



Superintendent's Message

In This Issue

Park Information	2
Visitor Centers and Programs	3
Park News	4 - 5
Park Challenges	6 - 7
Things to Do	8 - 9
Kids	10 - 11
Safety	12



September 3, 2014 marks the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. All of Gulf Islands is special, but Horn and Petit Bois Islands have the distinction of being Congressionally designated wilderness.

This March my daughter and I spent her spring break exploring Horn Island, tramping the beaches, camping among the dunes, embracing the sunsets - the grind of college classes and the complexities of job momentarily left behind. We met the island on its own terms - natural, untrammelled - as visitors who will not remain and who leave nothing behind.

Preserving wilderness has challenges - the potential for drill rigs a mile off-shore, marine debris constantly washing ashore, balancing the impacts of large flotillas of boats with expectations of solitude.

I invite you to share your thoughts and ideas as we prepare a new Wilderness Stewardship Plan for the Seashore. More than that, I encourage you to experience the wilderness islands yourself.

Dan Brown

Plan Your Visit

Welcome to America's largest national seashore stretching 160 miles from Cat Island, Mississippi to Okaloosa, Florida. The park has something for everyone to enjoy and learn. We are all stewards of this phenomenal place. It is yours to enjoy and to protect.

Entrance Fees - Florida Only

Single Person Entry \$3.00
(Foot, bicycle, motorcycle for 7 days)
Single Vehicle Pass \$8.00
(Valid for 7 days)
Gulf Islands Annual Park Pass \$25.00
(Valid 1 year from month of purchase)
Night Fishing Permit \$30.00
(Extends hours of access for anglers. Requires an annual pass bearing a matching signature to the permit. Call 850-934-2622 for availability information).

Commercial Vehicles:

Vehicles (1-6 passengers) \$25.00
(plus \$3.00 per person)
Vans and mini-buses (7-25 passengers). \$40.00
Motor coaches (26+ passengers) \$100.00

Federal Passes Available

America the Beautiful - the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass

Interagency Annual Pass \$80.00
Interagency Senior Pass \$10.00
Interagency Access Pass Free

Camping

Mississippi. Davis Bayou Campground The 52 sites are \$22.00 per night, \$11.00 with Interagency Senior or Access pass. Dump station is free for campers and \$5.00 for non-campers. For reservations call (877) 444-6777 or visit www.recreation.gov.

Florida. Fort Pickens Campground The 200 sites are \$26.00 per night. \$13.00 per night with Interagency Senior or Access pass. For reservations call (877) 444-6777 or visit www.recreation.gov.

Campground Store Open

Coastal Concessions operates the Fort Pickens Campground Store, the Firehouse Snack Bar, and a Langdon Beach food truck.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Gulf Islands
National Seashore
Superintendent Dan Brown
1801 Gulf Breeze Parkway
Gulf Breeze, FL 32563-5000

Phone: (850) 934-2600

Website: www.nps.gov/guis

Editor: Susan Teel

July, 2014

Visitor Centers and Ranger Programs

Naval Live Oaks
Visitor Center
Gulf Breeze, Florida
8:30 am - 4:30 pm
Call 850-934-2600

Fort Pickens
Visitor Center
Pensacola Beach, Florida
8:30 am - 4:30 pm
Call 850-934-2635

Fort Barrancas
Visitor Center
Pensacola, Florida
8:30 am - 4:30 pm
Call 850-455-5167

William M. Colmer
Visitor Center
Davis Bayou Area
Ocean Springs,
Mississippi
8:30 am - 4:30 pm
Call 228-230-4100

All Visitor's Centers are closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Gulf Islands National Seashore has a variety of programs from Junior Rangers to jon boat tours. Ranger talks, guided walks, and special events occur throughout the year.

Go online to www.nps.gov/guis for an in-depth list of programs or pick up a schedule at one of the four visitor centers in the park. Park information is also available by calling (850) 934-2600 in Florida or at (228) 230-4100 in Mississippi.



