

KEY NOTES

NEWS FROM
THE PERDIDO KEY ASSOCIATION



March 2025

PKA Annual Membership Meeting

The Perdido Key Association held its Annual Membership Meeting on February 22, 2025 at the Eden Condominium. PKA president Stan Capua covered meeting preliminaries, various Perdido Key construction and development issues as well as PKA activities in 2024. Featured speaker Escambia County District 1 Commissioner Steve Stroberger discussed his decision to run for office in 2024 and his campaign's visits to over 6,000 residences. Responding to questions, he expressed an open mind for changes to the Perdido Key Drive/Johnson Beach Road roundabout and noted funding has not been committed for underground utilities on Perdido Key. He hoped the outdoor bathroom status at Escambia County beach access locations on Perdido Key could be improved and does not plan to go forward with changes to Beach Access #3 until his concerns were addressed. He also discussed crosswalks on Perdido Key Drive and planned to schedule routine maintenance along the now-completed Perdido Key Multi-Use Path. The Commissioner expressed hopes Escambia County would provide better information about its funding and spending activities and mentioned possible creation of a "waterfront district" for coastal areas of Escambia County. PKA president Capua introduced the 2025 PKA Board of Directors: Stan Capua, Connie Walters, Mae Dean, Mark Richardson, Steven Huggins and Charles Krupnick along with new Directors Karen Rolan and Paul Frechette; Suzanne Kenworthy continues as PKA Administrator. Draft meeting minutes will be posted on the PKA website in the near future.

Dune Enhancement Project

Escambia County and engineering firm Baskerville-Donovan co-hosted a public meeting on the "Escambia County Dune Matrix Enhancement Project" on February 25, 2025 at the Perdido Bay United Methodist Church. As noted in the meeting announcement, "The goal of this project is to enhance critical dune habitats on Pensacola Beach and Perdido Key, which will strengthen resilience to coastal storms and enhance habitat for protected coastal wildlife, including the Perdido Key Beach Mouse and nesting sea turtles." Local sand-holding plants such as sea oats will be planted and some sand fences put in place. Because the project includes "private gulf-front lands on Perdido Key," it requires landowner permission to proceed on those properties; property owners could also consider granting "right of entry" but without plantings. County efforts to obtain right of entry documents must be completed by April 1,

2025. The project is expected to begin in December 2025, requiring 1 to 7 days per property and be completed in four months. It is funded by a National Fish & Wildlife grant. For more on this issue, go to <https://myescambia.com/news/news-article/2025/02/14/escambia-county-dune-matrix-enhancement-project-public-meeting-feb.-25>.

DOGE Affecting National Seashore

US national leadership efforts to reduce federal government expenses and work force are affecting Gulf Islands National Seashore, although the expected reduction from the park's 95 employees noted in 2024 has not been released. According to a *Pensacola News Journal* article, at least 1,000 National Park Service employees were released "as part of drastic and broad firings of probationary federal employees launched by President Trump and Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency or Doge." In an apparently similar effort, on February 24, 2025 "Governor Ron DeSantis announced the creation of the Florida State Department of Governmental Efficiency (DOGE) task force, which will work to further eliminate waste within state government, save taxpayers money, and ensure accountability in Florida." For more on these issues, see the February 20, 2025 *Pensacola News Journal* article "Trump's mass firings hit Gulf Islands National Seashore's workforce" by Jim Little at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/pensacola/2025/02/20/gulf-islands-national-seashore-staff-fired-in-trump-mass-firings/79195383007/> and the February 24, 2025 *State of Florida Newsroom* release "Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Florida Doge Efforts" at <https://www.flgov.com/eog/news/press/2025/governor-ron-desantis-announces-florida-doge-efforts>

SS United States Sailing to Mobile

The SS United States left its berth in Philadelphia on February 19, 2025 and is currently under tow passing the Florida Keys on its way to Mobile where it will be prepared for use as a diving wreck site offshore from Destin/Ft. Walton Beach. It is not known if the ocean liner will be visible off Pensacola area beaches during its transit, but entering Mobile Bay off Ft. Morgan perhaps as early as Sunday, March 2, should be spectacular. For more on the SS United States, see the February 27, 2025 *Fox 29 Philadelphia* article "SS United States spotted in South Florida week after leaving Philadelphia" by Amanda Hurley at <https://www.fox29.com/news/ss-united-states-spotted-south-florida-week-after-leaving-philadelphia> and the "SS United States Tracking" website at <https://share.garmin.com/SSUNITEDSTATES>.

Tornado Hits Escambia County!

A tornado with up to 95 mph winds swept through portions of northwest Escambia County near Copter Road on February 11, 2025. According to the weather service, "the tornado had a width of approximately 30 yards, traveled a total of a half a mile and dissipated at 4:22 p.m. about a minute after it began." Metal roofs, doors and siding were damaged while a number of boats were overturned or pushed aside. For more on the storm, see the February 12, 2025 *Pensacola News Journal* article "EF-1 tornado with 95 mph winds confirmed to have struck Ferry Pass" at <https://www.pnj.com/story/weather/2025/02/12/pensacola-tornado-at-ellyson-industrial-park-confirmed-as-ef-1/78468843007/>.

