



**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
DIVISION OF RECREATION AND PARKS**

OFFICE OF PARK PLANNING



T.H. Stone Memorial St. Joseph Peninsula State Park

**September 2021 Public Meetings
PUBLIC COMMENTS**

From: [tracey logeman](#)
To: [FLStateParkPlanning](#)
Subject: Comment on T.H. Stone Memorial Park redevelopment plan
Date: Monday, September 20, 2021 9:07:44 PM

I will be unable to attend the meeting to comment on the redevelopment plan. I have reviewed the proposed plans and have a few comments, observations. First let me say I am so very excited that the park is being restored. After the hurricane this was not a certainty. I have been coming to the area for the past 30 years and love it. I have rented houses, tent camped and most recently we bought a small trailer (15').

I loved the proposed plan with the exceptions of the elimination of the Gulf Breeze campground. I really don't get having another place that people who are not camping can go to the beach. There already is a large area of beach that can be accessed across from the Main gulf beach access. If you would like to make it more available to the public **might I suggest a larger parking lot across from the main gulf beach**. Whenever I have been there, there has not been that many people using the beach . I really don't get building another beach access when the first area it not that heavily used.

Before the park had 120 standard campsites. The new plan reduces it to 55. **I would REALLY like to see more campsites** if that is at Gulf breeze great if not maybe enlarge one or the other campsites. Even 20 more campsites would be great. I know they would be filled all the time (look at Julian Bruce -St. George island) *This would bring in a lot of revenue to the park, the state, and the local economy. They would pay for themselves in no time.* I do not want it to be a big RV park. The natural areas are why we come. But it is very, very hard to book a site and more would be helpful. Maybe smaller sites for smaller trailers, tent trailers and tents.

Thanks for reading this and all your hard work to bring the park back
Terry Lawyer

From: [Bay Audubon](#)
To: [FLStateParkPlanning](#); [Alsentzer, Daniel](#)
Subject: Comments of Restoration of T. H. Stone St. Joe State Park
Date: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 8:04:55 AM

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. These comments are on behalf of Bay County Audubon Society.

Although T. H. Stone St. Joe State Park is very popular for public recreation, it is also necessary to accommodate the needs of wildlife, specifically the shorebirds that nest and feed in the park. As development destroys other nesting and foraging areas, our parks become even more essential to provide for the birds' survival. Specifically, shorebirds and seabirds rely on open, sparsely vegetated landscapes, and these should be preserved as the park redevelops. Construction should be done only when the birds are NOT nesting and raising young.

Viewing platforms sound like a good idea for the enjoyment of visitors, but they should NOT be placed near shorebird nesting areas (including along the park road, on the bayside near the marina, and in front of the old Gulf Breeze campground) because they provide perches for avian predators who then pick off the fledgling chicks. Trash cans are not advised for this reason, also, and because they do not work. Trash cans merely give people a target for throwing their trash!

We recommend the placement of traffic calming or speed slowing devices along the newly constructed road to minimize road mortality of breeding shorebirds and seabirds and their young. Currently, birds nest on both sides of the road and have the potential to travel with their chicks back and forth across the road.

The footprint of the newly proposed Bay View Campground is at a location where migrant birds are always plentiful. Keeping the native vegetation in this campground would provide habitat for these birds, as well as providing privacy for campers. It is not necessary to clear ALL campsites to provide maximum space for large vehicles.

T. H. Stone St. Joe Park is one of our favorite places, and we are delighted that it will be restored to provide limited recreation for humans, but that human experience will be greatly enhanced if the needs of wildlife are also respected.

Thank you, Candis Harbison, Secretary, Bay County Audubon Society

From: [Ann Morrow](#)
To: [FLStateParkPlanning](#)
Subject: Comments on Redevelopment of St. Joseph Peninsula State Park
Date: Monday, September 27, 2021 2:15:08 PM

Florida State Park Planning Staff:

First, thank you to all the DEP staff who have led the efforts to restore St. Joseph Peninsula State Park following the devastation of Hurricane Michael. As Tallahassee residents for 38 years, we have treasured our time spent camping, hiking, birding and botanizing at the park and consider it one of our favorite destinations. We are very impressed with the restoration to date.