Fort Massachusetts, Ship Island.

Visit Mississippi's Offshore Islands

Have you ever wanted to drop everything and spend the day on a pristine beach away from it all? Gulf Islands National Seashore's Mississippi District offers serenity and solitude within a short distance of the mainland. For ferry schedule and ticket prices, visit www.msshipisland.com or call (866) 466-7386.

It's an experience you won't soon forget!

Take the affordable ferry from Gulfport, MS to West Ship Island in the spring, summer, and fall. Visitors often experience wild dolphins as they cruise the 50 minute ride to the island. Once there, cross the island to enjoy stunning Gulf of Mexico vistas and the relaxing sound of waves lapping on the shore as migratory and resident birds feed nearby. Available amenities include chair and umbrella rentals, a snack bar and souvenir shop, pavilions, and bathhouse. History buffs can explore the historic Fort Massachusetts, open daily. Visitors can also use park-approved charters to sail or motor to other barrier islands. One local favorite is Horn Island, frequented by fishermen, artists, and sun lovers. Habitats found on this 15 mile long island include; maritime forest, marshes, meadows, sand dunes, along with a myriad of birds and other wildlife. Horn Island is federally designated wilderness area, boasting the highest level of legal protection available for public lands.

Park News



Pack-It-In & Pack-It-Out

The Seashore has implemented a pack it in/pack it out policy at most locations and eliminating trash cans. Our staff always strives to provide the best possible service.

Help keep the Seashore clean and beautiful by practicing Leave No Trace and pack-it-out ethics. Share your knowledge with fellow visitors or even take some extra trash out with you. To dispose of trash or recycle during your visit, look for dumpsters in the park.

Reduce, Recycle, Reuse

The National Park Service is working to significantly reduce the amount of energy and water used in our facilities and the amount of greenhouse gases produced by our operations. By demonstrating reuse, recycle, and reduce principles in our operations. The green initiatives at Gulf Islands include:

- ♻️ Rest rooms with water-efficient fixtures.
- ♻️ Buildings refitted to reduce electrical use and consumption.
- ♻️ Vehicles replaced with hybrid or fuel efficient vehicles.

What Can you do to reduce, recycle, and reuse at the seashore?

- ♻️ Reduce waste buy using refillable water bottles.
- ♻️ Recycle trash in designated containers.
- ♻️ Refill water bottles at filling stations.
- ♻️ Remember the path to sustainability—leave no trace.



Water bottle filling station

Wilderness and Backcountry

Gulf Islands is updating the park's "Wilderness and Backcountry Management Plan" for the 50th anniversary of the 1964 Wilderness Act. The plan will aid park staff in decision making to ensure Horn and Petit Bois Islands are preserved as wilderness islands for the future. These islands are the only essentially unchanged white sand, slash pine forested barrier islands along the entire northern Gulf of Mexico. The plan will also include backcountry areas on Cat and East Ship Islands, in Mississippi and Perdido Key and Santa Rosa Islands in Florida.



Horn Island

Park News

Youth Conservation Corps

For the 13th consecutive year students participated in the Youth Conservation Corps summer program in both Florida and Mississippi Districts of the national seashore.

Students completed a variety of projects including: trails, roadside, and shoreline maintenance, planted sea oats, installed sand fence, removed debris, painted picnic tables, sign posts, restroom facilities and picnic area pavilions, filled sand bags, and trimmed hedges.



Youth Conservation Corps

Youths completed training including: water safety, first aid/CPR, archaeology, resume writing, and interpretive presentations. They visited the Navarre Beach Sea Turtle Conservation Center, Sand Crane Wildlife Sanctuary, Battleship Park, Walter Anderson Museum and Stennis Space Center.

