

Young, Bernie C

From: Paul E. Zielske <paul@phoendev.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 24, 2020 4:36 AM
To: Justice, Charlie; Eggers, Dave; Long, Janet C; Seel, Karen; Peters, Kathleen; Welch, Kenneth; Gerard, Pat
Subject: 20-845A Version: 1 Vessel Exclusion Zone

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. **Do Not Click** on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Would like some clarification on this recently passed modification to the Vessel Exclusion Zones in regards to Outback Key. Are boats allowed to still anchor up on the outside of the "key"? Is this just trying to stop people from going into the newly formed lagoon? It mentions this was done to eliminate safety concerns between swimmers and boaters. Wondering how do you think 99% of those swimmers got to the key?

If this truly locks down Outback Key, disallowing any boat to anchor off to that entire beach front created in recent years, then I 100% disagree with this ordinance. If anything we need to encourage more access to our beautiful waterfront. I find it very curious that in the middle of a pandemic when the entire nation is locked down that this kind of restriction to our beautiful outdoors is even presented. To sneak something like this in under the radar with it being virtually impossible for public comment seems a little unscrupulous to me.

There is no mention that this has anything to do with an ecological issue. It is not a bird sanctuary. Some rare fish on the brink of extinction doesn't only live there. There are no houses or developments nearby that are affected by noise, traffic, etc... Although it is open 24/7, outside of this pandemic where it has been full every day, it is generally only used on weekends between 11:00 am and 5:00 pm.

I have a boat. I am on the water a lot. I have used outback key to take a break and get a swim and relax before. Not often, but I have used it. Just like Egmont and other areas. Although the traffic, especially right now, can be overwhelming, I don't know how shutting it down could be on the agenda. It is clearly a spot that the public uses. There has to be a more reasonable way to deal with things than to just shut it down. Swim zones and other restrictions up and down the coast have virtually eliminated places that boats can anchor up on the beach to hang out. This key didn't exist 15 years ago. It isn't readily accessible to "land lubbers". To lock it down makes ZERO sense other than a political agenda.

I would like to thank Commission Eggers and Commissioner Peters for using COMMON sense and voting against this measure and I would like to voice to the rest of you my distaste for your decision.

The continued lockdown of our natural resources, the thing that makes Pinellas County so fantastic is ridiculous.

I have been a Pinellas County resident for over 30 years and I do vote and decisions like this will definitely change my vote in upcoming elections.

Sincerely,
Paul E. Zielske
Pinellas County Resident
Voter

Young, Bernie C

From: sean@schraderville.com
Sent: Tuesday, May 26, 2020 3:08 PM
To: Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Eggers, Dave; Seel, Karen; Peters, Kathleen; Welch, Kenneth
Subject: [BULK] BUNCES PASS VESSEL EXCLUSION ZONE
Importance: Low

CAUTION:

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BOCC:

I am very concerned about the ordinance passed last week regarding expanded vessel exclusion zones at Bunces Pass.

The boating industry and the boating public have a considerable financial impact on Pinellas County. I hope that you are in regular communication with industry groups as well as boating clubs to discuss these topics prior to your votes. These groups are made up of individuals who vote and it is your responsibility to consider them in your recommendations and decisions.

I ask that you reconsider your decision and take into account the boating public and the hundreds of companies that will be effected by closing another boating destination.

Thank you
Sean Schrader

Young, Bernie C

From: sean@schraderville.com
Sent: Tuesday, May 26, 2020 3:08 PM
To: Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Eggers, Dave; Seel, Karen; Peters, Kathleen; Welch, Kenneth
Subject: [BULK] BUNCES PASS VESSEL EXCLUSION ZONE
Importance: Low

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I ask that you reconsider your decision and take into account the boating public and the hundreds of companies that will be effected by closing another boating destination.

Thank you
Sean Schrader

Young, Bernie C

From: Thom Burton <thomjbarton@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2020 7:10 PM
Cc: Welch, Kenneth; Peters, Kathleen; Eggers, Dave; Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Seel, Karen; Pete Merrifield; Becky; Neil Mirchandani; Rick Holmes; David Bauck; Justin & Amy Greth; Dustin Secor; Preston Shoup's e-mail address; Ted Vandigriff
Subject: [BULK] Re: Overreaction - Bunces/Ft desoto
Importance: Low

CAUTION:

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To all,

Pete Merrifield and I have been discussing this today along with many neighbors and I totally agree with all of Pete's thoughts below.

I would also like to add a few of my own thoughts and "piggyback" on top of his.

I am a very avid boater. I grew up on the Great Lakes in Michigan and loved boating so much that it is one of the main reasons that I moved to St. Petersburg in the first place. A beautiful boating environment that could be enjoyed pretty much 365 days a year.

I purchased a waterfront home in Broadwater in 1988 and have lived and boated this area ever since. I have seen many changes to the boating environment since that time and don't really like some of them but agree with many of the necessary mandates such as all the "no-wake zones" that have been added throughout the years in the name of safety.

I watched the entire presentation of Tuesday's meeting and found it to be very interesting.

First off, it was mentioned that the public was notified of this meeting and had no response. I would like to hear how the public was notified? I can honestly say that I have been to the exact area in question on each of the last three weekends and there was no "posting" of the upcoming meeting anywhere to be seen?

The main considerations that I heard during the discussion for closing off the area were for the safety of the families with children and concern the lifeguards could not maintain control of the area, and that if passed, families will be able to safely walk out to the Gulf of Mexico from the North parking lot if this area was closed to all boats.

1- In all the years that I have been boating in this area, even prior to the formation of the sandbar, I have never once seen a lifeguard tower or lifeguard in this area. The swimmers have always remained South of said area. Does this mean that in addition to the very expensive "posting of signage" and enforcement, the county will also be building lifeguard towers and hiring extra lifeguards to manage it?

2- Kathleen Peters was the only commissioner that mentioned that she had frequented the area by boat and also by Sheriff helicopter and she voted "no" and to leave the area as it is. Many other commissioners mentioned that they had not been to the area and/or were unfamiliar with it. To me, they were voting "yes" without really having any first-hand knowledge of what they were voting for.

3- If anybody was to drive to the North parking lot and walk all the way to the Gulf from the parking lot, I'm guessing that they would not do it because of the distance and the need to traverse the water and sand and walk I'm guessing about a mile to get there. Now I really cannot imagine a family walking that distance with a cooler, beach chairs, and totting their children with them. Just saying...

4- As Kathleen mentioned and I totally agree with her, this area is rapidly filling in with sand anyway and in a year, I'm guessing it would be a moot point as boats will not be able to get in there anyway. As it is now, we generally turn off and raise our motors near the entrance and "walk our boat to the inside" and do the same when leaving as it is normally waist deep or less.

5- I totally agree that the jetskis travel way too fast in that area and thinking a much cheaper cost would be to post one or two "Slow speed No Wake Zone" signs at the entrance and that would handle that problem. As to the "ultralight planes" mentioned in the meeting, I'm not denying they have ever landed there but all the many times that I have spent the day there, I have never witnessed this happening so guessing it is very rare.

Any further consideration would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,
Thom Burton
727-867-4228

On Wed, May 20, 2020 at 4:40 PM <pmerrifield@acsi-usa.com> wrote:

Hello Commissioners,

As a citizen in St Petersburg, I understand that a decision was recently made to restrict all boater access to an area near Bunces Pass/Ft Desoto /Outback Key

If this is accurate, I request you reconsider the decision to restrict boaters access to the area around Bunces pass and Outback key. We boaters make up a large portion of the populace in the city, and the repetitive closures of any location where boaters gather to socialize is somewhat draconian. When problems arise, there should be a way to work things out rather than outright prohibitions. From what I heard in the BCC meeting is that the request to close this area was due not to actual damages or injuries, but rather 'potential' problems. Again, a full shutdown seems extreme – especially for a town that is so intertwined with the water and water activities.

Can we please reconsider this decision and work together towards a mutually beneficial solution – if there is even a problem?

The Sheriff's comments seemed that he was unaware of an issue in the area.

Ft. Desoto is a huge park– with miles of beach all around it. Why is it that the one ½ mile area where boats accumulate is the one spot where drastic moves must be taken? Boats go slow in the area (except maybe skis).

Boaters like calm areas to relax and socialize, and closure of this location is probably going to further compress the boaters in another area— providing another excuse by someone to say that location needs to be shut down.

Multiple times over the past few years I have seen areas where boaters identify as a place to gather and socialize are deemed as a problem – when no real problem is truly identified. Nor is there an effort to work together – only a prohibition.

