

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lee County announces phased opening of beach parks

Fort Myers, FL, Feb. 14, 2023 – Lee County plans a phased reopening of beach parks with the overall goal of working alongside local, state and federal partners to progress as quickly as possible, while ensuring safety for the community and the best use of taxpayer dollars.

Lee County Natural Resources is overseeing the restoration of the natural elements while Lee County Parks & Recreation is overseeing the beach parks restoration, including facilities and amenities.

The hurricane damaged Lee County's beaches and the sensitive ecosystems with storm debris, pollution and the removal of healthy, safe sand and dune vegetation. The county is ensuring that the many elements of the beach restoration process are being rigorously documented to support full reimbursement through federal funds. This involves assessing and inventorying the damages, meeting FEMA criteria and participating in FEMA inspections, and determining eligibility for public assistance funding. The same goes for beach park facilities, which also were severely impacted. Parks & Recreation is following the important process involving documentation and inspections per FEMA standards to ensure local taxpayer dollars are not depleted on repairs.

Beach erosion assessments have been completed and transmitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and FEMA.

Residents and visitors are advised:

- Beaches and beach parks have not been restored to pre-Hurricane Ian conditions.
- Some amenities such as restroom facilities, piers and walkovers have not been repaired or replaced at this time.
- Debris continues to wash onshore and quickly may be obscured by sand.
- Beach shoes should be worn at all times.
- Debris can still be found in near-shore areas, such as dunes or mangrove-lined coastlines.
- Closure signs are posted where necessary, and www.leeparks.org has status updates.

With those cautions in mind, the tentative opening plans for beaches and beach parks are:

Early March

- Dog Beach
- Boca Grande beach accesses

Mid-March

- Alison Hagerup Beach Park on Captiva
- San Carlos Bay/Bunche Beach Preserve, south Fort Myers
- Bonita Beach Accesses 1, 4, 5, 6 and 9

Mid-April

- Lynne Hall Memorial Park on Fort Myers Beach
- Bonita Beach Park

May

- Bowditch Point Park on Fort Myers Beach

- Bonita Beach accesses 2,3, 7, 8 and 10, also known as Little Hickory Island Park
- Crescent Beach Family Park on Fort Myers Beach

The list above is not all inclusive for every waterfront park site / access point. For more information on additional openings and available amenities, visit the Park Progress Map tool at www.leeparks.org.

For Hurricane Ian information, visit www.leegov.com/storm.

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