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| **To:** | All Park Personnel | | | **From:** | | | Kevin V. Abbate, Parks & Recreation Director | | | |
| **Subject:** | Beach Closures | | | | | | | | | |
| **Effective Date:** | | February 26, 2019 | | | **Created by:** | | | Katya Lysak, Recreation Administrator  Jim Lopilato, Parks Safety and Operations Administrator | | | |
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| **PURPOSE** | | | | | | | | | | |

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines and procedures for beach closures. This policy will outline the following:

* Guidelines used by Martin County Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) Staff to determine when beach closures are appropriate and/or necessary, and
* Procedures for PRD Staff to follow when closing the beaches, notifying the public, and re-opening the beaches.

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| **POLICY** |

**GUIDELINES TO DETERMINE BEACH CLOSURES**

Occasionally, the beaches will need to be closed for various periods of time due to, but not limited to, maintenance and emergency repairs, unusual tides and currents, water quality issues, requests by other agencies or other County Departments, or any condition that impacts the safety, health and wellness of the public. The beach conditions are surveyed and monitored by PRD Staff, the Fire Rescue Department, and the Public Works Department. In addition, the Florida Department of Health in Martin County monitors the water quality and provides updates on its website and to Martin County.

PRD will use the following guidelines when evaluating conditions and determining beach closures:

* Health and safety impacts to the public and/or to the environment
* Information, alerts, and recommendations provided by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Department of Health in Martin County, the Public Works Department, the Fire Rescue Department, Martin County Sheriff’s Office, other County Departments, other outside agencies, or the public.
* Consultation between PRD Staff, the Parks Safety and Operations Administrator, the PRD Director and Deputy Director, and the Assistant County Administrator.

**PROCEDURES**

**Step 1: Determining Closures and Issuing an Order**

PRD Staff will follow these procedures to determine a beach closure:

**Emergency Repairs:**

Once notified of a maintenance issue by anyone, PRD Staff will inspect the location and evaluate the conditions of the beach, its facilities and amenities, the dunes, and the safety impacts to the public and to the environment. PRD Staff will determine, in conjunction with the Parks Safety and Operations Administrator, whether conditions warrant closing the beach until repairs are completed, and, if so, the timeframe of the beach closure based on the scheduled repairs. The Parks Safety and Operations Administrator will discuss conditions, impacts, and proposed beach closures with the PRD Director and Deputy Director for final determination.

The PRD Director will consult with the Assistant County Administrator on the beach closure, the scope of closures, necessary enforcement, and the notifications necessary (such as info release, social media, signs), and, if warranted, the PRD Director will issue the order to close the beach or portion of a beach.

**Scheduled Maintenance:**

At times, PRD Staff will schedule ongoing maintenance or maintenance/repairs triggered by emergency issues for a later date. In this case, PRD Staff will provide the maintenance timeline to the Parks Safety and Operations Administrator, who will determine, in conjunction with the PRD Director and Deputy Director, the beach closure timeline and scope of closures.

The PRD Director will consult with the Assistant County Administrator on the beach closure timeline, the scope of closures, necessary enforcement, and the notifications necessary (such as info release, social media, signs), and, if warranted, the PRD Director will issue the order and timeline for the beach closure.

**Unusual Currents and Tides:**

Ocean Rescue and PRD Staff monitor beach conditions daily and if high tides start to encroach on the beach or if there is an impact to public safety, the Parks Safety and Operations Administrator will consult with the Public Works Department Director and Ocean Rescue Chief and then with the PRD Director and Deputy Director to determine if closures are necessary.

The PRD Director will consult with the Assistant County Administrator on the beach closure, the scope of potential closures and necessary enforcement, and the notifications necessary (such as info release, social media, signs), and, if warranted, the PRD Director will issue the order to close the beach.

**Water Quality Issues (may include, but not limited to, Red Tide, Blue/Green Algae):**

The Florida Department of Health in Martin County and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection monitor water quality and provide updates on water quality issues which may include Red Tide and Blue/Green Algae. Once information is received from the Florida Department of Health in Martin County, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, another outside agency, other County Department, or a member of the public, the Parks Safety and Operations Administrator will consult with the Public Works Department Director and Ocean Rescue Chief and then provide recommendations to the PRD Director and Deputy Director.

The PRD Director will consult with the Assistant County Administrator on the beach closure, the scope of potential closures and necessary enforcement, and the notifications necessary (such as info release, social media, signs), and, if warranted, the PRD Director will issue the order to close the beach.

**Other Emergencies:**

In the case of other emergencies or upon receiving notice of an emergency issue from the Fire Rescue Department, the Martin County Sheriff’s Office, the Public Works Department, other County Departments, or an outside agency, the Parks Safety and Operations Manager will consult with the Fire Rescue Chief, the Public Works Department Director, and/or the Martin County Sheriff’s Office designee and then with the PRD Director and Deputy Director to determine if closures are necessary.

