

# KEY NOTES

NEWS FROM  
THE PERDIDO KEY ASSOCIATION



## September 2025

### International Coastal Cleanup Day on September 20!

Perdido Key will celebrate International Coastal Cleanup Day 2025 on Saturday, September 20, with two cleanups! The beach cleanup will be held at Perdido Key State Park East Use Area from 8 to 11 AM; the road cleanup will begin at the Perdido Key Visitors Center and will run from 9 to 11 AM. Please join the Perdido Key Area Chamber of Commerce, the Perdido Key Association, Florida State Parks and several sponsors as we help keep Perdido Key a beautiful and healthy place to live and visit. Be sure to bring water bottle, sunscreen and hat.

### Customary Use and Perdido Key

A recent *Pensacola News Journal* article examined possible implications for Perdido Key following passage of Florida Senate Bill 1622 that allows local governments to apply “customary use” doctrine for public use of private beaches. According to the article, Escambia County District 1 Commissioner Steve Stroberger whose district includes Perdido Key “currently doesn’t believe it’s necessary to push for an ordinance recognizing recreational customary use” and feels “like everybody’s working well together there on the beach.” The article reviewed other Perdido Key beach access issues including beach signage and the 75 foot public access easement for a portion of Perdido Key private beaches. For more on these issue, see the August 20, 2025 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Private beaches on Perdido Key could be open to the public if Escambia opts in to new law” by Mollye Barrows at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/escambia-county/2025/08/20/public-beach-access-in-perdido-key-could-expand-unnew-florida-law-gives-local-leaders-power-for-more/85721552007/>.

### State of the Bays Report 2025

The Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program has released its *2025 State of the Bays Report*. Some key findings were that seagrass beds were stable but water quality was “a blend of positive and negative indicators” in the Perdido Bay System; there were also fewer sewer overflows and beach advisories issued “due to bacterial concentrations” in the Perdido Bay watershed; Manatee sightings were consistent in both Pensacola and Perdido Bay watersheds. To access the report, go to <https://stateofthebays.org/>.

## **SS United States Lawsuit Dismissed**

The “New York Coalition to Save the Steam Ship United States” appealed to Federal Courts as well as high US officials including President Donald Trump to prevent the historic ocean liner SS United States from being sunk off the northwest Florida Gulf Coast as an artificial reef. On August 6, 2025, US District Judge M. Casey Rodgers ruled the coalition “lacked constitutional standing to challenge the county’s [Okaloosa] plan to sink the 990-foot vessel in the Gulf off Destin-Fort Walton Beach.” The ship is undergoing preparations for sinking in Mobile where its iconic funnels are being removed for later display at an onshore commemorative museum. For more on the lawsuit, go to the August 7, 2025 *Get the Coast* article “Federal court clears path for Okaloosa’s SS United States artificial reef project, dismisses lawsuit” by Jared Williams at <https://www.getthecoast.com/federal-court-clears-path-for-okaloosas-ss-united-states-artificial-reef-project-dismisses-lawsuit/>: for information on the commemorative museum, see the August 4, 2025 *Workboat* article “SS United States funnel removed for museum” by Workboat Staff in Passenger Vessels at <https://www.workboat.com/passenger-vessels/ss-united-states-funnel-removed-for-museum>.

## **Final 2025 Hurricane Forecast**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) continues to forecast an above-normal hurricane season with 13-18 total named storms, five to nine hurricanes with two to five major hurricanes. “Many of the factors we identified ahead of the season are still at play, and conditions are largely tracking along with our May predictions,” said Matt Rosencrans, lead hurricane forecaster with NOAA’s National Centers for Environmental Prediction.” For more on this issue, see the August 7, 2025 *USA Today* article “Final hurricane season forecast warns storms are coming soon” by Doyle Rice at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/weather/2025/08/07/noaa-final-hurricane-season-forecast-2025/85557804007/>.

## **Gulf Breeze Underground Utilities**

The City of Gulf Breeze is completing the first phase of its \$18 million conversion to underground utilities. Phase 1 goes along Highway 98 from the Pensacola Bay Bridge to Daniel Drive. The project has been “in the works” since 2018 and will move onto Phase 2 “for all of our neighborhood collectors,” said Gulf Breeze City Manager Samantha Abell, with expected completion by the end of 2026. “For our community, not just for the beauty of the city, and what we’ve done through the landscaping of the main medians, but just for the security and for the comfort of knowing that they’re just protected one more level,” said Gulf Breeze Mayor JB Schluter. For more on this issue, see the July 21, 2025 *WEAR NEWS3* article “Gulf Breeze set to finish phase one of \$18M project to move utility lines underground” by Hannah James at <https://weartv.com/news/local/gulf-breeze-set-to-finish-phase-one-of-18m-project-to-move-utility-lines-underground>.