Continued activities of this type will result in more boats being restricted to fewer areas resulting in what I fear will be the desire to continue to restrict access to those locations.

It sounded like the biggest potential danger was high speed Jet Ski's.

IF this is the real problem, why not have no wake zones to answer the concerns? Or shut down the very inside of the zone where most boats can't get to?

Instead of working against us, can we work together? At least shouldn't there be a study or team assembled that could work through this?

I appreciate your feedback and assistance!

Thank you for your consideration.

Pete Merrifield

33711

PH: 727-822-3000

Fax: 727-822-4044

Young, Bernie C

From: Raul Pou <raulpou@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 22, 2020 11:22 AM
To: Gerard, Pat
Subject: Bunces Closing

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. **Do Not Click** on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Mr Gerard,

I would like the opportunity to meet with you to better understand your reasoning for voting on the measures to close down Outback Key to the recreational boaters that enjoy this great resource. When would be a good time and date for you?

Regards,

Raúl Pou
847-772-1306

Young, Bernie C

From: Alex Obenauf <aobenauf@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2020 1:29 PM
To: Justice, Charlie; Long, Janet C; Seel, Karen; Welch, Kenneth; Gerard, Pat
Cc: Eggers, Dave; Peters, Kathleen
Subject: Bunces Pass Boating Restriction

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. Do Not Click on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

County Commission,

I just watched the entire hearing regarding 20-845A - the Fort DeSoto Vessel Exclusion zone. I am not one that typically gets involved with local politics; however, I do vote and I am very upset about your decision.

Your park commissioner, Paul Cozzie, lied to you in his presentation. I use this area on my boat very often and the "problem of swimmers" that is used as a justification for this ordinance is non-existent. "Swimmers use the beach to south of outback key because it is quit a long walk from the "parking lot" to outback key. I go here all the time and I never see Non-Boaters on outback key. You keep taking available areas away from boaters (Shell key) and have stirred up a hornets nest with this move. You passed this without letting the public know. The fact that no citizens spoke up during your "virtual meeting" clearly shows that the public wasn't aware of this. I would have spoken up had I known (and many of my friends are livid online right now). You do this at a time when we are told to "stay inside", "separate 50 feet", and socially distance is not only tone deaf but actually harmful.

Your park director was deceitful and was not honest with the commission. The video he showed was inflammatory and focused more on the "sea planes" then actual issues with the boat (and this does nothing to address the sea plane). The director and the sheriff both acknowledged that they hadn't had "many complaints" and weren't able to point to any accidents.

If you were only banning boating "inside the lagoon would be one thing (I would disagree with it, but it will probably be filled in soon anyway). From my social network, I know that many people, who are not usually political, are very upset about this and I expect that you will hear a lot of negative feedback.

If this doesn't get reversed, I promise that I will work to have each of you that voted for this unseated in the next election.

Regards,
Alex Obenauf
727-410-8768

Young, Bernie C

From: Ralph Obenauf <robenauf@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2020 2:07 PM
To: Justice, Charlie; Long, Janet C; Seel, Karen; Welch, Kenneth; Gerard, Pat; Peters, Kathleen; Eggers, Dave
Cc: Ralph
Subject: Bunces Pass Boating Restriction

CAUTION:

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I am writing regarding 20-845A - the Fort DeSoto Vessel Exclusion zone. I am typically not political; however, I do vote and I am very upset about your actions.

Your park commissioner, Paul Cozzie, was not correct in his presentation. I go to this area by boat often and the "problem of swimmers" that is used as a justification for this ordinance is non-existent. Swimmers use the beach to south of outback key because it is a very long walk from the "parking lot" to outback key. In all the times I've been there I have never seen Non-Boaters on outback key.

You keep taking available areas away from boaters (such as Shell Key) and as far as I know there were no public meetings, hearings or opportunities for the public to respond, ask questions, etc. You passed this without letting the public know. and without justification. The public wasn't aware of this.

Your park director was deceitful and was not honest with the commission. The video he showed was inflammatory and focused more on the "sea planes" then actual issues with boats (and this does nothing to address the sea plane). The director and the sheriff both acknowledged that they hadn't had "many complaints" and weren't able to point to any accidents.

If you were only banning boating "inside the lagoon would be one thing (I would disagree with it, but it will probably be filled in soon anyway). I have many friends who are not usually political but who are very upset about this. I expect that you will hear a lot of negative feedback and you will lose all their votes.

This action was not justified! If this doesn't get reversed immediately I promise that I will personally work to have each of you that voted for this unseated in the next election.

Ralph Obenauf
3103 Bayshore Blvd NE
Saint Petersburg, FL 33703
C: 908-884-6874

Young, Bernie C

From: Mike Valone <mikevalone@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2020 1:01 PM
To: Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Eggers, Dave; Seel, Karen; Peters, Kathleen; Welch, Kenneth
Subject: Bunces Pass Sandbar Closure

CAUTION:

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Dear Commissioners,

As a boater who frequently visits the Bunces Pass Sandbar with my family, I wanted to share my disappointment with the 5-2 decision to close the majority of the area to vessel traffic and offer up a few important points I did not hear mentioned during the public discussion on May 19th:

1. The distance between the Fort DeSoto North Beach Parking lot and the Bunces Pass Sandbar/Lagoon area is 0.5 - 1.25 miles (measured on Google Maps) depending on where you park in the North Beach lot and you currently must wade through a deep cut of water to get there. We rarely, if ever, see Fort DeSoto beach visitors walk all the way out to the sandbar where boats are anchored, much less drag coolers, umbrellas and beach chairs to spend the day.
2. While the proposal to leave the north tip and Bunces pass section open to boaters is a nice gesture, part of the reason everyone anchors there boats on the inside of the lagoon area is it is much calmer and safer for families, especially on weekends with heavy boat traffic. Forcing them to anchor in rougher water seems irresponsible.
3. One point that gets lost in this discussion about bathers and boaters is that almost every "boater" that anchors along the sandbar is also a "bather" themselves. Everyone congregates in the water among their boats and I am not aware of any serious accidents to date from this practice.

I'm afraid the Commission has found a solution to a problem that does not exist. I would urge you to rethink this decision as this has a very negative impact on the boating community and a benefit to almost no one.

Thank you,
Mike Valone

Young, Bernie C

From: Mike Valone <mikevalone@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2020 1:01 PM
To: Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Eggers, Dave; Seel, Karen; Peters, Kathleen; Welch, Kenneth
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Thank you,
Mike Valone

Young, Bernie C

From: Jamie Hanson <jamieandenzo@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 26, 2020 12:32 PM
To: Gerard, Pat
Subject: Bunces Pass

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. **Do Not Click** on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Ms. Gerard

I am writing you to reconsider your vote on Bunces Pass. My husband and I boat there almost every weekend and we have not seen any problems between boaters and swimmers. Very few people even swim in the lagoon. Most people walk over from the parking lot straight onto the south beach of Bunce's Pass. It is also not true that there are more swimmers than boaters. Maybe you would consider the lagoon to be a no wake zone? I think that it would be easier to ban swimmers from the lagoon than to ban boaters. All of the barrier islands off of St Pete Beach have been restricted to boaters in some way or another. It just feels like this decision was not made using facts. Thank you very much for your time.

Jamie Hanson
2831 E Vina Del Mar Blvd
St Pete Beach, FL 33706

630-890-8378

Young, Bernie C

From: pmerrifield@acsi-usa.com
Sent: Friday, May 22, 2020 4:06 PM
To: Welch, Kenneth
Cc: Welch, Kenneth; Peters, Kathleen; Eggers, Dave; Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Seel, Karen
Subject: Ft Desoto/ Bunces Pass Boating

CAUTION:

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Hello Commissioner Welch,

Thank you for your response, and willingness to consider thoughtful approaches to making as much of our county accessible.

I am pleasantly surprised by the overwhelming interest by fellow citizens (with over 5000 signatures on a petition regarding this matter) – it means a lot to many of us.

https://www.change.org/p/pinellas-county-commissioners-bunces-pass-is-for-boaters?recruiter=5441203&recruited_by_id=0dc15ad0-2513-11e5-ba62-83b6162c744a&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=psf_combo_share_abi&utm_term=share_petition

I listened to a good percentage of the meeting on line, so I have a decent understanding of what the park representative was saying.

I have been a frequent boater out to the lagoon at Bunces. In the many times I have been out there I haven't seen anything that even somewhat represents that video (which was as I understand it from a few years ago).

