

## **Media Contact**

Leah Cast  
Public Relations Manager  
Galveston Island Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Office: 409-797-5152  
Email: [lcast@galvestoncvb.com](mailto:lcast@galvestoncvb.com)



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## **Park Board Reminds Public About Seaweed Maintenance**

**GALVESTON ISLAND, TX (April 13, 2012)** – It's that time of year again when seaweed starts washing up on Galveston's beaches, and the Park Board of Trustees is reminding the public about proper seaweed maintenance processes.

The Park Board, which oversees tourism development and beach maintenance in Galveston, is reminding beachgoers and beachfront property owners of following facts:

- The Park Board does not remove seaweed from the beach, as it helps nourish the beachfront and prevents erosion. Guidelines set by the City of Galveston and the Beach Maintenance Advisory Committee require that seaweed – also known as sargassum – remain on the beach in order to facilitate the materials re-integration into the ecosystem.
- Some beach areas are left “natural” or untouched, allowing Mother Nature to run her full cycle. In other areas, such as the beach parks, beach access points or beaches bordering residential areas where the homeowner association has complied with the necessary process, the Park Board grooms or cleans the beach.
- The Park Board crews use front-end loaders to gently collect and deposit mounds of seaweed along dunes located near the Seawall or “toe” of existing dunes. This practice occurs daily, sometimes as early as 2 a.m., and helps to build up dunes, preserve sand and ensure a pristine environment for beach users. Once summer has passed, the piles along the Seawall are pulled back onto the beach to help nourish the sands.
- Maintenance efforts regarding sargassum require permitting. Both private individuals and governmental agencies, such as the Park Board, are required to submit permit applications to the City of Galveston to be processed by the city's planning department and Texas General Land Office. It is important to submit applications as early as possible due to a processing period that can take more than four weeks.
- Organizations or persons with permits to maintain sargassum are allowed to hire private contractors or formally request the Galveston Park Board to maintain sargassum at a permitted site. Because the Park Board maintains most of the island's beaches, seaweed maintenance outside of the island's beach parks and Seawall occurs only when equipment and manpower is available.
- Subdivisions requesting the Park Board to maintain seaweed are required to submit a copy of their City of Galveston issued Beachfront Construction Permit to the Park Board. They must also sign the Park Board issued Limited Temporary Easement Agreement. This form can be picked up at the Park Board administrative office located at 601 Tremont Street, Galveston, Texas 77550 or downloaded from [www.galvestonparkboard.org](http://www.galvestonparkboard.org).
- Park Board equipment operators have been trained by federal, state and other agencies to recognize and report sea turtle sightings. All of the Park Board's beach maintenance

equipment has a magnetic sign in the cab with the 866-TURTLE-5 number to remind the operator of the proper procedure for reporting sea turtle sightings.

This spring the Galveston Park Board of Trustees will also send the message that “seaweed saves Galveston’s beaches” by educating the public about the environmental benefits of sargassum. Community outreach efforts will include the launch of a new seaweed brochure to be available on the Park Board’s website and at island hotels and rental properties. Galveston Beach Patrol tourism ambassadors will also pass out informational trinkets – such as wrist bands and stickers – at the island’s beaches throughout peak tourism season.

“Seaweed is a gift to our beaches from Mother Nature, but we also understand it coincides with peak tourism season and there may be a lack of education on why the seaweed remains on the beach,” said Park Board Executive Director Kelly de Schaun. “We have the tough job of balancing the need for providing aesthetically pleasing beaches while encouraging environmental conservation. I’m hoping these public outreach efforts will assist us in providing that balance.”

For more information about the Park Board, visit <http://galvestonparkboard.org>.

### **About Galveston Island**

Galveston Island is a historic beach town located on the Gulf of Mexico just 50 miles from Houston. The island is best known as a vacation destination, offering 32 miles of beaches, a variety of family attractions, Texas’ premier cruise port and one of the largest and well-preserved concentrations of Victorian architecture in the country, including several National Historic Landmarks. Galveston Island is home to popular amusements such as, Moody Gardens and Schlitterbahn Galveston Island Waterpark, as well as a variety of museums and recreational activities from surfing to birding. For more information on Galveston Island visit [www.galveston.com](http://www.galveston.com) or call 1-888-GAL-ISLE.

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