Publix on US 98 to open March 12

The new Publix Super Market constructed on US Highway 98 and Blue Angel Parkway will open at 7AM on March 12, 2025. For more on this issue, see the February 25, 2025 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Publix is opening another Pensacola store. Here’s when and where” by Edward Bunch III at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/2025/02/19/publix-will-open-a-new-pensacola-store-in-march/79110537007/#:~:text=Publix%20is%20opening%20another%20Pensacola,Here's%20when%20and%20where.&text=Pensacola's%20new%20Publix%20is%20set,7%20a.m.%20on%20March%2012.>

More on OLF 8

After withdrawing itself from consideration earlier in February 2025, TRI-W Development has made another \$42.5 million offer to buy OLF 8. The project has remained on the market for two years following several unsuccessful efforts by Escambia County to agree on a buyer(s), with some developers believing “the county needs to compromise on certain aspects of the Master Plan to make it commercially viable.” For more on recent activity, see the February 24, 2025 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Tri-W tries again to buy OLF 8 in Beulah. Will this time be different?” by Mollye Barrows at [https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/escambia-county/2025/02/24/olf-8-in-beulah-gets-another-tri-w-offer-to-buy-escambia-property/79419612007/.](https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/escambia-county/2025/02/24/olf-8-in-beulah-gets-another-tri-w-offer-to-buy-escambia-property/79419612007/)

Volunteer Workdays at Demonstration Garden

Escambia County has two remaining 9:00 to 11:00 AM volunteer workdays for the Perdido Key Coastal Demonstration Garden at the Perdido Key Visitors Center, 15500 Perdido Key Drive: March 28 and April 25, 2025. For more information and to register, go to <https://Spring2025GardenWorkdays.eventbrite.com>.

Perdido Key Leadership Class Graduates

Leadership Perdido Key is “designed to empower individuals with the skills, knowledge, and networking needed to become effective leaders in their communities.” “Through a series of workshops, seminars, and experiential learning activities, participants have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of Perdido Key area and hone their leadership capabilities.” The 16 graduates of the 2024-2025 Perdido Leadership Class included Connie Walker, Vice President of the Perdido Key Association. For more information on the program, go to <https://business.visitperdido.com/events/details/leadership-perdido-key-class-24-25-01-02-2025-35724>.

New Pensacola Beach Dune Walkovers

Work was recently completed on two new dune walkovers on Pensacola Beach at Avenida 16 (25A) and 18 (25B) off De Luna Drive. Both crossovers have ramps for beach access while 25A offers some off-street parking. For more on this issue, see the February 11, 2025 *Pensacola News Journal* article “New dune walkovers added to Pensacola Beach” by Edward Bunche III at [https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/2025/02/11/pensacola-beach-dune-walkers-are-ada-assessible/78295058007/.](https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/2025/02/11/pensacola-beach-dune-walkers-are-ada-assessible/78295058007/)

Santa Rosa Approves Impact Fees

Santa Rosa County Commissioners recently approved impact fees to help fund road construction in the fast growing county. The vote was unanimous in part because two newly elected commissioners had campaigned in favor of the fees. Some discussion on impact fees or concurrency in Escambia County has taken place to help infrastructure keep up with development. For more on this issue, see the February 04, 2025 *Pensacola News Journal* article “‘The juice is worth the squeeze’ Santa Rosa Commissioners vote to implement impact fees” by Tom McLaughlin at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/milton/2025/02/04/santa-rosa-commission-votes-to-impose-impact-fees-on-new-construction/78182529007/>.

Navarre Bridge Tolls

Santa Rosa Commissioners are considering establishing tolls for the Navarre Beach Causeway Bridge to help raise money for replacing the bridge. The current bridge was built in 1960 and originally required tolls. If implemented, tolls would likely be \$.50 to \$1.50 per crossing. For more on this issue, see the February 12, 2025 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Santa Rosa considering adding tolls at Navarre Beach Bridge” by Tom McLaughlin at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/navarre/2025/02/13/navarre-beach-bridge-tolls-being-considered-by-santa-rosa-commissioner/78469520007/>.

Right Whale Visitors and World Whale Day February 15

As if to emphasize World Whale Day on February 15, 2025, two female right whales were recently sighted off the Alabama Gulf coast. The visit was surprising because female right whales rarely travel together and do not typically venture into the Gulf of Mexico. Right whales have been listed as endangered since 1970 and have a population of about 370 today. As pointed out by *Ocean Conservancy*, World Whale Day is a reminder that warming waters, melting ice, and noise pollution can impact whales. For more information on this issue, see the February 12, 2025 *USA Today* article “A pair of whales are making a baffling journey along the US Gulf Coast” by Dinal Voyles Pulver at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2025/02/06/two-right-whales-make-a-baffling-journey-along-the-us-gulf-coast/78235551007/> and the *NOAA Fisheries Species Directory* article “North Atlantic Right Whale” at <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/north-atlantic-right-whale>.