This location is one of very few that has a number of factors going for it

1. It is reasonably close to town – and easily boatable.
2. There is very little current here – unlike even the other side of bunces pass which can have very strong currents.
3. It is somewhat remote, enabling us to 'get away from' the rat race of our work weeks, without a lot of effort.
4. there is not a lot of wave action, which provides for smooth waters – again somewhat unique to the area. While some would think that we have a lot of open beaches where we can anchor easily, many have significant wave action which often make it undesirable to stay on board a boat and also can be irritating to stand in surf.

Locations such as this could be considered Unicorns (very difficult to replicate; hence the overwhelming desire to keep the access open).

Most of us that patronize the area come by boat at a reasonable, safe pace to the area; we anchor our boats and either stay on board, or exit to stand in waist deep water to socialize with friends. We are responsible citizens that are concerned for both our safety and those around us – in this world of litigation, most of us are very concerned about even the appearance of being unsafe. First and foremost, we are there to relax, not cause problems.

Essentially, most of us are just taking a different mode of transportation to Ft Desoto than those that come by car. It's really just a water parking lot for the vast majority of us. Instead of gathering on the beach, or at one of the villas on land, we prefer to stand waist deep on the sand bar.

We have FWC, Pinellas County, and St. Petersburg law enforcement representative who provide and enforce the rules in place throughout the waterways. We appreciate and support them!

I believe that after listening to the Park representative's presentation, the primary concern was safety to swimmers, and the 'Potential' for injury in the future (not that any injury is known to have taken place to this point). He also brought up a topic of seaplanes, which I believe that he indicated that this closure would also not be able to affect (I have no suggestions for seaplanes).

Closing this area to boats due to the potential danger to swimmers is akin (in my view) to closing the streets at the park due to the potential danger to pedestrians, but I don't think anyone is considering that, are we? Instead we have reasonable speed limits.

In response to your request for suggestions, **I would offer that a reasonable means to address the concerns would be to put in a speed limit- for boaters a 'No Wake Zone' in as large an area as there is concern** – similar to how we regulate speed limits on the roads to support other pedestrian concerns. This is a common practice in delicate waterways today throughout the county.

We have had a few similar locations shut down over the years, and it appears to be having the opposite of the intended result. Because locations that have the characteristics that I've listed above are limited, when one is closed, it results in larger groups congregating at the remaining locations. Instead of reducing the amount of congestion, the remaining accessible options get more traffic.

Pinellas county is one of the greatest places to live in the country. Our citizens love living here. We have great beaches and waterways. Most, if not all of us, appreciate and respect the opportunities that we have here, and we don't want to jeopardize it. From what I heard on the call no specific or repetitive actions have taken place that would warrant a prohibition. We've just been through 2 months of heavy restrictions; I don't think anyone wants to be limited in their ability to assemble any more than is necessary – especially when there are less restrictive options.

Summer is here! We've all been cooped up for months. The beaches just reopened; Let's not shut down some of the best parts of the county – especially without significant justification. The people that live here respect the opportunities that are unique to us. Our law enforcement representatives do a great job; let's put in a slow zone in any areas of concern and trust the citizens who consider themselves lucky to live in this paradise we call Pinellas!

Thank you for your consideration, and have a great weekend!

Respectfully,
Pete Merrifield
33711

From: Welch, Kenneth <kwelch@co.pinellas.fl.us>
Sent: Friday, May 22, 2020 2:28 PM
To: pmerrifield@acsi-usa.com
Subject: Re: Overreaction - Bunces/Ft desoto

Thanks for your email regarding the Commission's recent decision regarding Vessel Exclusion Zones at Ft. Desoto park. I supported the recommendation in the interest of boater and swimmer safety. The item was properly noticed and discussed in public, televised meetings on both June 19th and June 14th.

Your email however, and the volume of email responses that I've received makes it clear to me that many in the boating community were not aware that the ordinance was under consideration by the BoCC, and I'm open to reviewing the issue. Safety is still my priority - I have seen video and photos of boaters, swimmers and even seaplanes in the same area. That appears to be a potentially hazardous situation.

Given that, I would ask you for any suggestions that you have to address the issue of safety for both swimmers and boaters in the area. Thanks for reaching out with your concerns.

KT

Commissioner Kenneth T. Welch

Pinellas Board of County Commissioners

[727.464.3614](tel:727.464.3614)

Please note: all mail sent to and from Pinellas County government is subject to the public records law of the State of Florida.

Sent from my iMac

On May 20, 2020, at 4:40 PM, pmerrifield@acsi-usa.com wrote:

CAUTION:

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Hello Commissioners,

As a citizen in St Petersburg, I understand that a decision was recently made to restrict all boater access to an area near Bunces Pass/Ft Desoto /Outback Key

If this is accurate, I request you reconsider the decision to restrict boaters access to the area around Bunces pass and Outback key. We boaters make up a large portion of the populace in the city, and the repetitive closures of any location where boaters gather to socialize is somewhat draconian. When problems arise, there should be a way to work things out rather than outright prohibitions. From what I heard in the BCC meeting is that the request to close this area was due not to actual damages or injuries, but rather 'potential' problems. Again, a full shutdown seems extreme – especially for a town that is so intertwined with the water and water activities.

Can we please reconsider this decision and work together towards a mutually beneficial solution – if there is even a problem?

The Sherriff's comments seemed that he was unaware of an issue in the area.

Ft. Desoto is a huge park– with miles of beach all around it. Why is it that the one ½ mile area where boats accumulate is the one spot where drastic moves must be taken? Boats go slow in the area (except maybe skis).

Boaters like calm areas to relax and socialize, and closure of this location is probably going to further compress the boaters in another area– providing another excuse by someone to say that location needs to be shut down.

Multiple times over the past few years I have seen areas where boaters identify as a place to gather and socialize are deemed as a problem – when no real problem is truly identified. Nor is there an effort to work together – only a prohibition.

Continued activities of this type will result in more boats being restricted to fewer areas resulting in what I fear will be the desire to continue to restrict access to those locations.

It sounded like the biggest potential danger was high speed Jet Ski's.

IF this is the real problem, why not have no wake zones to answer the concerns? Or shut down the very inside of the zone where most boats can't get to?

Instead of working against us, can we work together? At least shouldn't there be a study or team assembled that could work through this?

I appreciate your feedback and assistance!

Thank you for your consideration.

Pete Merrifield
33711

PH: 727-822-3000
Fax: 727-822-4044

Young, Bernie C

From: SCOTT HANSON <shanson327@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 26, 2020 11:14 AM
To: Creech, Whitney; Justice, Charlie; Eggers, Dave; Long, Janet C; Seel, Karen; Peters, Kathleen; Welch, Kenneth; Gerard, Pat
Subject: May 21th meeting Outback Key/Bounces Pass recommendations

CAUTION:

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Commissioners, good morning.

As a resident of Vina Del Mar (off pass-a-grille) and an avid boater in the area for the past 6 years, I wanted to raise awareness of my concerns and how information was presented by Paul Coozie to the group.

I truly feel that Paul mislead and misrepresented the facts during the last meeting in his recommendations about Outback Key/Bounces Pass.

Good decisions can only be made from good data and I don't believe you were supplied that.

First let me say, safety is a top priority. I am not proposing any changes to decrease our most valuable commodities (people).

His statement "you can only get to the beach by swimming through the lagoon" is false". While you may choose to do that, the closest way to enjoy the beach is right at the very north most end of the parking lot. Its the shortest route and you can pass directly across without even having to swim (not even at high tide).

I have been enjoying the area (from boat and car) for the past 5 years. I have never seen anyone walk 1/2 to 3/4 of a mile further north of the parking lot and then cross the lagoon (200 ft) to get to the beach.

The picture below has the parking lot highlighted in yellow as well as the natural path of people to enter the beach and walk along Outback Key. Note the photo is old and the water doesn't continue to create a channel that people have to cross. Highlighted in red is the path that Paul suggests people use as the only way to get to the beach on Outback key which is also the basis for his recommendations.



If you were out this past holiday weekend or rode with the sheriffs you would have also seen that literally 90% of the individuals who arrive by car set up within a 1/2 mile perimeter and walk over to the beach (as highlighted in green)

I would propose to each of you if Paul's position was different....would your answer have been different? If Paul would have said the primary way people get to the Outback Key beach was via the existing beach, if Paul would have shown the video and his dialog was "look how the boaters are getting along, looking out for each other, enjoying the outdoors peacefully, etc, if Paul would have said there hasn't been a single boat/swimmer incident in the past 5 years". I can't help but believe your votes would be different. You're not entirely at fault. I am asking each of you who approved Pau's recommendations to better educate yourselves on the actual facts and not be led by someone who clearly doesn't understand the area, how it's used, and how important it is to the community.

