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Your Community

New and improved Bathtub Reef Beach reopens to public

By Martin County Board of County Commissioners
YourNews contributor

STUART – Serving as a popular destination for local families and out-of-town visitors, Bathtub Reef Beach is well-known as one of Martin County's fondest local treasures. In January 2016, the beach was closed for a major restoration effort to restore it to its former splendor after hurricane damages sustained in 2012 and other erosion had taken its toll.

The county is pleased to announce that just in time for summer, a bigger and better Bathtub Reef Beach was reopened to the public on Saturday, June 18. The county and its contractor, Ferreira Construction, have completed the dredging and sand replenishment work. All equipment that had been staged on the beach has been removed in time to allow turtle nesting to begin. One hundred parking spaces were restored in the parking lot, which had been lost over the last several years as the beach eroded and sand was piled up in the parking area. The restored parking lot, which includes 100 spaces, was opened when the beach reopened.

Martin County wishes to thank State Senator

Joe Negron (R-Stuart) for securing nearly 40 percent of the total project cost through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Beach Management Funding Assistance Program. Martin County and Sailfish Point each paid 50 percent of the remaining project cost.

Senator Negron said, "Bathtub Beach is one of the jewels of our community, especially for families. I enjoyed working with Martin County and our legislative delegation to secure this important beach renourishment funding."

Martin County Commission Chair Anne Scott added, "Senator Negron's support was pivotal. The project's rapid completion, from turning dirt in January to returning the beach to the public in June, represents what can be accomplished with successful partnerships like this one."

Key features of the Bathtub Reef Beach/Sailfish Point renourishment project include:

- The addition of more than 325,000 cubic yards of sand to the beach
- New restroom facilities (to be complete January 2017 or earlier)
- Renovated pavilion
- Restored parking lot with 100 spaces
- New vegetated dunes



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Bathtub Reef Beach has now reopened just in time for local families and visitors to enjoy their summer and make some new memories at this popular Martin County beach.

"We look forward to reopening Bathtub Reef Beach just in time for local families and visitors to enjoy their summer and make some new memories at this popular Martin County beach," said Martin County coastal engineer Kathy FitzPatrick.

The restoration effort was performed in the most cost-efficient as well as the most environmentally sensitive manner. Sand was dredged from the flood shoals and the impoundment basin of the St. Lucie

Inlet located immediately south of these beaches to help maintain the safety and navigability of the Inlet for local boaters. The sand was then piped to the beach and distributed from that point across 4,900 feet of coastline, from just north of Bathtub Reef Beach and extending south into Sailfish Point. This approach created a high-quality recreational beach, increased storm protection and is designed to protect the integrity of the fragile Sabellariid worm reef that serves as

both a critical marine habitat and protective barrier at Bathtub Reef Beach.

Martin County's Atlantic beaches span nearly 22 miles along our coast and include Jensen Beach, Stuart Beach, Sailfish Point, St. Lucie Inlet State Preserve, Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge and the Town of Jupiter Island. These beaches are an integral part of the quality of life in Martin County, generate considerable revenue to the economy of Martin County and support homes, businesses

and related infrastructure (roads, utilities) for many residents and visitors. Bathtub Reef is located just offshore at Bathtub Beach Park and is a popular spot for snorkelers due to the large numbers of marine creatures and fish that congregate there. Its presence is also a key factor in creating the "bathtub effect" of very shallow waters during low tide that make it such a favorite swimming location for families with young children.

Bathtub Reef is a fascinating reef system, created by tiny tube-building Sabellariid sea worms. It is not only an incredibly unique system, but also an extremely fragile one. The worms cement sand grains together, creating a vast network of tube dwellings. Colonies build on top of one another over time and create a reef system that helps break waves and reduce beach erosion. This habitat is used by more than 500 marine species including endangered sea turtles that forage on and around the reef.

For more information about the Bathtub Beach restoration project visit <http://www.bathtubbeachmartin.com/> and <https://www.facebook.com/BathtubBeachMartin> or email coastal@martin.fl.us.