



March 2026

March 7 PKA Annual Membership Meeting!

A final reminder that the 2026 PKA Annual Membership Meeting will be held Saturday, March 7, 2026 from 10 AM until Noon at the Eden Condominium, with guest speaker Escambia County Natural Resources Management Deputy Director Tim Day. The minutes from the 2025 Annual Membership Meeting will be presented for approval at the meeting and are available for review on the Archive page of the PKA website. Zoom viewing information will be distributed closer to the meeting.

Customary Use Debate Update

Escambia County Commissioners did not take a vote on Customary Use at their February 19, 2026 regular meeting but may have Commissioner/County Attorney discussions to consider a way ahead. The February 19 meeting had considerable input from Perdido Key beachfront property owners opposing Customary Use as well as others favoring the policy. Customary Use is not on the agenda at the March 5, 2026 Commissioner Meeting so those desiring to speak on the issue can do so at the Public Forum beginning at 4:30 PM prior to the regular meeting – arriving 30 minutes early to sign up to speak. For additional information on the February 19 meeting, see the February 23, 2026 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Escambia explores alternatives to customary use on Perdido Key beaches” by Mollye Barrows at [Perdido Key customary use battle could lead to more public beach.](#)

A Real Drought

As of mid-February 2026, 68% of Florida was in extreme drought conditions – the highest percentage in the United States with over 18 million Floridians living in drought stricken areas. “Drought can be funny, it kind of sneaks up on you, while floods and hurricanes are pretty obvious,” said Richard Tinker, a meteorologist and drought expert with the National Weather Service’s Climate Prediction Center. On Perdido Key, the usually flowing stream beneath the River Road bridge was more like a big mud puddle. For more on this issue, see the February 20, 2026 *USA Today* article “Parched Florida now most drought-stricken state and is feeling effects” by Kimberley Miller at [Florida burn bans, wildfires, water shortage orders as extreme drought](#) and the February 21, 2026 *Pensacola News Journal* article [Panhandle under 'water shortage warning' due to drought conditions](#) by Tom McLaughlin.

Johnson Beach Lower Fee Request

Following a proposal by District 2 Commissioner Mike Kohler, Escambia County is requesting possible local resident reduction in the \$25 fee (good for seven days) to access the Perdido Key Area of Gulf Islands National Seashore (Johnson Beach). The proposal is in line with recent discussions on increasing public access to Perdido Key beaches.

Johnson Beach Electronic Signs

Electronic signs may soon be posted on Perdido Key Drive indicating the status of entry to the Perdido Key Area of Gulf Islands National Seashore (Johnson Beach). This should help alleviate traffic backup on Johnson Beach Road for tourists and residents as well as emergency vehicles when the entrance is closed as it may be when all parking places are taken.

Greenhouse Gas Ruling Reversed

The US government has reversed the 2009 “endangerment finding” that concluded “a range of greenhouse gases were a threat to public health.” The White House said the move was the “largest deregulation in American history” while environmental groups called it “by far the most significant rollback on climate change yet attempted.” For more on this issue, see the February 13, 2026 *BBC* article [Trump revokes landmark EPA ruling that greenhouse gases endanger public health](#) by Matt McGrath.

SB 354/HB 299 and Development

SB 354 and HB 299 are similar bills advancing through Florida’s Senate and House. They both provide expedited measures to allow developments of 10,000 acres or more on natural or agricultural land “even if they conflict with a community’s comprehensive plan, and are located far away from existing development.” 1000 Friends of Florida believes the proposal is a “serious threat to rural Florida” and recommends concerned Floridians contact the Senate Rules Committee and House State Affairs Committee to oppose the bill. Drawn from a February 19, 2026 *1000 Friends of Florida* e-mail.

More “Best” Beaches

The 2026 Travelers’ Choice Awards Best of the Best by *Tripadvisor* included a number of Florida beaches. While California’s La Jolla Cove captured #1 and four Hawaii beaches were in the top 10, Clearwater Beach was #2, Siesta Beach #6, St. Andrews State Park #8 and Panama City Beach #11. For more on this issue, see the February 22, 2026 *USA Today Network* article “Bay County beaches, others in Florida, rank among Tripadvisor’s best” by Mitchell Spitzer and Deon Tay Smith at [Two Bay County beaches make Tripadvisor’s Top 15 list.](#)

Flamingos to be Florida State Bird?

The Florida House voted to replace the mockingbird with the flamingo as the state bird, though the bill’s fate in the Florida Senate is uncertain. Flamingos returned to Florida after an absence of more than 100 years with Hurricane Idalia in 2023. For more on this issue, see the February 11, 2026 *Tallahassee Democrat* article [Florida House votes to make flamingo the state bird](#) by Marta Zherukha.