Planes landing and taking off in the lagoon is a true concern. Planes unlike cars and boats have much longer lead times to make course corrections not to mention the rate of speed and angle of site. If you want to do the responsible thing, let's start spending our efforts to investigate how to manage this.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to speaking on Thursday the 28th.

Respectfully,
Scott Hanson
2831 E Vina Del Mar Blvd

Young, Bernie C

From: CARLAN Kevin (Kevin Carlan) <kcarlan@mastry.com>
Sent: Friday, May 22, 2020 11:09 AM
To: Gerard, Pat
Cc: Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; eggers@pinellascounty.org; Seel, Karen; Peters, Kathleen; Welch, Kenneth
Subject: New Vessel Exclusion Zone at Bunces Pass

CAUTION:

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Commissioner Pat Gerard
2020 Chair
Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners
Sent via e-mail: pgerard@pinellascounty.org

Dear Commissioner Gerard,

I am writing in regards to the decision to create a new Vessel Exclusion Zone at Fort Desoto at Bunces Pass on behalf of the Tampa Bay Marine Industries Association (TBMIA), a division of the Southwest Florida Marine Industries Association, a 300 member trade group representing the interests of recreational boating.

We strenuously object to this decision on a number of levels. I'm not sure what happened, but we were not aware that this issue was coming before the commission this past Tuesday and I was only able to watch the proceedings after the fact. This is why I and the rest of our members did not participate in the public comment.

Since there was no public comment at all, my guess is that few people were aware that this item was on the agenda. I believe you are going to see a great deal of pushback from the boating public as word is now rapidly spreading of the action taken by the commission.

Before this creates an unnecessary firestorm I ask that you give me the opportunity to sit down personally with you to discuss my position and concerns both as an avid boater and as Chairman of TBMIA.

I think it important that we find a time to meet just as soon as possible.

Please contact me by cell at 727-639-1066 or by e-mail kcarlan@mastry.com

Cc: Commissioner Janet Long
Commissioner Pat Gerard
Commissioner Charlie Justice
Commissioner David Eggers
Commissioner Karen Seel

Commissioner Kathleen Peters
Commissioner David Welch
SWFMIA/TBMIA Board of Directors
Misty Bottorf, TBMIA Regional Manager

SWFMIA/TBMIA

Representing the Interests of Recreational Boating Since 1972

swfmia.com

goboatingflorida.com

info@swfmia.com

239-656-7083

Kevin Carlan

President • Yanmar Mastry Engine Center

Phone: 727-522-9471 ext. 215 • Fax: 727-527-7013

Young, Bernie C

From: Emily Andon <eaandon@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2020 11:02 AM
To: Welch, Kenneth; Seel, Karen; Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie
Cc: Peters, Kathleen; Eggers, Dave
Subject: North Beach Vessel Exclusion Zone: Stupidity to its MAX

CAUTION:

This message has originated from Outside of the Organization. Do Not Click on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Good day,

The decision to repeal north beach east and establish about vessel zone in Bunces' pass is absolutely outrageous. If you are concerned about swimmers, impose a no wake zone or slow speed zone. If you were actually considering facts, data, numbers, and boating experts there's no way in hell you'd make this a no vessel zone. You will be putting so much more boat traffic stress in areas that are sanctuaries (such as passage key). The enforcement of this zone is not only going to be a nightmare but also eliminating vessels is absolutely insane and not even considering the Sheriffs input is shady and not smart. I sure hope you're ready to deal with the outrage of this - and taking action to reverse this short sighted modification.

Emily Andon

Sent from my iPhone

Young, Bernie C

From: Mark Rutemiller <mark.rutemiller@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2020 11:59 AM
To: Justice, Charlie
Cc: Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Eggers, Dave; Seel, Karen; Peters, Kathleen; Welch, Kenneth
Subject: Outback Key & Bunces Pass

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Charlie & commissioners,

County Commissioners are in the spot light again.

I wasn't going to write, until I noticed the "Bunces Pass is for Boaters" change.org petition already has ~1900 signatures this AM. (700 alone while I wrote this email) I watched the confused & misleading meeting that was held yesterday. I would like to point out a couple items/questions:

- Is there truly a problem? Have citizens been able to make this playground work without significant problems?
- It was clearly stated, that in a short period of time this lagoon would be inaccessible to boats. Why interrupt the natural process?
- Most of Outback Key is outside of park boundaries delegated by the state/federal, therefore how does the county have jurisdiction? Was this reviewed by the county attorney? Is this legal?
- Why are SUP and kayaks prohibited from a shallow protected area of water? How do they present a danger to swimming? If SUP and Kayaks are in the same category as motorized vessels, why are they not registered. (not that I promote this). Wouldn't it be more dangerous for SUP and kayak to paddle in the channel or 150 yards off shore by the speed boats? This seem like common sense. Why are we creating a larger problem in hopes of minimizing another?
- Anchoring off shore 150 yards in deep water does not make beaches accessible to boaters. How often have you noticed vessels anchored outside of swim buoys? It's not practical for beach access.
- If Desoto Park is not boating friendly, why is there the largest boat ramp in the county located there? Where do you recommend the boaters go?
- It sounded as though the most dangerous concern was aircraft which cannot even be addressed with this new legislation. So what was accomplished?
- The boundaries allow vessels w/ beach access on the north side that may be 500 feet (?), to accommodate ~10 vessels @ 50' spacing. Does the county think this is adequate? It also concentrates the vessels directly in line with Bunces Pass and the channel. (Where the kayaks and SUP are designated also) Again, the county is creating more dangerous conditions.
- Was there any discussion with the general public regarding this new legislation? Wouldn't that be appropriate and fair as this is their park?
- As the sheriff said, FWC resources are limited and the Sherriff will enforce. This only creates more unnecessary workload for a projected problem that will resolve itself.

We need less legislation, not more. Please rethink the impact you are having on your constituents best recreational areas. If Outback key is for swimming, designate another long stretch of minimally used beach area elsewhere for boaters. I personally don't even boat at DeSoto but to me just seems fair. Generally speaking, it appears as though not enough thought/discussion went into this decision and is an overreach just as Mr. Eggers suggested.

Kind regards,

Mark Rutemiller
St. Petersburg

From: Justice, Charlie [mailto:cjustice@co.pinellas.fl.us]
Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2020 11:21 AM
To: Mark Rutemiller
Subject: Re: Reopen PUBLIC Beaches

Thank you for your email.

There was discussion but no vote on beach access during today's meeting. The conversation was centered around beginning the process of reopening the beaches as well as lifting other restrictions - knowing that we also are under the Governor's Executive Orders.

Most County parks are currently open for your safe use. Details can be found here
<http://www.pinellascounty.org/resident/recreation.htm>

Appreciate your input.

From: Mark Rutemiller <mark.rutemiller@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2020 11:03 AM
To: 'Mark Rutemiller' <mark.rutemiller@gmail.com>; Welch, Kenneth <kwelch@co.pinellas.fl.us>; Justice, Charlie <cjustice@co.pinellas.fl.us>
Subject: RE: Reopen PUBLIC Beaches

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. Do Not Click on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Sir,

Listening to the tail end of your meeting. It sounds as though the commissioners voted to keep the beaches closed. I am very disappointed in your decision. Please do not count on my vote for re-election.

Mark

From: Mark Rutemiller [mailto:mark.rutemiller@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, April 14, 2020 5:30 PM
To: 'kwelch@pinellascounty.org'; 'cjustice@pinellascounty.org'
Subject: Reopen PUBLIC Beaches

Mr. Welch & Mr. Justice,

I reside near Downtown St. Petersburg. I had no idea who my commissioners were until I felt as though my civil liberties may be in jeopardy. Considering Hillsborough county has imposed a curfew after only 42 social distancing complaints over several weeks and after 9pm, I am concerned Pinellas County may move in the wrong direction. **I strongly encourage you to reopen Pinellas county Beaches and Parks for recreation and not social gatherings.** The Sheriff is wrong to be unwilling to remove barricades at this time. Public beaches should remain open while adhering to social distance recommendations. In addition, I've seen several people physically injured attempting to enjoy water activities without proper safe beach access.

The more open space that is available, the safer we all are. Please do not make the situation worse than it is by imposing illogical restrictions on the public.

Respectfully,

Mark Ruterhiller

Young, Bernie C

From: Chris Hunter <chunter357@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2020 8:00 AM
To: Peters, Kathleen; Eggers, Dave; Gerard, Pat
Subject: Outback Key
Attachments: tierra_verde_boating_zones.pdf

CAUTION:

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First let me say, I was born in Pin County and lived 95% of my life here, and raising my family here, and been boating most of that time as well.

