



## April 2026

### County to Gather Customary Use Information

Escambia County Commissioners voted three to two to begin collecting information toward a possible decision on imposing Customary Use on Perdido Key. District 1 Commissioner Stroberger and District 4 Commissioner Hofberger voted against while District 2 Commissioner Kohler, District 3 Commissioner May and District 5 Commissioner Barry voted for the measure. The meeting and vote were unusual in that Customary Use was added to the meeting agenda only the day before and the vote was conducted prior to the usual public comment period, presumably to allow Commissioner Kohler to participate in the vote since he had to leave the meeting early.

While more specific guidance should be available in the near future, the County will collect information provided by citizens including “documents, photos, affidavits and anecdotal stories to show where they believe the public has historically had access to Perdido Key beaches”; other information can of course be submitted that would challenge claims that public use of Perdido Key beaches has been Ancient, Reasonable Recreational Activity, Uninterrupted, and Free from Dispute – the four criteria established for proving Customary Use. “The Board says its communications and marketing team will issue a press release and create a dedicated email address for submissions.” The County may also create an online portal where the information can be submitted. Information on beach usage will be collected for about 90 days followed by another 90 days during which it “will be reviewed and vetted by the Escambia County Attorney’s office and the Natural Resources Department before they later submit it to the board.”

PKA will pass on additional guidance on submitting information once the process is established. For more on this issue, see the March 28, 2026 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Escambia asks public for proof of historic use of Perdido Key beaches” by Mollye Barrows at [Perdido Key beaches customary use prompts Escambia County search.](#)

Escambia County Commissioners will have a Committee of the Whole meeting at 9:00 AM, Wednesday, April 1, 2026 where public comments are not allowed; later on April 1 Commissioners will have a Public Forum at 4:30 PM and regular meeting at 5:30 PM. Customary Use is not currently on the regular meeting agenda so citizens wishing to speak on Customary Use or other issues can do so at the 4:30 PM Public Forum.

### **Temporary Beach Signs Authorized**

A recent directive interpretation by Escambia County staff allows Perdido Key beachfront property owners to post temporary “sandwich style” or “gap” signs on their beachfront property. These would be exempt from permitting because they are “temporary, informational, and not visible from the right of way” and would address safety, access, and guest management concerns that cannot adequately be handled by the two boundary signs currently specified by Escambia County ordinance. The additional signage should be used sparingly but could include private property identification, beach safety communications, beach rule awareness, and emergency and access corridor designations. The signage may be deployed after turtle patrol clears the beach each day but must be removed each evening. Please contact Escambia County Natural Resources Management Deputy Director Tim Day at [trday@myescambia.com](mailto:trday@myescambia.com) with any questions.

### **Gulf Drilling Exempt from Endangered Species Act**

The Endangered Species Commission (sometimes called the “God Squad” because it can affect extinction of species) met for the first time in more than 30 years and voted “to exempt drilling in the Gulf of Mexico from complying with Endangered Species Act (ESA) requirements.” The Commission is composed of the Secretaries of Interior, Agriculture and Army plus the Heads of the Council of Economic Advisors, Environmental Protection Agency and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The exemption “appeared aimed at circumventing a lawsuit that seeks to protect endangered species including the Rice’s Whale.” To more on this issue, see the 31 March, 2026 *The Hill* article “Trump’s ‘God Squad’ exempts Gulf oil drilling from Endangered Species Act requirements” by Rachel Frazin at [Gulf drilling exempt from Endangered Species Act](#).

### **Navarre Beach Lighting Concerns**

Sea turtles use the reflection of the moon off the Gulf to guide them to the relative safety of the water, but man-made lighting can disorient them. Cinnamon Tyler from the Navarre Beach Sea Turtle Conservation Center estimated at least 250 to 300 newly hatched sea turtles died in 2025 because of man-made lighting. She believes Santa Rosa County officials do not enforce lighting ordinances although Santa Rosa County Deputy Administrator Jared Lowe states “the county has put a great deal of effort this year into complying with sea turtle lighting regulations.” For more on this issue, see the March 23, 2026 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Navarre Beach lights kill sea turtles, Santa Rosa looks to end carnage” by Tom McLaughlin at [Navarre Beach sea turtle deaths blamed on Santa Rosa beach lighting](#).