We appreciate this opportunity to comment on proposed changes. This planning process is a chance for the park to consider the effects of climate change and increased visitation on the park's natural resources and to be a model for other parks in the state that are facing the same threats. We also acknowledge the challenge you face of meeting the Florida Park Service Mission "to provide resource-based recreation while preserving, interpreting and restoring natural and cultural resources," as well as, the park planning objective "to achieve an equitable balance between preserving natural resources and providing public access for outdoor recreation."

Our comments come from our perspectives as biologists who want to see, above all, the park's habitats and wildlife protected and from our experience as visitors and tent campers in this and other parks. We value a quality experience for ourselves and other visitors.

We suggest:

1. Encourage a "dark sky" experience and minimize the detrimental effects of light pollution on wildlife and campers by instituting a "All Lights Out" policy after 10 pm in each campsite. Soft exterior lighting can illuminate restrooms but interior restroom lighting should be motion activated.
2. Prohibit music and television volumes that carry beyond an individual site. (Tents provide only a minimal light and sound barrier.)
3. Prohibit pets in campgrounds and on trails. They disturb wildlife, campers and trail users and are often not well-behaved or are poorly supervised.
4. Create separate, tent-only camping areas in quality locations.
5. Charge higher day-use and camping fees for out-of-state visitors. State residents are already supporting our parks through taxes.
6. Group camping – Prioritize reservations for authorized groups, but allow individuals to reserve the group camping site if it is available after all other individual sites are full.
7. Consider enhanced efforts to alleviate disturbance to loafing and feeding shorebirds and seabirds through signage, handouts or active patrolling. We have witnessed numerous examples of adults and children running towards flocks of birds to get them to fly. This is particularly evident on the numerous sandbars on the Eagle Harbor side of the breach.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Ann and Don Morrow

Tallahassee, FL

From: [Ruth Narcisse](#)
To: [Degagne, Demi](#)
Subject: Question for T.H. Stone Memorial St. Joseph Peninsula State Park - Redevelopment Planning Virtual Public Meeting
Date: Monday, September 20, 2021 4:52:55 PM

Hello,

My husband and I plan to attend the webinar and we have one question for the panel - Are there any plans for the campground(s) to have sites with full hookup? If so, do you know how many sites will have it (full hookup) yet?

Thank you,

Ruth Narcisse
Johns Creek, GA

From: [Billy R Hulsey](#)
To: [FLStateParkPlanning](#)
Subject: St. Joseph Campground
Date: Monday, September 20, 2021 6:34:47 PM

Hello,

Thanks for presentation on 9/20/2021. Can you send me proposed RV campground map and other plans you showed in presentation? This was our favorite campground before hurricane. We loved bay area and being able to snorkel in bay. Looking at maps it seems sea grass and sea life was sweep away by hurricane.

We have very many good memories of visiting park in past. We plan on visiting again as soon as park reopens for camping.

Thanks again for your effort,

Billy Hulsey

brhulsey@gmail.com

158 Grant Pt.

Dawsonville, GA 30534

From: [Bay Audubon](#)
To: [FLStateParkPlanning](#); [Alsentzer, Daniel](#)
Subject: Comments of Restoration of T. H. Stone St. Joe State Park
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Thank you, Candis Harbison, Secretary, Bay County Audubon Society

From: [Christian Wagley](#)
To: [FLStateParkPlanning](#)
Subject: comments on SJSP
Date: Monday, October 18, 2021 1:16:07 PM

October 15, 2021

Florida Park Service

Via email: FLStateParkPlanning@floridadep.gov

Dear Park Planning staff:

Healthy Gulf is a diverse coalition of individual citizens and local, regional, and national organizations committed to uniting and empowering people to protect and restore the natural resources of the Gulf of Mexico. One of our priority focus areas is on maintaining and improving the natural resiliency of coastal systems such as coastal barriers and wetlands.

On behalf of our members and supporters in Florida, we wish to comment on recovery plans for the T.H. Stone Memorial St. Joseph Peninsula State Park following the impacts of Hurricane Michael. The Park is of great interest to our members due to its ecological significance and its location adjacent to St. Joseph Bay—a unique body of water along the northern Gulf coast. We believe that the recovery planning process presents an opportunity to set a course for park management that protects the natural integrity of the park and its wildlife; allows for balanced public access and use; and adapts to the changing conditions caused by climate change that include stronger hurricanes and accelerated sea level rise.