I also just bought a new boat, and dropped 2k on sales tax, and more \$\$ on a boat license.

2ndly, the fact that during the entire taped meeting covering several agenda items not 1 person, not 1 from the public was online to comment. That should demonstrate that you are not properly updating the public as to agendas and dates. Had I known believe me I would have commented, and another (personally known) 20-30 boaters would have happily extended the meeting.

The fact self-admitted non-boaters are administering these rules is poor representation to say the least. Was there any public notice?

Last year, May 2019, I sent maps of all the existing exclusion areas to boats in and around that area, I don't recall if anyone other than Ms. Peters replied. I emailed Paul Cozzie, and I know dozens of friends that did as well. This is an issue we care about.

One can not just 'access the beach' from just about anywhere, as suggested by the non-boater, due to the simple fact your boat may end up on the beach, seagrass, stingrays, or its a heck of a swim, or currents or the area is too shallow to access or a dozen other things.

The lagoon is filled with 'bathers'... yup, from the boats. However, to me that is not really an issue, the lagoon will solve its own problem, the water gets stagnant anyway. I am not concerned about the lagoon. While you say boaters can anchor on the west tip, this clearly demonstrates the lack of any understanding of the area depth and wave impact. That portion is practically unusable to boaters, along with a significant portion of the southwest side, ever wonder why videos rarely, if ever, include boats anchored there?

Mr. Eggers is correct 50+ yards is a long swim, especially in rough water, or with a kid under 10, or an older adult not to mention dragging something to the beach., and back.

Ms Peters is correct, you have now created extra stress on other areas, 98% of boaters are very good stewards, please re-open areas that are currently closed, we literally have 2% of the area we used to have available.

At this point, the BCC should provide an EXACT map of where we are allowed to anchor near (10-25 yards) or at the beach, the map used in the meeting was anything but helpful, and further demonstrates a lack of boating experience. Please be sure to include the zones on the south, west, east, and north side of Ft Desoto Park. I anxiously await.

We literally can't anchor anywhere from Pass-a-Grill pass north to Johns Pass, see attached map for shell key and Ft Desoto, the "other posted zones" are seagrass so you don't want to anchor there or walk in the area or you trample the grass or step on something sharp, so it too is essentially unusable, except to folks fishing, (you will

need to zoom in). Then toss in bird zones, turtle zones that are not on the map, not much is left, especially if we want to take the dog!.

chris hunter 33703 727-492-7573

Young, Bernie C

From: pmerrifield@acsi-usa.com
Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2020 4:41 PM
To: Welch, Kenneth; Peters, Kathleen; Eggers, Dave; Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Seel, Karen
Subject: Overreaction - Bunces/Ft desoto

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. **Do Not Click** on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello Commissioners,

As a citizen in St Petersburg, I understand that a decision was recently made to restrict all boater access to an area near Bunces Pass/Ft Desoto /Outback Key

If this is accurate, I request you reconsider the decision to restrict boaters access to the area around Bunces pass and Outback key. We boaters make up a large portion of the populace in the city, and the repetitive closures of any location where boaters gather to socialize is somewhat draconian. When problems arise, there should be a way to work things out rather than outright prohibitions. From what I heard in the BCC meeting is that the request to close this area was due not to actual damages or injuries, but rather 'potential' problems. Again, a full shutdown seems extreme – especially for a town that is so intertwined with the water and water activities.

Can we please reconsider this decision and work together towards a mutually beneficial solution – if there is even a problem?

The Sherriff's comments seemed that he was unaware of an issue in the area.

Ft. Desoto is a huge park– with miles of beach all around it. Why is it that the one ½ mile area where boats accumulate is the one spot where drastic moves must be taken? Boats go slow in the area (except maybe skis).

Boaters like calm areas to relax and socialize, and closure of this location is probably going to further compress the boaters in another area– providing another excuse by someone to say that location needs to be shut down.

Multiple times over the past few years I have seen areas where boaters identify as a place to gather and socialize are deemed as a problem – when no real problem is truly identified. Nor is there an effort to work together – only a prohibition.

Continued activities of this type will result in more boats being restricted to fewer areas resulting in what I fear will be the desire to continue to restrict access to those locations.

It sounded like the biggest potential danger was high speed Jet Ski's.

IF this is the real problem, why not have no wake zones to answer the concerns? Or shut down the very inside of the zone where most boats can't get to?

Instead of working against us, can we work together? At least shouldn't there be a study or team assembled that could work through this?

I appreciate your feedback and assistance!

Thank you for your consideration.

Pete Merrifield
33711

PH: 727-822-3000

Fax: 727-822-4044

Young, Bernie C

From: Dustin <dustin@secor.me>
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2020 8:11 AM
To: Thom Burton
Cc: Welch, Kenneth; Peters, Kathleen; Eggers, Dave; Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Seel, Karen; Pete Merrifield; Becky; Neil Mirchandani; Rick Holmes; David Bauck; Justin & Amy Greth; Preston Shoup's e-mail address; Ted Vandigriff
Subject: Petition link

CAUTION:

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https://www.change.org/p/pinellas-county-commissioners-bunces-pass-is-for-boaters?recruiter=5441203&recruited_by_id=0dc15ad0-2513-11e5-ba62-83b6162c744a&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=psf_combo_share_abi&utm_term=share_petition

Thanks
Dustin

Dictated to my iPhone but not proofread so I apologize for any typos

On May 20, 2020, at 7:09 PM, Thom Burton <thomjburton@gmail.com> wrote:

To all,

Pete Merrifield and I have been discussing this today along with many neighbors and I totally agree with all of Pete's thoughts below.

I would also like to add a few of my own thoughts and "piggyback" on top of his. I am a very avid boater. I grew up on the Great Lakes in Michigan and loved boating so much that it is one of the main reasons that I moved to St. Petersburg in the first place. A beautiful boating environment that could be enjoyed pretty much 365 days a year.

I purchased a waterfront home in Broadwater in 1988 and have lived and boated this area ever since. I have seen many changes to the boating environment since that time and don't really like some of them but agree with many of the necessary mandates such as all the "no-wake zones" that have been added throughout the years in the name of safety.

I watched the entire presentation of Tuesday's meeting and found it to be very interesting. First off, it was mentioned that the public was notified of this meeting and had no response. I would like to hear how the public was notified? I can honestly say that I have been to the exact area in question on each of the last three weekends and there was no "posting" of the upcoming meeting anywhere to be seen?

The main considerations that I heard during the discussion for closing off the area were for the safety of the families with children and concern the lifeguards could not maintain control of the area, and that if passed, families will be able to safely walk out to the Gulf of Mexico from the North parking lot if this area was closed to all boats.

1- In all the years that I have been boating in this area, even prior to the formation of the sandbar, I have never once seen a lifeguard tower or lifeguard in this area. The swimmers have always remained South of said area. Does this mean that in addition to the very expensive "posting of signage" and enforcement, the county will also be building lifeguard towers and hiring extra lifeguards to manage it?

2- Kathleen Peters was the only commissioner that mentioned that she had frequented the area by boat and also by Sherriff helicopter and she voted "no" and to leave the area as it is. Many other commissioners mentioned that they had not been to the area and/or were unfamiliar with it. To me, they were voting "yes" without really having any first-hand knowledge of what they were voting for.

3- If anybody was to drive to the North parking lot and walk all the way to the Gulf from the parking lot, I'm guessing that they would not do it because of the distance and the need to traverse the water and sand and walk I'm guessing about a mile to get there. Now I really cannot imagine a family walking that distance with a cooler, beach chairs, and totting their children with them. Just saying...

4- As Kathleen mentioned and I totally agree with her, this area is rapidly filling in with sand anyway and in a year, I'm guessing it would be a moot point as boats will not be able to get in there anyway. As it is now, we generally turn off and raise our motors near the entrance and "walk our boat to the inside" and do the same when leaving as it is normally waist deep or less.

5- I totally agree that the jetskis travel way too fast in that area and thinking a much cheaper cost would be to post one or two "Slow speed No Wake Zone" signs at the entrance and that would handle that problem. As to the "ultralight planes" mentioned in the meeting, I'm not denying they have ever landed there but all the many times that I have spent the day there, I have never witnessed this happening so guessing it is very rare.