Loggerhead Turtle Navigation

Researchers at the University of North Carolina have confirmed loggerhead turtles can memorize the magnetic signatures of geographic locations and use them for navigation. Their research involved studying the turtles’ “dancing” behavior associated with past locations of food. Loggerheads are the most frequent sea turtle visitors to the Perdido Key area. For more on this issue, see the February 12, 2025 *USA Today* article “Scientists investigated a mystery at sea. They found dancing turtles” by Dinah Voyles Pulver at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2025/02/12/dancing-turtles-help-reveal-a-mystery-of-the-sea/78388443007/>.

Invasive Species Week

National Invasive Species Awareness Week 2025 was held February 24-28, 2025. It is an "... international event to raise awareness about invasive species, the threat that they pose, and what can be done to prevent their spread." For information on two invasive species found in the Pensacola area see the following Escambia County Extension videos on *coral ardisia* – an invasive plant from Southeast Asia at <https://youtu.be/s8CzFkoqeGI?si=fsCgafklpPRjVxxS> and *cogon grass* at <https://youtu.be/iWWRIW4HFBQ?si=aqXYqPer-sUNUwL7>.

Seen any Tegu Lizards lately?

The tegu lizard is a large invasive species from South America. Prevalent in several parts of Florida and recorded in the Panhandle, tegus can grow to 4-5 ft long and weigh 10 pounds. They are "opportunistic predators" and eat almost anything – dead or alive, including the eggs and young of crocodiles and tortoises. As with some other creatures that can threaten native species, tegus are in the United States as a result of the pet trade. For more on this issue, see the *UF/IFAS askifas* article "Florida Invader: Tegu Lizard" by Steve A. Johnson and Monica McGarrity at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/UW340>.

How to tell Stingrays and Skates apart?

Stingrays can be dangerous while skates not so much. A good way to tell them apart is by their tails: "Stingrays typically have long, whip-like tails; skates' tails, on the other hand, tend to be short, thick and fleshy." For more on these interesting creatures, see the *Pelican Post February 2025* newsletter at <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Pelican-Post-February-Newsletter.html?soid=1134175614329&aid=Tt1ZLFfnR8g>.

Albatross and Plastics

As stated in an *Ocean Conservancy* February 4, 2025 e-mail, "Every year, after wandering far and wide across the ocean, albatrosses will return to the same partner, perform their same secret dance and start nesting." But the serenity may not last because plastic ingestion is one of the leading causes of death in albatrosses – another very good reason to help prevent plastic pollution in our oceans. For more on albatrosses and plastics, go to the *U.S. Fish & Wildlife* article "Albatross: Lifetime at Sea" at <https://alaskausfws.medium.com/albatross-7ca275b86f64>. "

Blue Angels practice at NAS Pensacola will begin April 02
Bands on the Beach at Pensacola Beach will begin April 01

March 2025 Calendar

Mar 01 – Mardi Gras Grand Parade in downtown Pensacola
Mar 01,02 – Foiling Week events at Community Maritime Park Public Marina in Pensacola
Mar 01,02 – Mardi Gras Dog Show at Escambia County Equestrian Center
Mar 01-02 – Ballyhoo Festival of Fine Art at Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores
Mar 02 – Krewe of Wrecks Mardi Gras Parade in Pensacola Beach
Mar 03 – Moon Pies on Main Mardi Gras parade and activities at The Wharf
Mar 04 – Orange Beach and Gulf Shores Mardi Gras Parades

Mar 04-10 – Sun Belt Men/Women Basketball Championship Games at Pensacola Bay Center
Mar 08 – Perdido Beach Resort half marathon, 5k and fun run at the Resort in Orange Beach
Mar 08 – St. Patrick’s Day Prediction 5K Run at McGuire’s Irish Pub in Pensacola
Mar 08,09 – Orange Beach Festival of Art at Coastal Art Center and Waterfront Park
Mar 14-16 – Orange Beach Invasion Car and Truck Show at The Wharf
Mar 14,15,21,22,23,28,29 – Pensacola Ice Flyers at Pensacola Bay Center
Mar 15 – Beach Run/Walk for America’s Warriors at the Flora-Bama
Mar 15-17 – Various St. Patrick’s Day celebrations
Mar 21 – Boat & Yacht Show presented by Porsche Mobile at The Wharf
Mar 28-30 – Disney on Ice: Mickey’s Search Party at the Pensacola Bay Center
Mar 29 – Waterboyz Surf Classic on Pensacola Beach
Mar 29 – Book Festival at Museum Plaza downtown Pensacola
Mar 29 – Elberta German Sausage Festival
Mar 30 – Easter Egg Hunt and Services 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