### **Kiwanis Club Best in “Wreaths Across America”**

The Kiwanis Club of Big Lagoon Foundation was named the #1 Group in Florida and #2 Group in the United States for Wreaths Across America where the local Kiwanis honored 17,535 service members at Barrancas National Cemetery. For more on this issue, see the March 17, 2026 *Mullet Wrapper* article “Big Lagoon Kiwanis Wreaths Across Barrancas is No. 1” at [Mullet Wrapper: Big Lagoon Kiwanis Wreaths Across Barrancas is No. 1 in Gulf Shores & Orange Beach](#).

### **Perdido Key State Park Volunteers/Update**

Perdido Key State Park is looking for volunteers to assist with manning its park entry stations. If interested, please contact Florida State Park Ranger Emily Price at [Emily.Price@FloridaDEP.gov](mailto:Emily.Price@FloridaDEP.gov) or other Park officials at 850-492-1595. The West Use Area of Perdido Key State Park is under renovation including additional repairs required for newly found damage, but as of today admission is still allowed to the park.

### **Kenny Chesney at the Flora-Bama**

Country star Kenny Chesney will record a *Sirius XM* concert on April 18, 2026 at the Flora-Bama to celebrate his 10 years with the online radio network. *SiriusXM* subscribers can win tickets for two to the concert including transportation and lodging. The application period is open until April 6, 2026. For more on the concert and contest, see the March 29, 2026 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Kenny Chesney has Built Something Truly Special: The country superstar returns to Flora-Bama for *SiriusXM* live show” by Brittany Misencik at [Kenny Chesney Flora-Bama concert for SiriusXM at Florida Alabama line.](#)

### **Seaweed Threat to South Florida**

Experts are predicting significant sargassum seaweed could hit South Florida Atlantic beaches during the 2026 season due to “warm ocean conditions.” No mention was made in the referenced article of possible seaweed problems in Panhandle beach areas. For more on this issue, see the March 11, 2026 *CBS Miami* article [Record-breaking amounts of sargassum seaweed could be coming to South Florida, experts say - CBS Miami](#) by Bri Buckley.

### **Alabama Beaches a Year-Round Destination**

According to data provided by Gulf Shores and Orange Beach Tourism President and CEO Beth Gendler, Alabama Beaches have become a year-round destination. “Strong visitation in all seasons” keeps staff employed all year to provide “consistent, friendly services to our guests...” Visitor spending on lodging in 2025 was more than double what it was 10 years ago; retail sales were up; and, rental inventory has increased, but additional sports fields were apparently needed because of sports industry and local sports growth plus competition in the sports destination market. For more on this issue, see the March 17, 2026 *Mullet Wrapper* article [Mullet Wrapper: Our beaches are becoming year round destinations in Gulf Shores & Orange Beach.](#)

### **OLF 8 Development Changes**

At their March 26, 2026 meeting, Escambia County Commissioners agreed to changes in the County’s OLF 8 sale agreement with developer Tri-W Development and Chad C Henderson Enterprises of Pensacola where the County will “keep the Employments, Technology & Innovation (ETI) District, which is focuses on high quality job creation and take \$14 million less than the \$42.5 million originally promised for all 540 acres of the multiphase development.” Part of the reason for the change is a hope and expectation that Escambia County, as a government agency, would be able “to help cover the project’s substantial infrastructure costs with a grant from Triumph Gulf Coast [funds recovered from the Deep Water Horizon oil spill].” For more on this issue, see the March 26, 2026 *Pensacola News Journal* article “Escambia

takes \$14M less for OLF 8, keeps 170 acres” by Mollye Barrows at [Escambia OLF 8 land sale agreement Tri W Chad Henderson renegotiated.](#)

### **Data Centers**

Large data centers are being constructed across the United States including in Florida. While apparently essential for current and future AI and other computer uses, their power requirements are extreme: “A typical AI-focused data center consumes as much electricity as 100,000 households. The larger data centers now under construction are expected to use 20 times as much.” Other concerns are water usage for the centers’ evaporative cooling systems, air quality, land use and taxation issues, all “key planning considerations we [1000 Friends of Florida] believe state and local decision-makers should be weighing as proposals emerge.” For more on this issue, see the *1000 Friends of Florida* February 26, 2026 publication “Potential Impacts of Data Center Development on Florida Communities: Issues for State and Local Policymakers” at [FOF 1380 - Data Centers Special Report v4#](#).

