

FORT MORGAN NEWS

July 2018~Issue 137



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi, Folks,

Hope all had a safe and good 4th. Other than too much traffic and too many people, I don't have much to report. Will see you at our July meeting.

Paul

Paul Barefield



Rip Current warning signs installed at Gulf access points on Fort Morgan Peninsula

[Thanks to the county commission, the Fort Morgan Volunteer Fire Department and each of our members and other residents who raised the hue and cry about multiple loss of life to rip current dangers.]

Photo by Ernie Church

Fort Morgan Volunteer Fire Department ~~~~~Chief Glenn Stevens

The summer season is here, and the Fire Department has been very busy responding to a variety of calls. During May, we averaged a little over one call per day, and so far in June, we are averaging around 2 calls per day. We responded to 37 emergency calls in May, which included:

- ~ 22 medical
- ~ 7 false alarms
- ~ 2 public assists
- ~ 1 swimmer in distress
- ~ 1 elevator entrapment
- ~ 1 stingray barb
- ~ 1 jellyfish sting
- ~ 1 grass fire
- ~ 1 structure fire

Our new beach pickup truck was delivered on June 20. Our goal is to have it fully equipped and ready to respond by July 4. Also delivered on June 20 was our remote-controlled water rescue buoy called "EMILY." We are currently assembling the unit and should start training with it by the end of June.

Our annual fund drive is underway. All property owners should soon receive a newsletter from the Fire Department describing all the projects completed in 2017 and all the projects that are underway for 2018. Your support is appreciated, and we thank all of you who generously donate to the Department.

Our meetings are open to the public. Come join us on the 1st and 3rd Mondays each month at Station 1 at 6:30 p.m.

PRINT THE ATTACHED RIPTIDE NOTICE & POST IN YOUR HOME

Fort Morgan Pier Update

Our legislative delegation has formally announced that the Fort Morgan pier rebuilding will begin in August and should be completed by year-end. The old pier was closed in 2014 due to its unsafe condition. The new pier will be 500 feet long with 24,000 square feet. Total cost for the project is estimated at over \$3million and will be covered by RESTORE Act funds from the BP oil spill. The project proposal and a blueprint of the proposed pier can be seen at the Corps of Engineers website. *Mobile District--Public Notice No. SAM-2016-01363-SBC.*

Website: www.sam.usace.mil/Regulatory/PublicNotices

THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD ENDS 30 DAYS AFTER PUBLICATION WHICH WAS JUNE 26.

To see the WKRG news article, go to: https://www.wkrg.com/news/baldwin-county/ft-morgan-fishing-pier-to-be-rebuilt-after-4-year-closure/1270964695?utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook_WKRG

Turtle Tracks Fort Morgan 2018~~~~~Total: 9 Nests!~~~~~Debbie Harbin, Team Leader

Fort Morgan Share the Beach team found Nest # 9 on June 29th. This time last year we had 32 nests. Almost all the southeast is experiencing lower than normal numbers this year. Several reports attribute this to the severe cold winter causing lack of vegetation for adult potential mama turtles to feed on.

We are close in numbers to July 1st in 2014 when we ended the season with a total of 26 nests. Maybe the mamas also know we need a rest after 55 nests last season. Let's pray for no storms -- for more than just the turtles' sake.

Please take your chairs and beach supplies in at night and turn off bright outside lights. Thank you for your interest and support of the Fort Morgan Share the Beach Team. For more information, contact team leader Debbie Harbin at 251-391-8333 or Ken Lee at 410-610-3690.

Fort Morgan Community History

MEMORIES: BONFIRES ON THE BEACH~~~~~Chan West

The beach bonfires of my youth, in the 40's, were magnificent. "Uncle Perk" was the construction superintendent who organized the crew to collect combustible materials from up and down the beach. Much would be dragged to the pile by our Model A Ford beach buggy. In those days the shore would be littered with all manner of lumber which had been used as dunnage to pack cargo in the holds of the ships going to the Port of Mobile. When they sailed out of Mobile Bay that dunnage, as well as garbage, would simply be thrown overboard.

I recall that a pile might be 8 feet high and 10 or 12 feet in diameter. At dark it would be wet with a jug of kerosene and ignited in a blaze of glory to burn all night. We kids would fall asleep on the beach, later loaded in the beach buggy and carried to bed.

I remember waking one morning to find Perk crawling in the front door of the cottage. He was a Captain for Waterman and had fallen into the hold of a ship, breaking a leg. Apparently, someone thought he had failed to collect enough fuel for the bonfire and had added his crutches to the fire!