## **Johnson Beach Road Subdivision Approved**

Escambia County’s Development Review Committee (DRC) approved a proposal for the “Isabella” subdivision on 9.85 acres off Johnson Beach Road on Perdido Key. Developers plan to “create 40 lots for single-family homes” to include a new road named “Giovanna Way.” Drawn from August 1, 2025 *Pensacola News Journal* article “From Perdido Key to Beulah,

over 130 new homes approved by Escambia County in July” by Edward Bunch III at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/2025/07/31/new-escambia-subdivisions-adding-houses-in-perdido-key-beulah/85411737007/>.

### **Florida Red Snapper Season Begins**

The first two weeks of September mark the beginning of Florida’s red snapper season. 2025 will see the longest private recreational Gulf red snapper season on record with 126 days allowed, considerably longer than authorized for the Atlantic side of Florida. For more on this issue, go to the August 28, 2025 *USA Today Network* article “Florida’s Gulf red snapper fall season starts on Labor Day. Bag limits, rules, schedule” by C. A. Bridges at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/2025/08/28/florida-gulf-red-snapper-season-starts-labor-day-what-know/85867107007/>.

### **Happy Birthday Fran!**

Many many people turned out for Fran Thompson’s 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party in Gulf Shores. Fran is the editor/publisher of the beloved *Mullet Wrapper* that keeps all of us on the Gulf Coast informed about local happenings. The celebration included presentation of a “Mullet birthday cake.” Many happy returns Fran!

### **Pensacola #1 Coastal City**

*Consumer Affairs* ranked Pensacola as the “top U.S. city for coastal-lifestyle seekers to make a long-distance move to in a new list,” with affordability and safety among the reasons the “Pensacola Metropolitan area earned the top spot.” For more on this issue, see the August 21, 2025 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Pensacola ranked No. 1 coastal city in the U.S. among 143 areas” by Edward Bunch III at <https://www.pnj.com/story/news/local/2025/08/21/best-us-cities-rankings-pensacola-florida-consumeraffairs/85730405007/>.

### **E-bikes on Paths**

Florida law allows electric bicycles on the same paths as regular bicycles. Some are concerned about the interaction of pedestrians and regular bicycles with motorized bicycles, as well as motorized scooters and skateboards. For recent commentary on the issue, see the August 10, 2025 *Treasure Coast Newspapers* editorial “Florida has an e-bike and electric scooter problem. It’s time to fix it” at <https://www.pnj.com/story/opinion/2025/08/10/electric-bikes-scooters-in-florida-need-better-regulations-our-view/85545369007/?tbref=hp>.

### **Business Advice from SBDC**

Perdido Key Area Chamber of Commerce recently hosted a briefing at Hub Stacey’s by Joshua Hartigan, Business Consultant with SBDC at the University of West Florida’s Lewis Bear Jr. College of Business. Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) “provide counseling and training to small businesses including working with SBA [US Small Business Administration] to develop and provide informational tools to support business start-ups and existing business expansion.” The assistance available to small business owners or those contemplating beginning a small business seemed significant. Mr. Hartigan can be contacted at [jhartigan@uwf.edu](mailto:jhartigan@uwf.edu); [sbdc.uwf.edu](http://sbdc.uwf.edu); and 850 474-2528.

## **Vehicle Insurance Rates**

The Florida Office of Insurance Regulations predicts vehicle insurance rates will drop by 6.5% in 2025 following the 4.3% increase in 2024, with the decline perhaps due to state tort reforms. Florida insurance rates remain among the country's highest with only five states averaging higher premiums. For more on this issue, see the July 31, 2025 *Palm Beach Post – USA TODAY NETWORK* article “After years of car insurance rate increases, some huge costs are going down. Here’s why” by Anne Geggis at <https://www.palmbeachpost.com/story/business/finance/2025/07/31/florida-car-insurance-rate-increases-finally-going-down-heres-why/85428165007/>.

## **Community Planning and SB180**

1000 Friends of Florida has raised concerns about recently passed Florida statute SB180. The law was passed as “hurricane recovery legislation” but, according to 1000 Friends, with the legislation “the state has stripped away all local government home-rule authority to plan for the future and stolen the rights of citizens to help shape their communities through planning.” For more information on this issue, go to *1000 Friends of Florida Position Statement “Restore Community Planning: Fix SB180”* at <https://1000fof.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/SB-180-analysis-summary.pdf>.

## **Report Rare Snake Sightings**

Sea Grant gathers snake sighting reports to inform local area residents about the snakes they are likely to encounter. But some snakes are becoming rare with the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission (FWC) particularly interested in sightings of Eastern Diamond-Backed Rattlesnakes, Eastern Indigo Snakes, Florida Pinesnakes, Rainbow Snakes, Short-Tailed King Snakes, and Southern Hog-Nosed Snake. If any are sighted and hopefully photographed, please make a report to FWC at [https://myfwc.com/research/wildlife/amphibians-reptiles/snakes/?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=campaign](https://myfwc.com/research/wildlife/amphibians-reptiles/snakes/?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=campaign).

