



Gulf Islands

National Seashore
FL, MS

ALERTS IN EFFECT

DISMISS

PARK CLOSURES

Fort Pickens Visitor Center (Discovery Center) Closure

Date Posted: 1/25/2024

The visitor center at Fort Pickens Area is temporarily closed for renovations. The rest of the area remains open.

[More \(https://www.nps.gov/guis/learn/news/gulf-islands-national-seashore-to-install-new-exhibits-in-the-fort-pickens-area.htm\)](https://www.nps.gov/guis/learn/news/gulf-islands-national-seashore-to-install-new-exhibits-in-the-fort-pickens-area.htm)

Fort Barrancas Closure

Date Posted: 9/30/2024

The Fort Barrancas Area to include the visitor center and the fort will be closed for the season until Spring of 2025.

Perdido Key Area Closures

Date Posted: 10/14/2024

The Perdido Key kayak launch and parking lot will be closed. The Perdido Key Discovery Trail and boardwalk are also closed for construction.

Davis Bayou Area Closures

The Nature Way Trail boardwalk behind the visitor center.

[+ 4 more non-emergency alert notifications... \(https://www.nps.gov/guis/planyourvisit/conditions.htm\)](https://www.nps.gov/guis/planyourvisit/conditions.htm)

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Hurricane Katrina

In August of 2005, a catastrophic hurricane hit Florida, Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi. Hurricane Katrina caused destruction from which many communities are still recovering.

Hurricane Katrina began as a tropical depression that was formed over the Bahamas on August 23, 2005, and strengthened into a tropical storm the next day on August 24, 2005. On August 27, the storm reached Category 3 strength with top winds exceeding



115 miles per hour and was fast approaching Louisiana and Mississippi. Within nine hours of the storm entering the Gulf of America it increased to a Category 5, the highest category on the Saffir-Simpson scale.

(https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tcr/AL122005_Katrina.pdf)

This image was taken by GOES East at 2015Z on August 28, 2005 when Hurricane Katrina was at its maximum intensity as a Category 5 storm.

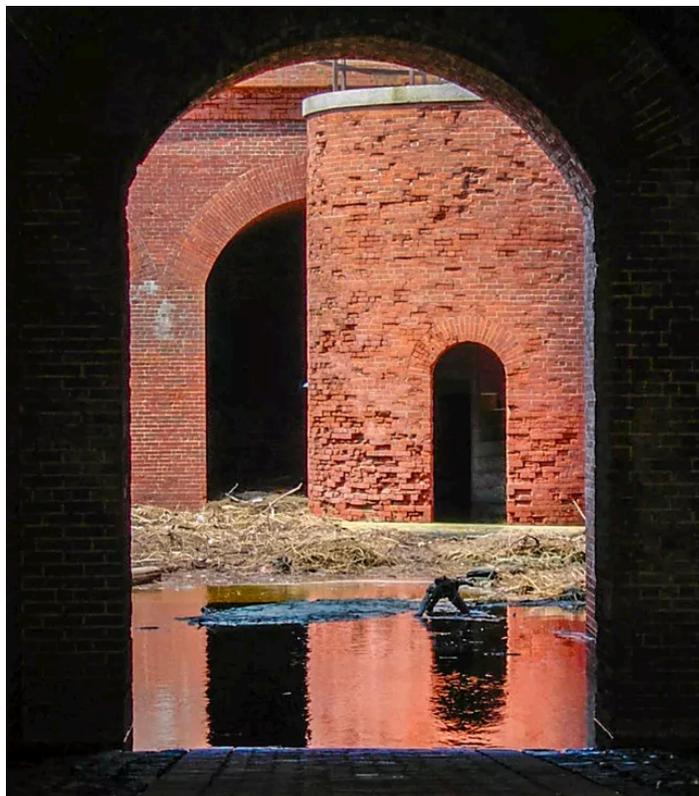
NOAA National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS)

Hurricane Katrina Hits the Park

Mississippi

At the Mississippi barrier islands: Cat, Petit Bois, Horn, and Ship Island (formally known as East Ship and West Ship Island), preparations were made for a direct impact from the massive storm. Though barrier islands can protect the mainland from storms, these islands were no match for Hurricane Katrina's immense storm surge. On August 29, the Category 3 hurricane barreled towards Mississippi and its barrier islands.

Winds of up to 120 mph were recorded and the storm surges ranged from 5.5 meters to 9 meters (16- 30 feet) in height. These surges overtopped Ship Island's Fort Massachusetts but failed to undermine the structure. The exhibit lighthouse that was erected in 1996 was washed away. The surge also wiped out the facilities including picnic shelters, snack bars, the pier and boardwalk on West Ship Island as well as several structures on Horn Island. East Ship Island's forest was demolished and the trees along the entire beach were either snapped or their bark ripped off completely to heights of eight meters. Katrina's extreme storm surge resulted in massive erosion on all of the island and also widened the separation or the "Camille cut" between West Ship and East Ship islands.



Fort Massachusetts flooding after hurricane Katrina

Florida

The Florida areas of the park were impacted even though Hurricane Katrina's eye landed 125 miles west of Perdido Key. Hurricane Katrina's outer band produced a 5.37ft storm surge with the maximum wind gusts reported at 69 mph. The Fort Pickens Area was particularly vulnerable to gulf to bay flooding from storm tides following the severe erosion and dune destruction caused by



Hurricane Ivan, Tropical Storm Arlene, and Hurricane Dennis. Major portions of the park roads were still under repair when the 2005 storms destroyed the roads again.

Response to Hurricane Katrina

The National Park Service “deployed a total of 1,894 NPS personnel in response to Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, including 229 personnel to support Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) ESF activities under the National Response Plan (U.S. Department of the Interior).” According to the Department of Interior, 100,000 cubic yards of debris and a

Aerial view of Fort Massachusetts flooding post hurricane Katrina

ton of hazardous materials and wastes were removed from Gulf Islands National Seashore. The Davis Bayou Campground was briefly used by FEMA to temporarily house victims of the hurricane.

The National Park Service is constantly working to prepare and improve the resiliency of national seashore facilities and resources. The national seashore prepares for these anticipated impacts and will normally be the first sites in the local area to close and the last areas to reopen. In some of these locations, roadways and facilities are just a few yards from the Gulf of America.

Bibliography

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