GUFFY'S GATOR STORY

This is a story from *The Child Who Rejected God* by Dana Stone (Guffy), a cousin of Chan West
One of my most terrifying childhood memories occurred while we were staying at the family beach house near Gulf Shores, Alabama. At that time, the area was deserted. Ours was the only house within a mile. It was completely off the grid, nestled down in the endless white sand dunes where the Union Army besieged Fort Morgan during the Battle of Mobile Bay. The house sat at the end of a long lagoon fed from a swampy shallow lake. As was usual for mother when she was living by the sea, she decided to stock an aquarium. With that in mind, she sent me off with a minnow seine to fetch small fish from the lake. I had no swimming trunks, so she commandeered a pair from my Uncle Dutch that were so big they hung down past my knees. I could hardly keep them up, even with the drawstring pulled tight. To my chagrin, they made me parade

around in them like a child model sporting these enormous trunks. Everyone was highly amused except, of course, me. Two teenage cousins, Richard and Lou, were charged with taking me to the lake, to ensure that I come back with the requested variety of small aquarium fish. We reached the dock, climbed in to the leaky wooden skiff that had to be bailed constantly the minute it was launched. Needless to say, that job fell to me. I was given a coffee can and instructed to start bailing and not stop until we landed on the far side. We were half way there when I heard a loud ominous guttural roar coming from across the lake where we were headed. Instinctively I knew it was made by an unspeakably dreadful primitive animal. "What's that?" I asked trying to mask my fear. "Just a gator," said Lou casually as though the roar was more common than the sound of surf. That was not what I wanted to hear. A year before, Richard had accidentally put his hand through a small glass pane in a French door trying to stop it from slamming shut. Reflexively he jerked his hand back through the broken shards still stuck in the frame. When he did, they cut long deep gashes down his forearm. When I asked how he got the scars, he told me, "Draggin' my hand in the water and a gator tried to bite it off. And I believed him. The last thing in the world I wanted to do was to wade around in a swamp dragging my extremities behind a fish net in waters infested with large alligators. Meanwhile, the fearsome roars grew in frequency and intensity. It was not a good sign.

As it turned out, it wasn't but a few minutes before my worst fears would be realized. Upon reaching the other side of the lake, we happened upon a little five-foot gator that had panicked trying to get to deep water before we landed, but not in time to escape my cousins. With a couple of loud whoops, they jumped out of the skiff brandishing the oars. They stuck one in its mouth and held it down with the other. Quicker than you could say "Jack Robinson," they threw it splashing, thrashing and spinning into the boat with me still in it. A five-foot alligator was pretty small by my cousins' standards, but to me, it might as well have been the Loch Ness Monster. It was bigger than me and I was terror-stricken. Nor were my fears lessened when one cousin had to jump on its tail and the other its head so it wouldn't bite me. With my bailing can shield, I squeezed into the bow as far out of harm's way as I could get. The boat rocked violently as they wrestled back and forth, the gator flapping wildly about and the boys doing their best to subdue it. "Guffy, give me the string from your bathing suit," commanded Richard. "Give it to me!" He was laughing as he spoke, but there was an undertone of urgency in his voice. He reached out his hand with scarred forearm for it, but when he did the alligator twisted its mouth free and started snapping at me again. It spun and lurched trying to escape, the boys jumping back and forth trying to regain control. The boat teetered on the verge of capsizing. Without me bailing amid all the commotion, it had begun to take on water, making it even more unstable. The last thing in the world I wanted was to end up in the lake clinging to a swamped skiff with an alligator swimming around next to me. I fumbled desperately trying to untie the string that held up my trunks. "Hurry up!" he shouted, "Or it will bite you!" I had no idea why he wanted it but wasn't about to question him. I was so scared, I could hardly pull the nylon string from my baggy trunks and pass it to him. He took it and slick as a rodeo cowboy tied its mouth shut in 4.5 seconds. With the alligator tucked out and subdued, they set out rowing back to our side of the lake. But the going turned out to be very slow. The alligator took up the entire midships bilge under the rowing bench, so they could not row without stepping on it. They took the oars out of the oarlocks and used them as paddles, sitting side by side on the rear seat, with the bow, where I sat, sticking out of the water. The problem was that, on top of their awkward position in the boat, they couldn't coordinate with each other well enough to paddle straight. Half the time they paddled around in circles, blaming each other for getting off course. Meanwhile the boat kept leaking. It took on so much water that the gator decided it was deep enough to swim in. Reinvigorated, he thrashed his tail violently and charged ahead in the bow, almost knocking me overboard. Terrified, I stuffed the bailing can over the tip of his nose to make sure he couldn't bite me if the string around his snout broke. "Hold On!" they shouted. They were laughing uproariously at how scared I looked. Richard jumped forward and grabbed its tail, pulling it back to the middle of the boat. "Give me your shirt, Guffy!" he shouted. I pulled my tee-shirt off and handed it to him. Deftly he grabbed the gator by the chin and pulling it head back, slid my tee-shirt over his head, covering its eyes so it would calm down a bit. "If he gets frisky," he said trying to reassure me, "grab 'im by the chin." Instead, I spent the rest of the trip cowering in the bow, fending off the flailing gator with the bailing can in one hand and trying to keep my giant trunks from falling off with the other. I was thoroughly convinced that we'd either capsize or swamp before reaching the shore. And what in the world was I going to do when mother sent me back to the swamp with the minnow seine to get the aquarium fish she had ordered?