Underwater World of Gulf Islands

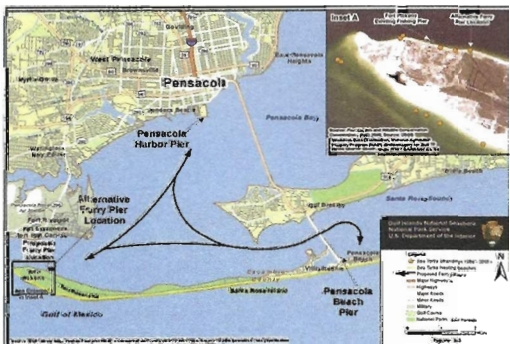


*Scallops are an important recreational species that relies on seagrasses.
Photo credit Florida Aquatic Preserves*

More than 80 percent of the seashore is underwater. The seagrass beds in these shallow waters provide habitat, food, and protection for juvenile fish, crab, shrimp, and waterfowl. Striped mullet, redfish, speckled trout, white trout, and other fishes come here from the gulf to spawn. The adult and young fishes, crab, shrimps, and oysters feed on plankton and algae that colonize seagrass beds. The grass also stabilizes bottom sediments, traps nutrients from runoff, and produces oxygen. Approximately 90 percent of the once lush green meadows of seagrass have been lost do to poor water quality, human use and manipulation, or coastal development.

- Idle your boats in shallow water to avoid creating prop scars which can take 10 years or more to heal.
- Tread lightly as feet trample stems and loosen roots.

Fort Pickens Proposed Passenger Ferry



Proposed Ferry Route

The need for a water transportation/ferry service to Fort Pickens was identified over 30 years ago. Hurricanes have destroyed sections of the Fort Pickens Road, illustrating the need to develop an alternative form of transportation to access to this popular area of the seashore. A ferry system will provide the opportunity to experience the seashore by water. In 2009, the Fort Pickens Gateway Community/Alternative Transportation Plan was completed. It outlined measures to improve vehicle congestion; reduce parking demand; reduce vehicle miles traveled; improve air quality; and protect natural resources (such as nesting sea turtles and shorebirds). These reductions will improve a visitor's overall experience. The first step in a ferry service was the construction of the ferry pier. The ferry service is expected to become operational by 2017.

Park Challenges & Opportunities

Gulf Islands National Seashore managers face many challenges as they strive to protect wondrous natural and cultural resources and provide safe and enjoyable experiences for visitors.

Offshore Oil and Gas Activity?



Offshore gas well south of Dauphin Island, Alabama.

The State of Mississippi has proposed regulations to allow future oil and gas exploration in close proximity to the boundaries of Gulf Islands. This action could lead to significant adverse effects impacting the integrity of the Gulf Islands Wilderness (Petit Bois and Horn island), including the scenic values of all five barrier islands in the Mississippi Sound area. The National Park Service is concerned about the possible affects to wildlife, air quality, water quality, soundscape and diminished visitor experience, should seismic testing and drilling platforms occur adjacent to park boundaries.

Shorebirds



From mid-March to late summer, several species of ground nesting shorebirds such as least terns, snowy and Wilson's plovers, and black skimmers nest on the beaches. Least terns fly in from Central or South America.



Protected areas are closed to the public and marked where shorebirds nests are identified. These closed areas represent a very small percentage of the seashore. Visitors are asked to avoid posted areas along the roadway. Any intrusion into these areas will cause the birds to take flight which will leave the nests, eggs, and chicks vulnerable. Birds often dive at any intruder in an effort to drive them away from the colony. Alarmed birds may then fly low across the road and into the paths of oncoming vehicles, cyclists, joggers, or walkers.



Unless otherwise posted in the Florida District, the speed limit is **20 mph** and will be closely monitored by park officials to protect the nesting colonies along the narrow island.



Least tern and chick

Speed kills.

More than 100 nesting shorebirds are hit each year.
SLOW DOWN and save a life!

Help Protect Wildlife Near Roads:
Always expect shorebirds and animals to be on or near the road.

Follow the posted speed limit.

Increase caution at night and during wet conditions.