## **Invasive Species Survey**

As informed by Escambia County Sea Grant representative Rick O’Connor, a PhD student at the University of Florida is conducting a research survey to understand public perceptions of “13 ‘iconic’ invasive wildlife species in Florida.” If you would like to participate in the survey (which takes 8-10 minutes and is confidential), go to [https://ufl.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_1R11RPLSdZ6kxaS](https://ufl.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1R11RPLSdZ6kxaS).

## **International Whale Shark Day on August 30**

International Whale Shark Day alerts us to the plight of these enormous and wonderful creatures that wander the ocean vastness. They are filter feeders with “long migratory paths” and “because of their vast size, whale sharks play a major role in maintaining the health of marine ecosystems, and what they do on a day-to-day basis can have far-reaching effects.” Whale sharks are threatened by “ocean plastic, abandoned fishing gear and unregulated shipping routes.” Drawn from August 30, 2025 *Ocean Conservancy* e-mail by Britta Baechler and *Marine Conservation* article “Why do we Celebrate Whale Shark Day?” at <https://www.gviusa.com/blog/international-whale-shark-day/>.

## **Sharks and Ocean Data**

Researchers are evaluating the use of tagged sharks for data gathering to improve hurricane prediction. “By attaching these tags ... to sharks, which are wide-ranging, mobile predators, we will be able to observe a much larger part of the ocean that typically remains unobserved,” said marine ecologist Aaron Carlisle of the University of Delaware in an email to *USA TODAY*.” For more on this issue, see the July 30, 2025 *USA TODAY* article “Sharks vs. hurricanes? Scientist say predators can help track huge storms” by Doyle Rice at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2025/07/25/hurricanes-forecasts-sharks/85346626007/>.

## **Thrush Cowrie in Northern Gulf**

The Thrush Cowrie sea snail has spread from the Red Sea and Indian Ocean through Caribbean and southern Florida; it has been identified in Panama City and can probably be found elsewhere in the Panhandle. It has a beautiful shell but “spreads quickly and could disrupt native ecosystems.” Drawn from August 1, 2025 Rick O’Connor e-mail and July 19, 2025 *Bailey-Mathews National Shell Museum & Aquarium* article “Thrush Cowrie in the Florida Panhandle” by José H. Leal at <https://shellmuseum.org/blog/thrush-cowrie-in-the-florida-panhandle/>.

## **Human Footprint on the Environment**

For the July 25, 2025 article “Our Environment: Part 14 – Managing Urban Growth” go to <https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/escambiaco/2025/07/25/our-environment-part-14-managing-urban-growth/> and the August 7, 2025 article “Our Environment: Part 15 – We Need Energy” go to <https://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/nat/2025/08/11/our-environment-part-15-we-need-energy/>.

Blue Angels practice at NAS Pensacola on September 9,10,16,23

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

## **September 2025 Calendar**

Sept 1 – Labor Day

Sept 2 – Perdido Coastal Cleanup meet at Panhandle Salt Surf Fishing 13595 Perdido Key Dr

Sept 3 – Learn AI with Jenni Arnold virtual event with SBDC/UWF at 850-474-2528

Sept 4-6 – Bulls on the Beach at the Flora-Bama

Sept 6 – Safe Boating Class at Orange Beach Fire Department

Sept 6 – North Florida Gun & Knife Show in Fort Walton Beach

Sept 9 – Coast Alabama Business Expo at Orange Beach Event Center

Sept 9-14 – Blue Wahoos at Blue Wahoo Stadium in downtown Pensacola

Sept 10 – Starting a Business by SDBC/UWF Pensacola Chamber event at 418 W Garden St

Sept 10,11 – Sip & Shop on Palafox in downtown Pensacola

Sept 13 – Kids Day at Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park

Sept 19-20 – Kevin Vines Memorial Fishing Tournament in Orange Beach

Sept 20 – International Coastal Cleanup Day at Perdido Key State Park & Community Center

Sept 20 – Son of Sailor Fest at Cathedral Square in downtown Mobile

Sept 20 – Alabama Coastal Cleanup at multiple zones in Mobile and Baldwin Counties

Sept 20 – Burgers, Bourbon & Beer Festival in Destin

Sept 20-21 – Emerald Coast Home and Boat Show in Fort Walton Beach  
Sept 23-27 – NW Florida Fair in Fort Walton Beach  
Sept 25 – Not Dead Yet! John Cleese and the Holy Grail at 50, Saenger Theatre Pensacola  
Sept 26-28 – Pensacola Seafood Festival in Seville Square downtown Pensacola  
Sept 26-28 – Destin Seafood Festival at Destin Harbor  
Sept 27 – Turtle Fest at Gulf State Park Fishing Pier  
Sept 30 – Pensacola Beach Songwriter’s Festival on Pensacola Beach at various locations

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