### **Exxon Valdez Anniversary**

37 years ago on March 24, 1989, the oil tanker *Exxon Valdez* ran aground in Prince William Sound in Alaska creating an environmental disaster felt to this day. “The toll on wildlife was staggering, with oil killing an estimated 250,000 seabirds, 2,800 sea otters, 300 harbor seals, 250 bald eagles, 22 orcas and billions of salmon and herring eggs.” With the Exxon Valdez disaster in mind, *Ocean Conservancy* is encouraging opposition to recent federal efforts “to expand oil and gas operations in the waters off California, Florida and Alaska.” Drawn from March 24, 2026 *Ocean Conservancy* e-mail from Katherine Tsantiris.

### **Migratory Fish Population Decline**

An assessment of more than 15,000 species of freshwater migratory fish “found their numbers had dropped by an estimate 81% in the last half century.” “As well as providing enough food for 200 million people globally,” Dr. Zeb Hogan, co-author of the report and professor of biology at University of Nevada, Reno, said “migratory freshwater fish have immense diversity which needs protection.” For more on this issue, see the March 24, 2026 *BBC* article [Decline in migratory fish populations prompts fight for protection](#) by Esme Stallard.

### **More on Rattlesnakes**

Rick O’Connor concludes his series of articles on Gulf barrier island rattlesnakes with the Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake at [Rattlesnakes on Our Barrier Islands; Part 8 – Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake - UF/IFAS Extension Escambia County](#) and Dusky Pigmy Rattlesnake at [Rattlesnakes on Our Barrier Islands; Part 9 – Dusky Pygmy Rattlesnake - UF/IFAS Extension Escambia County](#).

Blue Angels practice at NAS Pensacola April 1,7,8,14,15,21,22,28,29  
Bands on the Beach at Pensacola Beach from April to October 2026

### **April Calendar**

Apr 3-5, 14-19, 28-29 – Pensacola Blue Wahoos at Blue Wahoos Stadium in Pensacola  
Apr 4 – Various Easter related events at OWA

Apr 4-5 – Spring Kite Festival at Fort Walton Beach  
Apr 4-5 – Mudbugs and Margaritas Festival at Heritage Park in Foley  
April 5 – Easter  
April 5 – Restaurant Easter related events  
Apr 9 – Perdido Palooza Craft and Vendor Market at Warrior Beer Company on Sorrento Rd.  
Apr 10-12 – Panhandle Salt Pompano Showdown surf fishing tournament  
Apr 11-12 – Northwest Florida Spring Home Show at Lewis Turner Blvd in Fort Walton Beach  
Apr 11 – Navy Federal Credit Union 5K in downtown Pensacola to benefit Vet's Wish  
Apr 11 – Marinemax Pensacola Spring Boat & Yacht Show near downtown Pensacola  
Apr 11 – Mustang and Mega Car Show at OWA  
Apr 11-12 – Strawberry Festival & Car Show at Municipal Park in Loxley  
Apr 16-19 – Ballet Pensacola's Romeo and Juliet at The Center in downtown Pensacola  
Apr 18 – Earth Day at Bayview Park in Pensacola  
Apr 18 – Mullet Man Triathlon at the Flora-Bama  
Apr 11 – Discovery Day at Dauphin Island Sea Lab  
Apr 23-25 – Bama Coast Cruisin' Outdoor Car Show at The Wharf  
Apr 24-26 – Pensacola Crawfish Festival at Seville Square & Fountain Park  
Apr 24-26 – Interstate Mullet Toss at the Flora-Bama  
Apr 30 – Gulf Coast Hot Air Balloon Festival in Foley

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