Park Challenges & Opportunities

Oil Spill Emergency Response Ended May 2013

The Deepwater Horizon spill of 2010 was the largest accidental spill of oil MC252 in the ocean in history. It will take years to fully know the effects of the oil spill on marine ecosystems and wildlife in the Gulf of Mexico and the National Seashore. Although, cleanup efforts were extensive for several years following the spill, lingering oil could occasionally show up on shore.



MC252 Oil Characteristics: Brown color, shiny or dull surface, mixed with sand and shell

Please assist us by reporting oil found on beaches to the National Response Center:

800-424-8802

Provide: Location-Amount-Date-Time

Perdido Key Beach Mouse



Perdido Key Beach Mouse

The Perdido Key beach mouse is listed as a federal and Florida state endangered species. Loss of habitat from coastal development is considered to be the main factor contributing to the decline of beach mice populations. The main predators of all beach mice are feral and free roaming cats, which do not belong in a natural setting. Local agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the development community are working together to create a new option for mitigating impacts to the Perdido Key Beach Mouse.



These cute little mice are most active at night (nocturnal) and can be spotted crossing roads at night, please increase caution when driving.

Prescribed Fire Management



Prescribed fire in Davis Bayou, Mississippi.



Managers have long recognized the need for ongoing prescribed fire treatments to reduce the threat of unwanted fire and to restore and maintain a healthy ecosystem.



The Naval Live Oaks Area lies in Florida has approximately 1400 acres of long leaf and sand pine, coastal scrub oak, and live oak habitat and Davis Bayou Area in Mississippi has approximately 400 acres. Impacts of numerous hurricanes over the recent past have resulted in an accumulation of dead and down woody debris.



Fire helps restore the ecosystem providing habitat for endangered species such as the gopher tortoise, red-cockaded woodpecker, eastern indigo snake and Florida scrub jay.

Things to Do

Florida

One Day



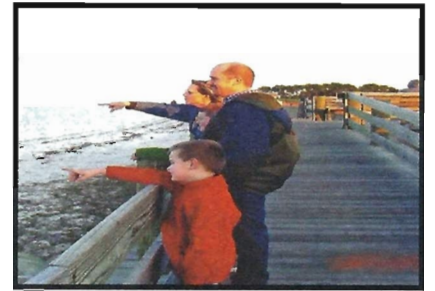
- Take a ranger-led tour of Fort Barrancas or Fort Pickens
- View the park's HD orientation film at the Naval Live Oaks Visitor Center.
- Relax on the beach at Perdido Key or Opal Beach.
- Spend an afternoon fishing at the Fort Pickens fishing pier.

Three Days



- Take a tour of the Advanced Redoubt on Saturdays.
- Hike the Trench Trail between Fort Barrancas and Advanced Redoubt.
- Attend a ranger-guided program. Programs vary by season.
- Participate in the Junior Ranger or Sea Star program for children.
- Ride a bike along the Florida National Scenic Trail.

One Week



- Paddle board or kayak the seashore.
- Bike or hike along the Florida National Scenic Trail.
- Explore the Coast Artillery Batteries at Fort Pickens
- Primitive camp at Perdido Key.
- Youth Groups can camp in the youth group camp area at Naval Live Oaks. Call (850) 934-2622 for reservations.

Mississippi

One Day



- View orientation films at the Visitor Center.
- Walk the Davis Bayou Trails.
- Look for alligators.
- Enjoy a picnic lunch under the shade of live oak trees.
- Attend a program at the visitor center.
- Go fishing at the Davis Bayou fishing pier.

Three Days



- Take the passenger ferry to West Ship Island (March-October).
- Explore Fort Massachusetts on West Ship Island.
- Explore Davis Bayou by canoe or kayak.
- Bike the Live Oaks Bicycling Route.
- Spend an afternoon fishing or crabbing from the pier.

One Week



- Take your own boat or charter a vessel and travel to Petit Bois or Horn Island for a primitive camping experience. Practice the **Leave No Trace** principles, such as, "Pack it in, Pack it out."
- Participate in the Junior Ranger or Sea Star programs for children.