Fort Morgan History ~ Indian Canal ~~~~~Harry King



We hired the Geo Probe service to probe down eight feet below existing canal bottom for soil samples. We then hired GeoArchaeologist Howard Cyr of University of Tennessee to come down and inspect the canal and mound sites and take his own samples to analyze. We hope to receive his documentation by year-end regarding when the canal was first dug and how long it was in use. Howard is shown in the picture with arms up holding a machete.

The city of Gulf Shores is funding this work related to their plans to provide future visitation sites for ecotourism. I plan to make a map of prehistoric sites for the Fort Morgan Peninsula that would include several sites west of Gulf Shores city limits. Participation by members of the Fort Morgan Civic Association would be welcome to identify and describe these sites when the map is completed.

Fort Morgan Crime Report ~~~~~Donnie Payne, BCSO

There were several tourist related domestic calls this month but no arrests. There was a Criminal Mischief call on Dune Drive and several narcotic arrests from patrol/vehicle stops. The major call was of course the child drowning on Ponce De Leon Court. The picture is Investigator Eli Barton checking into the illegal roadside dumps. Nothing of evidentiary value was found.



Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge ~~~~~Matthew Underkoffler

When one finds a baby bird, their first instinct is to take it inside to somewhere “safe,” but that might not always be the best option. Many species of birds leave the nest and spend a few days on the ground as fledglings, which is an important and normal part of the bird's development. While fledglings are on the ground, the parents can still care for the young bird by doing things like feeding them, teaching them to find food, or teaching them how to fly. Taking in a young bird does not allow the bird to learn the necessary skills it needs to survive in the wild. Unless the bird is injured, it is important to leave the bird untouched so they can learn and be cared for by their parents.

Sometime nestlings, which are birds that are too young to leave the nest, are found on the ground. While fledgling birds are feathered from wings to tail, nestlings may have some feathers but they are mostly bare skinned. If you find a nestling, you can try to return it to the nest if you can find it. If the nest is unreachable or destroyed, you can hang a small basket/box lined with tissues close to where you think the nest is located. Birds have a poor sense of smell, so touching and handling of the young bird will not stop the parents from caring for it. The most important thing is that the bird is returned efficiently and quickly so that the parents can continue caring for it.

If you find a fledgling hopping around on the ground, it should be left alone and people and pets should be kept away from it so that the parents can continue to care for it until it is able to fly. Putting a fledgling back into the nest will most likely not work because they often get out again quickly.

If a young bird or any other wild animal is noticeably injured, the best chance for survival would be to take it to an animal rehabilitation center such as the Orange Beach Wildlife Center (251-491-9453). There are also many great resources online with information regarding injured or "abandoned" wildlife. Just remember, if you encounter young wildlife that seems "alone," often times the parents are not too far away and it is best to leave it be.

[For more information contact Matthew at the Refuge: matthew_underkoffler@fws.gov]:

Alabama Coastal Heritage Trust Seeks Board Members

Once again, ACHT is asking for board members from Fort Morgan community. For 23 years, ACHT has been the guardian of preservation on the Fort Morgan Peninsula where pristine beach and dune habitat continues to be endangered by aggressive development. The late Tom Hodges of Fort Morgan community was a founding member of ACHT. The Trust would welcome another board member from the Fort Morgan community to assist in their exciting work. ACHT continues to build and marshal an endowment and receive donation of lands to preserve more of Fort Morgan in its natural state. Board meetings are held three to four times per year in Mobile. Anyone interested in becoming a board member is asked to contact Hank Caddell at 251-478-8880 or email hhc45@bellsouth.net. For more information about ACHT, visit the website: <http://alabamacoastalheritagetrust.org>