Any further consideration would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,
Thom Burton
727-867-4228

On Wed, May 20, 2020 at 4:40 PM <pmerrifield@acsi-usa.com> wrote:

Hello Commissioners,

As a citizen in St Petersburg, I understand that a decision was recently made to restrict all boater access to an area near Bunces Pass/Ft Desoto /Outback Key

If this is accurate, I request you reconsider the decision to restrict boaters access to the area around Bunces pass and Outback key. We boaters make up a large portion of the populace in the city, and the repetitive closures of any location where boaters gather to socialize is somewhat draconian. When problems arise, there should be a way to work things out rather than outright prohibitions. From what I heard in the BCC meeting is that the request to close this area was due not to actual damages or injuries, but rather 'potential' problems. Again, a full shutdown seems extreme – especially for a town that is so intertwined with the water and water activities.

Can we please reconsider this decision and work together towards a mutually beneficial solution – if there is even a problem?

The Sherriff's comments seemed that he was unaware of an issue in the area.

Ft. Desoto is a huge park– with miles of beach all around it. Why is it that the one ½ mile area where boats accumulate is the one spot where drastic moves must be taken? Boats go slow in the area (except maybe skis).

Boaters like calm areas to relax and socialize, and closure of this location is probably going to further compress the boaters in another area– providing another excuse by someone to say that location needs to be shut down.

Multiple times over the past few years I have seen areas where boaters identify as a place to gather and socialize are deemed as a problem – when no real problem is truly identified. Nor is there an effort to work together – only a prohibition.

Continued activities of this type will result in more boats being restricted to fewer areas resulting in what I fear will be the desire to continue to restrict access to those locations.

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IF this is the real problem, why not have no wake zones to answer the concerns? Or shut down the very inside of the zone where most boats can't get to?

Instead of working against us, can we work together? At least shouldn't there be a study or team assembled that could work through this?

I appreciate your feedback and assistance!

Thank you for your consideration.

Pete Merrifield

33711

PH: 727-822-3000

Fax: 727-822-4044

Young, Bernie C

From: Ken Culver <kculver@frankwinne.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2020 1:13 PM
To: Gerard, Pat
Subject: Proposed ordinance to amend the Pinellas County Code relating to Vessel Exclusion Zones. - Your recent Bunces Pass decision

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. **Do Not Click** on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Good afternoon,

I am writing you today in regards to the recent changes made to the boating regulations in the Bunces pass / Ft. Desoto area. As someone who has boated in the south Pinellas county area for nearly 20 years, I wanted to express a few concerns I have with your recent decision. With all due respect, it seems like the people voting for this decision have little experience boating in that area. Below are a list of the dangers that will accompany your recent decision, along with my concerns.

- No access to lagoon will force boats to anchor along the outside of the beach along the channel. During tidal moves, the current here is strong. This will endanger swimmers by being swept out to sea. Boats attempting to anchor will collide with other boats causing property damage and bodily harm.
- The strong current in the channel makes anchoring your boat very difficult even for the most experienced boaters, and trust me they aren't all experienced. This will force captains to make dangerous maneuvers while other people are in the water nearby. Your decision puts swimmer in more risk than they were.
- The new regulations will force the same number of boats and people into a smaller area of Bunces pass. This causes more congestion. More boats, more people in a smaller space means more potential for accident. Not to mention in today's Covid 19 world, more people on top of each other is not what we want.
- Bunces pass is one of the few areas that can be reached without venturing into the gulf or bay. Other beaches, Egmont Key for example, are not as easily accessible for smaller boats or less experienced captains. This decision may force them to do something they shouldn't and put themselves and their passengers in a dangerous situation.
- The lagoon provides a place for people to anchor their boats, swim, and enjoy the beach without dangerous currents and waves.

The concern over jet skis speeding around in the lagoon is a valid one, however jet skis do that at every beach where you find boats anchored up. Unless you plan to ban all watercraft you will always have jet skis speeding around where they shouldn't. The lagoon is very shallow and you will not see boats speeding around in there. Boats are forced to trim their motors up high and navigate at idle speed just to gain entry. My suggestion would be to make the Lagoon a NO WAKE ZONE. Possibly putting some No Wake signs at the entrance to the lagoon would help slow down those jet skis. Write some tickets out there for a few weeks and people will learn quickly and you even get to bring in some revenue.

It seems to me like the lagoon gets more and more shallow every year, so in a few years you won't have to worry about boats in there. For now you are forcing more people into less space which makes no sense to me, especially when we have a virus going around and everyone is supposed to socially distance. Boating has never been busier over the last few months. There is nothing else to do. Families that might have been at a soccer game or a farmers market or maybe a friend's birthday party on Sunday are now out on their boat. If anything your decision should be postponed until Covid is behind us and things are back to normal.

I certainly hope you will reevaluate your decision. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out.

Best regards,

Ken Culver

Frank Winne & Son

**7909 Spring Valley Dr.
Tampa, FL 33615**

Cell# 813-361-2551

Fax# 888-702-1035

kculver@frankwinne.com

Check out our website @ www.frankwinne.com

Family Owned and Operated Since 1895

Young, Bernie C

From: kcsjevans@netzero.net
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2020 10:34 PM
To: Justice, Charlie; Eggers, Dave; Long, Janet C; Seel, Karen; Peters, Kathleen; Welch, Kenneth; Gerard, Pat
Subject: Proposed ordinance to amend the Pinellas County Code relating to Vesse |
Exclusion Zones

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. Do Not Click on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello County Commissioners,

This purpose of this email is to voice my displeasure over the passing of the ordinance to add vessel restrictions to Outback Key. I was unable to attend the virtual public hearing at 2PM in the afternoon due to work requirements so please accept this email as my voice.

The desire to protect swimmer safety is a noble one. That could have been accomplished by simply adding restrictions to boat access to the sandbar and the lagoon. By extending the restriction to all vessels, the ordinance has gone to far. Many county citizens, like me, enjoy kayaking and paddle boarding in the lagoon. These vessels do not travel at a high rate of speed nor are there sharp objects like props that could seriously endanger swimmers. I have frequented the lagoon in the past decade and have never witnessed a dangerous situation involving a kayak or paddle board and a swimmer. I'd like to ask how many reported cases there have been in the last decade and how that factored into your decision.

Also, the shoreline on Ft. Desoto offered hundreds of yards of designated swim areas before the ordinance. Those kayaking and paddle boarding do not want to be around areas with busy swimmers. We may launch in crowded areas but quickly proceed to less populated areas. Most of us have respected swim only areas and see the lagoon and the west shoreline as a place to retreat. Taking those spots away creates an imbalance of designated space.

Another potential concern is with encouraging swimming at the North end. The current between the shoreline and the sandbar is not safe for swimmers. By designating this area for swimming, you are creating an unsafe situation where those with less than excellent swimming skills, including all small children, are at risk of being pulled under or quickly swept out into Bunces pass. Paddling through this areas is hard enough.

Finally, your ordinance could have been limited to the primary summer months when more visitors come to Ft. Desoto. There are few if any swimmers in the winter months when the water is colder. Kayakers and paddle boarders use the area year round. I would not have liked but could have accepted restrictions for 3 to 4 months. I can't rationalize restrictions during months when there are no swimmers in the area and absolutely no danger. I'm curious, did you look at visitor records in the months or factor personal visits into your decision? The county has been charging visitors to come to the park for some time now so receipt records should be accessible to show volumes throughout the year.

I ask that you act as an elected official for all Pinellas County and surrounding residents and amend the ordinance to reflect more reasonable standards.

I can be reached at 941-524-2464 if you would like to discuss further.

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- **Woman Must Delete Photos of Grandchildren on Facebook**
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Young, Bernie C

From: Mark Rutemiller <mark.rutemiller@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 26, 2020 4:00 PM
To: Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Eggers, Dave; Seel, Karen
Subject: RE: Outback Key & Bunces Pass

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. Do Not Click on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

This email bounced since I had an error in the email address. I've forwarded to you 4 so its not redudant for Kathleen, Charlie and Ken. Thanks for reading.

Mark

From: Mark Rutemiller [mailto:mark.rutemiller@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, May 26, 2020 3:54 PM
To: 'Welch, Kenneth'
Cc: 'JanetCLong@pinellascounty.org'; 'pgerard@pinellascounty.org'; 'deggers@pinellascounty.org'; 'kseel@pinellascounty.org'; 'Peters, Kathleen'; 'Justice, Charlie'; 'Steve Smith'
Subject: RE: Outback Key & Bunces Pass

Hi Ken,

Thank you for the reply. Yes, it does appear that few boaters were aware of the discussion 11 months ago. The petition is approaching 7,000 signatures, so it definitely is not supported by the citizens.