The PRD Director will consult with the Assistant County Administrator on the beach closure, the scope of potential closures and necessary enforcement, and the notifications necessary (such as info release, social media, signs), and, if warranted, the PRD Director will issue the order to close the beach.

**Step 2: Notifying Internal Staff and Departments**

Once a beach closure order has been issued by the PRD Director, the Parks Safety and Operations Administrator will do the following:

* Contact PRD Superintendents regarding the closure to determine the scope of closures and securing of accesses.
* Notify the Ocean Rescue Chief
* Notify the Martin County Sheriff’s Office designee if enforcement is requested
* Notify the Coastal Management Division Administrator of the Public Works Department
* In cases of water quality issues or emergency situations, notify the Emergency Management Director
* Notify the Tourism and Marketing Manager
* Notify appropriate PRD Staff of closures and scope of closures: Aquatics and Park Administrator, Recreation Administrator, and Business Operations Manager and these individuals will pass the information along to appropriate PRD staff.
* Notify other County Departments

**Step 3: Notifying the Public**

PRD Staff will follow these procedures to notify the public of beach closures:

* Parks Safety and Operations Administrator will notify the PRD Marketing Manager of the beach closure order, the scope of closures, and method of notification based on the PRD Director’s order, and will provide the PRD Marketing Manager information to be included in the notification message to the public.
* Parks Safety and Operations Administrator will work with the PRD Marketing Manager and other County Departments, as necessary, to determine language and placement for signage, if needed.
* The PRD Marketing Manager will prepare the appropriate notifications to the public based on the PRD Director’s order. Should this include an information release, the PRD Marketing Manager will prepare a standard County information release with the information and, upon approval by the PRD Director, will provide it to the County’s Communications-Outreach Coordinator for release to the local media. Should this include social media, the PRD Marketing Manager will create posts for PRD’s social media regarding the beach closure. Should this include posting on the County’s website, the PRD Marketing Manager will provide the beach closure information to the County’s Web Content Specialist to be placed on the County’s website.
* Once the Parks Safety and Operations Administrator notifies appropriate PRD Staff of closures and scope of closures, the appropriate PRD Staff will notify organizers of scheduled activities and other groups of interest of the beach closures and the need for them to cancel all scheduled activities during the beach closure.

**Step 4: Re-opening the Beaches**

Once maintenance work is completed or the conditions of the beaches are no longer a health or safety concern to the public and/or to the environment, PRD Staff will follow these procedures to re-open the beaches:

* The Parks Safety and Operations Administrator will consult with the respective Departments and Agencies listed above and will recommend re-opening of beaches to the PRD Director and Deputy Director.
* The PRD Director will consult with the Assistant County Administrator and will discuss notifications necessary, and, if warranted, the PRD Director will issue the order to re-open the beach.
* The Parks Safety and Operations Administrator will notify Parks Superintendents, the Ocean Rescue Chief, the Martin County Sheriff’s Office designee if applicable, the Coastal Management Division Administrator of the Public Works Department, the Emergency Management Director if applicable, the Tourism and Marketing Manager, and other County Departments, as needed, of the beach re-opening.
* PRD Superintendents will ensure beach accesses are re-opened accordingly.
* The Parks Safety and Operations Administrator will notify appropriate PRD Staff of re-opening and scope of re-opening: Aquatics and Park Administrator, Recreation Administrator, and Business Operations Manager and these individuals will pass the information along to appropriate PRD staff.
* Appropriate PRD Staff will notify organizers of scheduled activities and other groups of interest of the beach re-opening and the ability for them to resume activities.
* The Parks Safety and Operations Administrator will contact the Ocean Rescue Chief to ensure proper staffing.
* The Parks Safety and Operations Administrator will notify the PRD Marketing Manager of the order to re-open the beaches and will work with other County Departments as necessary and provide the PRD Marketing Manager any information to be included in a press release, the methods of notification needed based on the PRD Director’s order, and determine whether new signage is needed or if existing signage needs to be removed.
* The PRD Marketing Manager will prepare the appropriate notifications to the public based on the PRD Director’s order. Should this include an information release, the PRD Marketing Manager will prepare a standard County information release with the information and, upon approval by the PRD Director, will provide it to the County’s Communications-Outreach Coordinator for release to the local media. Should this include social media, the PRD Marketing Manager will create posts for PRD’s social media regarding the beach re-opening. Should this include posting on the County’s website, the PRD Marketing Manager will provide the beach re-opening information to the County’s Web Content Specialist to be placed on the County’s website.

The PRD Director will review the Beach Closures Standard Operating Procedures periodically and will update as necessary. Additional updates may be made dependent on changes in Florida State Law.

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Kevin V. Abbate, Director

**Suppression History**

Created: February 26, 2019

\*Reference to a specific job title will also include that individual’s designee.