Wood Storks Coming Back

The wood stork species “no longer meets the definition of an endangered species or threatened species” according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Though its Florida wetland habitat has been compromised by ditching and draining operations for development and agriculture, a rebuilding program has made wood storks less endangered because of their “extensive breeding range, the overall range and the number of breeding colonies.” For more on this issue, see the February 11, 2026 *USA Today* article [Wood storks have rebounded, will be taken off endangered list](#) by Dinah Voyles Pulver.

Estuary Program Awarded Large Grant

The EPA awarded the Pensacola and Perdido Bays Estuary Program (PPBEP) a \$750,000 grant for development of a “regional Water Quality Monitoring Collaborative.” “Over the next three years, the program will collect monthly water quality data at approximately 30 sites” and standardize methods across the watershed. According to Whitney Scheffel at PPBEP: “By working together and standardizing how we monitor our waters, we can better track progress and support meaningful restoration efforts.” For more on this issue, see the February 4-18, 2026 *Mullet Wrapper* article [Mullet Wrapper: Perdido Bays Estuary Program awarded \\$750K grant in Gulf Shores & Orange Beach.](#)

Rattlesnakes Part 7

For an informative article on where to find (or avoid) various species of rattlesnakes, see Rick O’Connor’s February 5, 2026 *UF/IFAS* article [Rattlesnakes on Our Barrier Islands; Part 7 – Habitats - UF/IFAS Extension Escambia County.](#)

Invasive Phragmites

Most in the Pensacola region have certainly encountered a tall bamboo-like plant sometimes called “common cane,” but part of the genus *Phragmites*. In a video forwarded by a February 26, 2026 e-mail, Rick O’Connor discusses the invasive variety of the plant and how it can take over shorelines and elsewhere – growing 20 feet tall and blocking homeowner views. To access the *Phragmites* video, go to [https://youtu.be/xeq80zDdR2s.](https://youtu.be/xeq80zDdR2s)

Aquaculture in the Southern United States; Part 6 – Tennessee & Texas

Tom Derbes II notes that aquaculture occupies only a small part of Tennessee’s agricultural sector and is primarily engaged in catfish and trout production, though some niche producers raise other species. Texas on the other hand has a large and diverse aquaculture industry: “In addition to traditional production of channel catfish, producers raise baitfish, ornamental fish, tilapia, shrimp, crawfish, and a variety of marine finfish. Texas is a national leader in the production of red drum and hybrid striped bass, two high-value food fish species that together contribute approximately \$20 million annually to the state’s aquaculture economy.” For more on this issue, go to the February 13, 2026 *UF/IFAS* article [Aquaculture in the Southern United States: Part 6 – Tennessee and Texas | Panhandle Outdoors](#) by Tom Derbes II.

Blue Angel practice at NAS Pensacola begins on March 31, 2026

Bands on the Beach on Pensacola Beach will be from April to October 2026

March Calendar

Mar 1 – PDFFA Annual Dog Show at Escambia County Equestrian Center
Mar 3 – “Morning at the Museum – Jerusalem” at National Naval Aviation Museum on NAS
Mar 3-9 – Sun Belt Conference Basketball Tournament at the Pensacola Bay Center
Mar 4 – Christopher Cross at the Saenger Theatre in downtown Pensacola
Mar 6-8,13-15 – “Frozen” at the Orange Beach Performing Arts Center
Mar 7 – Gulf Coast Whale Festival on Pensacola Beach
Mar 7 – UWF Arbor Day Market at the University of West Florida campus
Mar 7 – Bunny Hop 5K and Fun Run at The Wharf
Mar 7 – Gulf Coast Diabetes Walk at OWA
Mar 7 – Ballyhoo Festival of Fine Art and Culture at Gulf State Park, Gulf Shores
Mar 13 – “Oklahoma” by Pensacola Opera at Saenger Theatre in downtown Pensacola
Mar 13 – Five Flags Speedway 2026 Opening Weekend Double Header
Mar 13,14,27,28 – Pensacola Ice Flyers at the Pensacola Bay Center
Mar 13-15 – Kites on the Beach at Pensacola Beach
Mar 14,17 – Various St. Patrick’s Day activities
Mar 14 – Flora-Bama Beach Run for America’s Warriors
Mar 15 – Mac & Cheese Festival in Destin
Mar 20-21 – Zerbini Family Circus at Pensacola Interstate Fair Ground
Mar 21 – Third Day Thirtieth Anniversary Tour at the Pensacola Bay Center
Mar 22 – “Swan Lake” by World Ballet Company at Saenger Theatre in downtown Pensacola
Mar 27-29 – Orange Beach Invasion Car and Truck Show at The Wharf
Mar 28 – Easter Egg Hunt, Easter Bunny Drop and Services at the Flora-Bama
Mar 28 – Elberta German Sausage Festival

The following websites provide additional information about events on our great Gulf Coast:

<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