We recommend that the following general principles guide recovery planning for the Park:

Let nature rule

We believe that the Park's Approved Unit Management Plan provides ample support for this approach:

"DRP's philosophy of resource management is natural systems management. Primary emphasis is placed on restoring and maintaining, to the degree possible, the natural processes that shaped the structure, function, and species composition of Florida's diverse natural communities as they occurred in the original domain."

This approach is manifest through a "hands off" policy that allows natural processes to occur uninterrupted to the greatest extent possible. Examples include allowing sand dunes to build naturally rather than through artificial plantings or the construction of artificial dunes. Doing so allows for the maintenance of newly created overwash fans, which will serve as exceptional shorebird nesting habitat in the years ahead.

Create more flexible infrastructure

The overwhelming body of scientific evidence predicts a dramatic acceleration of sea level rise in the decades ahead, with 2' – 6' of additional rise to 2100. This will put much of the Park's shoreline in more rapid retreat, making it more difficult to maintain infrastructure and facilities.

As opposed to making facilities harder, there are many opportunities to make them softer and more in-line with the natural dynamics of the Peninsula. For example, garbage, restroom, visitor center, and other facilities can be made smaller, lighter, more flexible, and easier to move out-of-the way of storm events.

Relocate vulnerable infrastructure

The Park Service should assess every park building and piece of infrastructure to determine whether it should be relocated to make it less vulnerable to future storms and sea level rise. For example, campground restrooms/bathhouses heavily damaged in the storm should be moved inland to higher ground.

Plan for alternative ways to reach the park, such as boat/ferry service

FPS should plan for alternative methods of reaching the Park so that there can be temporary and perhaps permanent access in this manner following future storm events that limit access. This could take the form of boat/ferry service. Such planning is in recognition of the continued vulnerability of State Road 30E at the Stumphole, where Cape San Blas meets the Peninsula, as well as vulnerability of the entrance road and facilities inside the Park itself.

Protect Water quality

Considering the ecological significance of the adjacent St. Joseph Bay, we recommend that protecting water quality be given the highest priority. Sewage in areas not accessible for central treatment could be handled by composting toilets that can be removed or otherwise secured in the event of a storm.

While we are generally supportive of Park restoration plans, we also offer the following comments on specific areas of the Park:

Multi use path

We support the creation of a multi use path to encourage bicycle and pedestrian travel rather than travel by auto.

Support Area

We suggest that Support Area buildings include solar photovoltaic systems that would reduce the environmental footprint of Park operations and provide electricity in the event of an outage (a battery system would be needed).

Entrance Area

No comments.

Eagle Harbor Marina

We generally support the proposed improvements. We do have concerns about the vulnerability of a new concession building to storm surge. We suggest that the possibility of a small portable building attached to screened outdoor areas be considered as a way of promoting lighter, more flexible, more resilient Park infrastructure. Furthermore, we ask that the Marina area be able to accommodate possible passenger ferry service from Port St. Joe following a future storm event that eliminates vehicle access to the area.

Main Gulf Beach Access

We ask that restroom facilities be sited in the area safest from storm surge. We would also like to see the use of alternative materials and designs that could make the beach walkovers less vulnerable to storm surge.

Former Breach Site

No comments.

Gulf Breeze Day Use Area

No comments.

Proposed Bayview Campground

We support the proposed improvements as they are less vulnerable to storms than camping areas

on the Gulffront.

Shady Pines Campground

We suggest keeping the entire campground location as far landward as is practicable. Keeping tent areas separate from RV areas will help ensure a better, quieter experience for tent campers. Furthermore, we suggest that tent areas be located closer to the Gulf than RV sites as they are smaller and have less intense supporting infrastructure, making them better suited to this more dynamic location.

Bayview Day Use Area

We support the proposed improvements.

Cabin and Primitive Group Camp Areas

We suggest that Cabins include solar photovoltaic systems that would reduce the environmental footprint of Park operations and provide electricity in the event of an outage (a battery system would be needed).

Wilderness Preserve

We support the proposed improvements, though we suggest that only man-made debris be removed from the area.

We appreciate the care and consideration that has been given to planning the redevelopment of the Park. Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,



Christian Wagley



Christian Wagley
(he/him/his)
Coastal Organizer,
Florida-Alabama

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healthygulf.org