I understand your concern for aircraft and powered vessels operating in close proximity, as we all promote safety. However, this is a potentially hazardous situation which has thus far been managed without ordinances. Sadly, Tampa's Bayshore Boulevard has been more dangerous than Outback Key. I support safety, but not at any cost or without logic. As requested, below are my suggestions:

- Based on your comments during the meeting and in this email; aircraft is your greatest concern and danger. Resolve this issue first and foremost. It appears this was quickly discounted since it is more difficult to restrict.
- MOTORIZED vessel exclusion zone should ONLY be the interior of the lagoon. Kayaks and paddle boards present little danger as compared to internal combustion engines and aircraft. Canoes, kayaks, SUP, skim, surf, kite board should all be permitted within the lagoon and beyond. This will promote safety, not encourage board sports to compete with motorized vessels. I am shocked this was not addressed more thoroughly and seems obviously critical should the primary concern be safety. I would really like to understand the logic by categorizing 1600HP vessel which operate up to 70 MPH with a stand up paddle board or kayak.
- Maintain motorized vessels perimeter beach access on the sand bar. (which is outside the park boundaries). There are plenty of swim zones in the park, including the future motorized vessel exclusion zone in the lagoon. Anchoring 150 yards off shore is not beach access.
- If motorized vessels are excluded from perimeter of Outback Key, offer an appropriate location comparable to the conditions of Outback Key where motorized vessels may have immediate beach access. The current plan has 10% of the area with direct beach access. This will not be sufficient. This is only fair! You take, you must offer something in return.

I hope this helps with your future discussions to maintain safety while not significantly adversely impacting your constituents lifestyle and liberties.

Kind Regards,

Mark Rutemiller

P.S. -- My friend Steve wrote a reply and had asked I share it with you.

Great email Mark. All your points are logical and fair.

Therefore as a lifelong sailor and a local marine business owner for 24 years who has witnessed firsthand the erosion of our natural rights as citizens at the hands of an increasingly overreaching bureaucratic state, especially when it comes to the freedom that responsible people used to enjoy on the water, it is my sad and unfortunate duty to warn you that your practical solutions to problems that you understand fully, will, in all likelihood fall on deaf, but mostly dumb ears.

Bureaucrats are only concerned with two things. Money and power to rule others.

I can only hope that as the state, on every level continues to step on the rights of the people based on questionable and conflicting science that Americans everywhere will finally understand what Government truly is, "The Most Dangerous Superstition".

And simply abandon it for a more evolved and civilized philosophy. For authoritarian governments which are without exception founded and operated on a monopoly on the use of violent force only exist because we believe that they should.

And the Government, for all its numbers is but a "Tiny Dot" compared to the people.

And when people unite sometimes pretty big things happen.

Someone famous once made a particularly powerful statement about "The Tree Of Liberty".

I understand that it is ranking pretty high on the Google search engine these days.

Everyone should reacquaint themselves with it. Especially those who have forgotten the oath that they took to uphold the Constitution of this nation when they got their jobs.

I applaud you for your patience and willingness to forbear and forgive the history of what you are dealing with and continuing to "work within the system".

But I have been deceived by the government I used to believe in too many times. I have come to the firm conviction that just as it is foolish and fruitless to expect a police department that is investigating its own crimes to arrive at a just conclusion to a case. You can't expect a system of governance that makes all the rules and controls all the checks and balancing to ever have the good of the people in mind.

Steve

From: Welch, Kenneth [mailto:kwelch@co.pinellas.fl.us]

Sent: Friday, May 22, 2020 2:26 PM

To: Mark Rutemiller

Subject: Re: Outback Key & Bunces Pass

Thanks for your email regarding the Commission's recent decision regarding Vessel Exclusion Zones at Ft. Desoto park. I supported the recommendation in the interest of boater and swimmer safety. The item was properly noticed and discussed in public, televised meetings on both June 19th and June 14th.

Your email however, and the volume of email responses that I've received makes it clear to me that many in the boating community were not aware that the ordinance was under consideration by the BoCC, and I'm open to reviewing the issue. Safety is still my priority - I have seen video and photos of boaters, swimmers and even seaplanes in the same area. That appears to be a potentially hazardous situation.

Given that, I would ask you for any suggestions that you have to address the issue of safety for both swimmers and boaters in the area. Thanks for reaching out with your concerns.

KT

Commissioner Kenneth T. Welch
Pinellas Board of County Commissioners
[727.464.3614](tel:727.464.3614)

Please note: all mail sent to and from Pinellas County government is subject to the public records law of the State of Florida.

Sent from my iMac

On May 21, 2020, at 11:59 AM, Mark Rutemiller <mark.rutemiller@gmail.com> wrote:

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Charlie & commissioners,

County Commissioners are in the spot light again.

I wasn't going to write, until I noticed the "Bunces Pass is for Boaters" [change.org](https://www.change.org) petition already has ~1900 signatures this AM. (700 alone while I wrote this email) I watched the confused & misleading meeting that was held yesterday. I would like to point out a couple items/questions:

- Is there truly a problem? Have citizens been able to make this playground work without significant problems?
- It was clearly stated, that in a short period of time this lagoon would be inaccessible to boats. Why interrupt the natural process?
- Most of Outback Key is outside of park boundaries delegated by the state/federal, therefore how does the county have jurisdiction? Was this reviewed by the county attorney? Is this legal?
- Why are SUP and kayaks prohibited from a shallow protected area of water? How do they present a danger to swimming? If SUP and Kayaks are in the same category as motorized vessels, why are they not registered. (not that I promote this). Wouldn't it be more dangerous for SUP and kayak to paddle in the channel or 150 yards off shore by the speed boats? This seem like common sense. Why are we creating a larger problem in hopes of minimizing another?
- Anchoring off shore 150 yards in deep water does not make beaches accessible to boaters. How often have you noticed vessels anchored outside of swim buoys? It's not practical for beach access.
- If Desoto Park is not boating friendly, why is there the largest boat ramp in the county located there? Where do you recommend the boaters go?
- It sounded as though the most dangerous concern was aircraft which cannot even be addressed with this new legislation. So what was accomplished?

- The boundaries allow vessels w/ beach access on the north side that may be 500 feet (?), to accommodate ~10 vessels @ 50' spacing. Does the county think this is adequate? It also concentrates the vessels directly in line with Bunces Pass and the channel. (Where the kayaks and SUP are designated also) Again, the county is creating more dangerous conditions.
- Was there any discussion with the general public regarding this new legislation? Wouldn't that be appropriate and fair as this is their park?
- As the sheriff said, FWC resources are limited and the Sheriff will enforce. This only creates more unnecessary workload for a projected problem that will resolve itself.

We need less legislation, not more. Please rethink the impact you are having on your constituents best recreational areas. If Outback key is for swimming, designate another long stretch of minimally used beach area elsewhere for boaters. I personally don't even boat at DeSoto but to me just seems fair. Generally speaking, it appears as though not enough thought/discussion went into this decision and is an overreach just as Mr. Eggers suggested.

Kind regards,

Mark Rutemiller
St. Petersburg

From: Justice, Charlie [<mailto:cjustice@co.pinellas.fl.us>]
Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2020 11:21 AM
To: Mark Rutemiller
Subject: Re: Reopen PUBLIC Beaches

Thank you for your email.

There was discussion but no vote on beach access during today's meeting. The conversation was centered around beginning the process of reopening the beaches as well as lifting other restrictions - knowing that we also are under the Governor's Executive Orders.

Most County parks are currently open for your safe use. Details can be found here
<http://www.pinellascounty.org/resident/recreation.htm>

Appreciate your input.

From: Mark Rutemiller <mark.rutemiller@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2020 11:03 AM
To: 'Mark Rutemiller' <mark.rutemiller@gmail.com>; Welch, Kenneth <kwelch@co.pinellas.fl.us>; Justice, Charlie <cjustice@co.pinellas.fl.us>
Subject: RE: Reopen PUBLIC Beaches

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Sir,

Listening to the tail end of your meeting. It sounds as though the commissoiners voted to keep the beaches closed. I am very disappointed in your decision. Please do not count on my vote for re-election.

