-park-and-restaurant-old-river-resort-coming-to-perdido-key/75457922007/>.

### Gulf Islands (Johnson Beach) Discovery Trail to be Rebuilt

Gulf Islands National Seashore has announced the “Perdido Key Discovery Trail” near the entrance to the Johnson Beach/Perdido Key Area of the park will be completely rebuilt. The boardwalk trail was heavily damaged by Hurricane Sally in 2020 and has been partially closed ever since. The project will begin in October 2024 and should be completed by April 2025. During reconstruction, the kayak launch parking lot will be closed for staging. Information drawn from October 11, 2024 e-mail from Stephenie Wade, GINS Public Information Officer.

## **SS United States to Okaloosa County via Mobile**

The SS United States saga has ended for Escambia County. "Okaloosa's Board of County Commissioners has approved a contingent contract to acquire the ship and convert it into the world's largest artificial reef, a record that is currently held by the Oriskany off Escambia County." According to recent news reports, the ship is currently berthed in Philadelphia but will be towed to Mobile, Alabama where it will remain while preparations are made for its transformation into a submerged artificial reef in the Gulf of Mexico near Fort Walton Beach and Destin. For more on this issue, see the October 1, 2024 *Pensacola News Journal* article "SS United States to be sunk off Okaloosa County after Escambia came up short for bid" by Mollye Barrows at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/escambia-county/2024/10/01/okaloosa-county-wins-bid-for-ss-united-states-and-will-sink-as-reef/75473484007/>; October 16, 2024 *USNI* article "SS United States Getting Towed to Norfolk Ahead of Planned Sinking off Florida Coast" by John Grady at <https://news.usni.org/2024/10/16/ss-united-states-getting-towed-to-norfolk-ahead-of-planned-sinking-off-florida-coast>; and, October 28, 2024 *Fox News* video "SS United States to dock in Mobile before becoming artificial reef off Florida coast" at <https://www.fox10tv.com/video/2024/10/28/ss-united-states-dock-mobile-before-becoming-artificial-reef-off-florida-coast/>.

## **Blue Angels and Thunderbirds Flyover Perdido Key**

Though blustery weather reduced visibility and may have altered the planned flyover, Perdido Key beach spectators still enjoyed seeing the US Navy Blue Angels and US Air Force Thunderbirds flying together over the Gulf of Mexico. It was a good beginning to the Blue Angels Homecoming Air Show at NAS Pensacola, Friday and Saturday, November 1- 2, 2024!

## **A Great Red White and Birdies Golf Scramble**

The Red White and Birdies Golf Scramble held at NAS Pensacola's AC Read Golf Course on October 11, 2024 was a whole lot of fun for its 70 participants and many supporting personnel. With perfect weather, the event was organized by the Perdido Key Area Chamber of Commerce with PKA fielding a foursome and sponsoring one of the 18 holes. The scramble raised funds for the Chamber's military programs and initiatives.

## **River Road Work**

Contractors have been clearing the east siding on a portion of River Road reportedly as part of a survey for future installation of AT&T fiber optic cable.

## **Pensacola a Top Ten Small City**

*Conde Nast Traveler's* annual Readers Choice Awards placed Pensacola as #7 on its "best small cities in the United States" list. The *Traveler* wrote "Florida certainly has no shortage of beautiful beaches, but few places have the blindingly white sand and Caribbean-blue waters you'll find in and around this town." For more on this issue see the October 2, 2024 *Pensacola News Journal* article "Pensacola, Key West ranked on Conde Nast Traveler's Best Small Cities list" by Brandon Girod at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2024/10/02/two-florida-cities-named-best-small-cities-by-conde-nast-traveler/75484582007/>.

## **“Friends” Awarded Impact 100 Grant for Big Lagoon Playground!**

The Friends of Pensacola State Parks, one of our area’s active non-profit organizations, was recently awarded a \$100,670 *Impact 100* grant to develop an “inclusive playground for children of all abilities and disabilities” at Big Lagoon State Park. “The idea behind IMPACT 100 involves recruiting at least 100 women to donate \$1,000 each and pooling those resources into one big grant for a qualifying nonprofit. In the 21 years since the Pensacola chapter began, this organization of philanthropic women has donated more than \$17 million in 165 grants to nonprofit organizations throughout the Escambia/Santa Rosa area.” For more on the “Friends,” go to <https://friendsofpensacolastateparks.org/>; for more on Impact 100, go to <https://impact100pensacola.org/>.

## **Amtrak to Mobile**

Dignitaries recently broke ground at the future train platform site that will “accommodate Amtrak passenger rail service along the Gulf Coast from Alabama to Louisiana.” According to US Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg who attended the ceremony, \$70 million of federal funds for the “rail opportunity” package was allocated to downtown Mobile for necessary construction and improvement to infrastructure for the Amtrak service. Pensacola has not received any recent grants for rail service but Mayor D.C. Reeves seemed committed to that end. For more on this issue, see the October 24, 2024 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Amtrak is bringing passenger rail to Mobile. Is Pensacola next?” by Tom McLaughlin at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/pensacola/2024/10/23/pete-buttigieg-celebrates-new-orleans-to-mobile-amtrak-service/75789494007/>.

## **Sun Belt Basketball Tournaments to Remain in Pensacola**

Following a letter of agreement approved on October 17, 2024, the Sun Belt Conference announced the Sun Belt Men’s and Women’s Basketball Championships will remain in Pensacola until 2030. Escambia County’s Pensacola Bay Center will host the tournaments. For more on this issue, see the October 24, 2024 *Escambia County Newscenter* news release “Escambia County Welcomes Sun Belt Basketball Championship Through 2030” at <https://myescambia.com/news/news-article/2024/10/24/escambia-county-welcomes-sun-belt-basketball-championships-through-2030>.

