

Gulf State Park Pier Renovations FAQ

April 14, 2020

What is happening?

The Gulf State Park Pier will undergo a major renovation that includes replacing the structure's wooden decking and railings, as well as installing new turtle-friendly lighting, building a new observation deck, and refurbishing office, bathroom, concession and bait shop areas of the pier.

When will this happen?

Construction will close the pier from May 11 through mid-July, meaning the pier is expected to be closed to the public for approximately two months.

Why is the renovation needed?

The existing pine decking and handrails are approximately 10 years old and are in need of repair and replacement. The new decking and handrails will consist of panels made of sustainably sourced Ipe (pronounced ee-pay), a hardwood product that is naturally resistant to rot, abrasion, weather and insects. The use of Ipe should increase the structure's life expectancy, which should translate into cost savings because it won't have to be replaced as often. In addition, the panels can be removed and stored, which is a major safety feature for the inevitable arrival of a hurricane on the Gulf Coast.

How much will the project cost?

The renovation cost is \$2.4 million and is being funded by the Natural Resource Damage Assessment Program, Alabama Trustee Implementation Group. Conservation Commissioner Chris Blankenship represents the State of Alabama on this group.

Why is the renovation needed now?

The permitting process was complicated, as officials paid special attention to environmental concerns, especially with the project's potential impact on sea turtles and other wildlife. That process pushed the work to the spring and summer instead of the preferred off-peak winter months. The new lighting — in the parking lot and on the pier — will be "turtle friendly" and will eliminate any adverse impact caused by the current lighting.

Will anything new be added?

Yes. The renovation includes construction of a 50-by-18-foot observation deck that will be elevated 10 feet, 6 inches above the existing octagon at the south end of the pier. The new deck will add about 850 square feet of additional viewing space for pier visitors. An elevator will allow the deck to be handicap accessible.

In addition, upgrades will be made to the fish cleaning station that should make life easier for anglers who use the pier for fishing.

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