Mark

From: Mark Rutemiller [<mailto:mark.rutemiller@gmail.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, April 14, 2020 5:30 PM

To: 'kwelch@pinellascounty.org'; 'cjustice@pinellascounty.org'

Subject: Reopen PUBLIC Beaches

Mr. Welch & Mr. Justice,

I reside near Downtown St. Petersburg. I had no idea who my commissioners were until I felt as though my civil liberties may be in jeopardy. Considering Hillsborough county has imposed a curfew after only 42 social distancing complaints over several weeks and after 9pm, I am concerned Pinellas County may move in the wrong direction. **I strongly encourage you to reopen Pinellas county Beaches and Parks for recreation and not social gatherings.** The Sheriff is wrong to be unwilling to remove barricades at this time. Public beaches should remain open while adhering to social distance recommendations. In addition, I've seen several people physically injured attempting to enjoy water activities without proper safe beach access.

The more open space that is available, the safer we all are. Please do not make the situation worse than it is by imposing illogical restrictions on the public.

Respectfully,

Mark Rutemiller

Young, Bernie C

From: kcsjevans@netzero.net
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2020 11:34 PM
To: Gerard, Pat
Subject: Re: Proposed ordinance to amend the Pinellas County Code relating to Vessel Exclusion Zones

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Hello Ms. Gerard,

I would like to extend an invitation to you to explore the North beach area and to Kayak in Buncess pass. The "lagoon" was mis represented by Paul Cozzie so if you have not seen it first hand in the past months, you should. There are actually two separate lagoon areas. The one farther south is easily accessed and very shallow. The lagoon to the north is only shallow close to shore and is not accessible by "walking" through the water. It is not safe to swim across the access points to the sand on the south due to the current. I am a father of 3 and would not let my kids try. That is the area where the boaters, kayakers, and paddle boarders congregate.

----- Original Message -----

From: "kcsjevans@netzero.net" <kcsjevans@netzero.net>

To:

cjustice@pinellascounty.org, deggers@pinellascounty.org, janetclong@pinellascounty.org, kseel@pinellascounty.org, kpeters@pinellascounty.org, kwelch@pinellascounty.org, pgerard@pinellascounty.org

Subject: Proposed ordinance to amend the Pinellas County Code relating to Vessel Exclusion Zones

Date: Fri, 22 May 2020 02:33:40 GMT

Hello County Commissioners,

This purpose of this email is to voice my displeasure over the passing of the ordinance to add vessel restrictions to Outback Key. I was unable to attend the virtual public hearing at 2PM in the afternoon due to work requirements so please accept this email as my voice.

The desire to protect swimmer safety is a noble one. That could have been accomplished by simply adding restrictions to boat access to the sandbar and the lagoon. By extending the restriction to all vessels, the ordinance has gone to far. Many county citizens, like me, enjoy kayaking and paddle boarding in the lagoon. These vessels do not travel at a high rate of speed nor are there sharp objects like props that could seriously endanger swimmers. I have frequented the lagoon in the past decade and have never witnessed a dangerous situation involving a kayak or paddle board and a swimmer. I'd like to ask how many reported cases there have been in the last decade and how that factored into your decision.

Also, the shoreline on Ft. Desoto offered hundreds of yards of designated swim areas before the ordinance. Those kayaking and paddle boarding do not want to be around areas with busy swimmers. We may launch in crowded areas but quickly proceed to less populated areas. Most of us have respected swim only areas and see the lagoon and the west shoreline as a place to retreat. Taking those spots away creates an imbalance of designated space.

Another potential concern is with encouraging swimming at the North end. The current between the shoreline and the sandbar is not safe for swimmers. By designating this area for swimming, you are creating an unsafe

situation where those with less than excellent swimming skills, including all small children, are at risk of being pulled under or quickly swept out into Bunces pass. Paddling through this areas is hard enough.

Finally, your ordinance could have been limited to the primary summer months when more visitors come to Ft. Desoto. There are few if any swimmers in the winter months when the water is colder. Kayakers and paddle boarders use the area year round. I would not have liked but could have accepted restrictions for 3 to 4 months. I can't rationalize restrictions during months when there are no swimmers in the area and absolutely no danger. I'm curious, did you look at visitor records in the months or factor personal visits into your decision? The county has been charging visitors to come to the park for some time now so receipt records should be accessible to show volumes throughout the year.

I ask that you act as an elected official for all Pinellas County and surrounding residents and amend the ordinance to reflect more reasonable standards.

I can be reached at 941-524-2464 if you would like to discuss further.

Jeremy Evans

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Young, Bernie C

From: Bill Waters II <William.Waters@RaymondJames.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2020 11:52 AM
To: Long, Janet C; Gerard, Pat; Justice, Charlie; Seel, Karen; Welch, Kenneth
Subject: Terrible Overreach and Lack of Understanding at Bunces Pass

CAUTION:

This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. **Do Not Click** on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Your closed door, almost secret meeting, to take away more boaters rights and places to go was sickening. Remember boaters are just residents trying to enjoy what our county has to offer such as beautiful water and beaches by boat. You all should be embracing what makes our area so special and allows so many to get out on the water and go to beach or shallow calm bays to anchor.

You all are in charge of one of the largest boating communities in the state yet you continue to force boats closer together and closer to people. Taking away places for families to get out and enjoy the beaches by boat is terrible.

All the mainland beaches have swim zones, and now the addition of the extra-large swim zone at Bunces/Ft Desoto forces boaters to swim in dangerous currents to get to land.

I go to Bunces almost every weekend and the Ft Desoto beach folks stay far away to the South. Allowing everyone to spread out, both boats and people, is the safest and what is currently going on now works great.

The inner lagoon was a nice place to anchor a boat in calm shallow water where really the only people are boaters. Kids could play safely and adults could relax in calm water. Idle speed would have been a logical choice but closing it completely is showing your gross lack of understanding the balance between beach and boating. Remember the boats are the simply Pinellas county residents just trying to enjoy why they live here in the first place.

I strongly suggest you reevaluate your stance and if you must "do something, just to do something" make it a well thought through decision.

BILL WATERS II, CIMA®
Financial Advisor
Certified Investment Management Analyst

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Young, Bernie C

From: Austin Stone <jastone2@mail.usf.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2020 11:28 AM
To: Gerard, Pat
Subject: Vessel Exclusion Zones Fort Desoto

CAUTION:

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Pat,

Good morning. I apologize in advance for my lengthy email. I am writing you to voice my opposition to the recent vote to close off the Outback Key/Fort Desoto Lagoon to boaters. I am a young single father of two little girls, ages 7 and 3. I take them on the boat frequently to the area the county commissioners voted to close off to boaters. This is one of my favorite "sandbars" in the entire state. We swim, play, create memories and spend quality time together there when I have them year round. Reasons why I choose to anchor in the lagoon vs Buncees pass or on the beach:

- It is less crowded
- Less boat traffic
- Less partying (bad music, foul language, drunken behavior, etc.)
- Calmer water, less current, no wake (extremely important to my children's safety)
- More room for my kids to play safely
- It is shallow, I can let me girls play without the worry they will be in deep water

All of the aforementioned reasons are directly correlated to safety. The number one priority of any parent. The approval of this measure just made the area immensely less safe and the commission should absolutely reconsider this immediately. Tied up in the pass or off the beaches, my boat rocks from side to side which is not enjoyable for my young family. They fall down and slip more easily. In the lagoon, they can freely climb in and out of the boat without issue. If safety is the real priority, why is the commission not promoting more boaters to tie up here rather than in the pass? The pass is extremely dangerous, that is a fact. Strong rip currents, turbid waters, large speed boats, and jet skis are present at all times. I do not want my girls on the beaches of the pass. It worries me just thinking about it. Furthermore you are condensing the area where people can anchor their boats. How can we social distance when you eliminated a large portion of the recreation area? The number of boaters is not going to decrease, it grows every year. This seems counterintuitive to say the least.

I noticed on the taped version of the meeting there was no public input at all on the call. Perhaps many of us, myself included, were unaware this was becoming an issue of safety or that this issue was being voted on. I have been using this lagoon for years and closing it off is not only unreasonable, it is overreach. I also noticed in the video showing the all of the boats, swimmers, and the sea plane, that was from a holiday weekend and not an accurate representation of the number of boats each weekend; it is significantly less. Is there any data to support that swimmers were in danger in this area? How many incidents were there in the last 5 years in the lagoon. In my experience, the issue is not boaters, who typically idle in slowly to access this area, it is jet skis and other PWC's that ride carelessly through the lagoon and in the pass. They likely are the only threat to swimmers in my opinion. For what it is worth, I do think the sea plane take offs in the lagoon are very dangerous and should not be allowed. A clearly marked idle speed no wake zone would be the appropriate course of action here, not taking away our right to enjoy one of Pinellas County's best boating areas. I strongly hope the commission would reconsider this motion and seek public input to come up with a better solution that works better to keep us all safe.

Sincerely,

Austin Stone