## **PKA Holiday Party**

The PKA Holiday Party will be held during the week beginning Monday, December 9, 2024, but please stay tuned for the final date and location.

## **Sandspurs and Bats**

Gardening volunteers at the Perdido Key Visitors Center and most others who explore our Perdido Key coastline will encounter sandspurs, a painful reminder of an unpleasant local plant species. For guidance on their removal if they invade your property, go to the *UF/IFAS Blog* article “Get Sandspurs BEFORE They Get You!” at <https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/levyco/2024/01/07/get-sandspur-get/>. Bats are enormously beneficial creatures that consume incredibly numbers of mosquitoes and other pests, but if you want to rid them from your home or other structures (a belfry?), according to Rick O’Connor fall is the best time to do so. Bat pups are weaned near the end of summer so bat exclusion devices can

be used legally only from August 15 until April 15. For more on Florida's amazing bats, go to <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/bats/?redirect=bats>.

### **Tracking Sea Turtles**

We encounter sea turtles on Perdido Key during their nesting season and sometimes while fishing, but hopefully not harming or disturbing them greatly when we do so. Where are they the rest of the time? A "Sea Turtle Conservancy" project hopes to find out by using satellites to track their movements. For more on this issue, see the October 6, 2024 *BBC* article "How satellites are mapping the future of turtle conservation" by Carla Rosch at <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20241001-how-satellites-are-mapping-the-future-of-turtle-conservation>.

### **Horseshoe Crabs**

The annual count of horseshoe crabs is underway with the spring tide from November 02 to November 08, 2024 offering the next best chance to spot them. If you see any, please contact Rick O'Connor at [roc1@ufl.edu](mailto:roc1@ufl.edu) .

### **Balloons Can't be that Bad?**

Balloons are shockingly damaging to the marine ecosystem. "Every year, seabirds, turtles and other marine creatures are killed by ingesting or becoming entangled in balloon debris." "Seabirds are 32 times more likely to die from ingesting balloons than from hard plastic; 78% of rubber debris ingested by sea turtles came from balloons." "ICC [International Coastal Cleanup] volunteers have picked up over 1.8 million balloons on coastlines worldwide." Drawn from October 29, 2024 *Ocean Conservancy* e-mail "Balloons don't belong in our ocean" by Susannah Spruill.

### **Ocean Viruses and Bacteria**

Are viruses "life" and are they in our oceans? What about bacteria in the oceans; are they good or bad? For more on these organisms go to the UF/UFAS *Panhandle Outdoors Newsletter* articles "Marine Creatures of Northern Gulf of Mexico – Viruses" (October 18, 2024) at <https://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/nat/2024/10/18/marine-creatures-of-the-northern-gulf-of-mexico-viruses/> and "Marine Creatures of the Northern Gulf of Mexico – Bacteria" (October 25, 2024) at <https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/escambiaco/2024/10/18/marine-creatures-of-the-northern-gulf-of-mexico-bacteria/>, both by Rick O'Connor.

### **November 2024 Calendar**

Nov 01-02 – Blue Angels NAS Pensacola Homecoming Air Show

Nov 01-03 – Greater Gulf Coast Arts Festival at Seville Square in downtown Pensacola

Nov 01-03 – Pensacola Greek Festival at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Pensacola

Nov 01-11 – Foo Foo Festival in downtown Pensacola

Nov 01-10 – Pensacola Museum of Art 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration in downtown Pensacola

Nov 02 – SERA Rodeo National Finals at Pensacola Bay Center in downtown Pensacola

Nov 03 – Fall back to Central Standard Time at 2:00 AM on Sunday November 03, 2024

Nov 03-10 – SEC Women's Soccer Tournament at Ashton Brosnaham Soccer Complex

Nov 07-10 – Fairhope Film Festival in Fairhope, Alabama

Nov 07-17 – Frank Brown International Songwriters Festival at various FL/AL venues  
Nov 08-10 – Panhandle Salt Pompano Showdown fishing tournament based at Warrior Beer  
Nov 08,09,10,16,24,27,30 – Ice Zone Public Skate at Pensacola Bay Center  
Nov 08,09,16,27,30 – Pensacola Ice Flyers at Pensacola Bay Center  
Nov 09 – International Food Festival at St. Joseph Catholic Church in downtown Pensacola  
Nov 09 – MarineMax Pensacola Yacht and Boat Show in downtown Pensacola  
Nov 12 – Autism Awareness Fundraiser at the Flora-Bama  
Nov 15,22,23,24,29,30 – Winterfest in downtown Pensacola  
Nov 19 – Board of County Commissioners Installation at County Office Bldg in Pensacola  
Nov 23 – Tree Lighting at OWA with Taylor Hicks entertainment  
Nov 23-24 – Coastal Christmas Market at Orange Beach Event Center at The Wharf  
Nov 28 – Thanksgiving  
Nov 28 – Elf Parade and Jubilee in downtown Pensacola  
Nov 28 – Harbor Docks 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Thanksgiving Feast in Destin  
Nov 29-30 – Magic Christmas in Lights at Bellingrath Gardens in Theodore AL  
Nov 30 – Coastal Half Marathon, 5K and Fun Run at Orange Beach Sportsplex

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