

**Environmental Assessment to Improve Barrier Island Habitat and
Visitor Access at Perdido Key / Johnson Beach Area
GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE**

June 2016

The National Park Service (NPS) at Gulf Islands National Seashore has prepared this environmental assessment to analyze the effects of altering visitor access at the Perdido Key / Johnson Beach Area, located in Florida. The purpose of the project is to improve barrier island habitat and improve visitor access and safety along Johnson Beach Road. This document has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA); regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 CFR 1500-1508); and NPS Director's Order #12: *Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-Making* and accompanying National Park Service National NEPA Handbook (2015).

Four alternatives were analyzed for meeting the objectives of the plan:

Alternative 1, No Action / Continue Current Management: Alternative 1 represents a continuation of the existing situation. The Perdido Key and the Rosamond Johnson Beach area would continue to be managed to offer convenient and easy access to recreational beaches for sunbathing, swimming, surfing, strolling, surf fishing, and sand castle play. There would continue to be one entry lane and fee both into the Perdido Key / Johnson Beach Area of Gulf Islands National Seashore and parking would continue to be available both in the main visitor facility parking lot (323 spaces) and along a 1.2-mile stretch of Johnson Beach Road (up to 185 parked cars have been observed on a busy summer day, though there is the potential for additional spaces pending road conditions)). Public access to the beaches would continue to be provided by eleven existing dune crossovers.

Alternative 2: Under alternative 2, visitors would be able to park in one of two locations at either end of the drivable portion of Johnson Beach Road. This alternative would concentrate visitor access to these two locations and allow for greater dune habitat protection along the remainder of the Johnson Beach Road corridor. Public access to the beaches would be provided by six newly constructed, elevated dune crossovers.

Alternative 3, the Alternative Preferred by the National Park Service: Under alternative 3, visitors would be able to park in one of four locations along the drivable portion of Johnson Beach Road. This alternative would concentrate the greatest visitor access to lots at either end of the drivable portion of Johnson Beach Road and two smaller lots in between. Concentrating parking to these areas would allow for greater dune habitat protection between the parking lots along the Johnson Beach Road corridor while still allowing for visitor access along the road. Public access to the beaches would be provided by nine newly constructed, elevated dune crossovers.

Alternative 4: Under alternative 4, visitors would be able to park in one of eight locations along the drivable portion of Johnson Beach Road. This alternative would spread visitor access across the road corridor in smaller, but more numerous parking lots. Although more spread out, concentrating parking to these areas would allow for dune habitat protection between the parking lots along the Johnson Beach Road corridor. Public access to the beaches would be provided by 12 newly constructed, elevated dune crossovers.

PUBLIC COMMENT

If you wish to comment on the environmental assessment, you may mail comments to the name and address below or post comments online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/guis>. This environmental assessment will be on public review for 30 days. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. Although you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Please address written comments to:

Dan Brown, Superintendent
Gulf Islands National Seashore
Attn: Perdido Key / Johnson Beach EA
1801 Gulf Breeze Parkway
Gulf Breeze, FL 32563