FMCA Executive Board Contacts

Officers

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Vice President	Ernie Church	334-220-0851	ecaces4@gmail.com
Treasurer	Chan West	979-4932	chan@goefish.com
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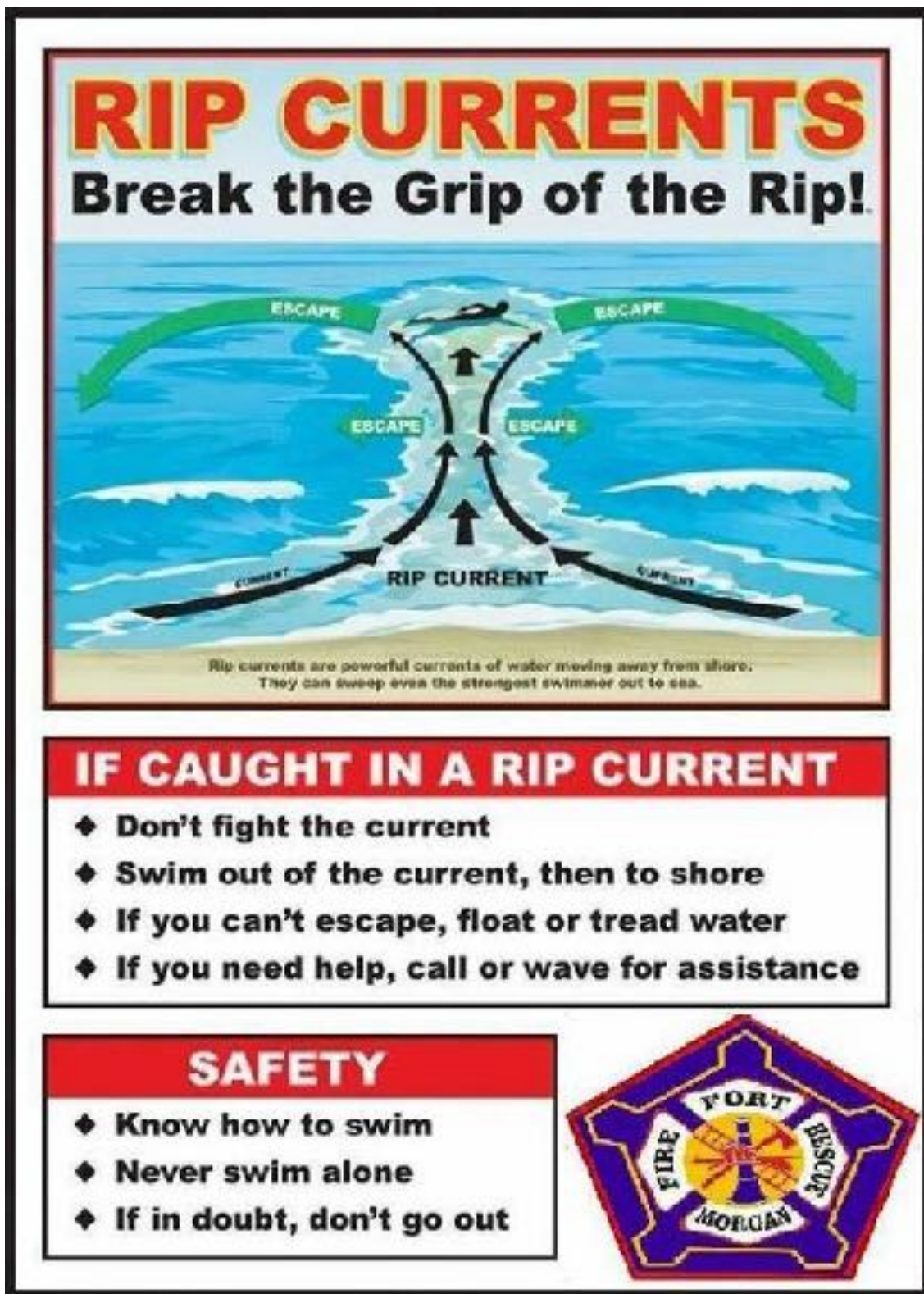
FMCA 2018 MEETINGS

FMCA Monthly Member Meetings ~ 2nd Monday, 6:30pm, Shell Banks Church
July 9 ~ August 13 ~ September 10 ~ October 8 ~ November 12

Fort Morgan Civic Association
P. O. Box 5313 ~ Gulf Shores, AL 36547

www.fortmorgancivic.org

Please post the Riptide Poster in your Fort Morgan home.
Advise your family, friends and visitors of the dangers of this deadly phenomenon.



RIP CURRENTS
Break the Grip of the Rip!

The diagram shows a swimmer caught in a rip current. Black arrows labeled 'CURRENT' and 'RIP CURRENT' point away from the shore. Green curved arrows labeled 'ESCAPE' point back towards the shore. A swimmer is shown in the center of the rip current, with arrows indicating the escape path.


Rip currents are powerful currents of water moving away from shore.
They can sweep even the strongest swimmer out to sea.

IF CAUGHT IN A RIP CURRENT

- ◆ Don't fight the current
- ◆ Swim out of the current, then to shore
- ◆ If you can't escape, float or tread water
- ◆ If you need help, call or wave for assistance

SAFETY

- ◆ Know how to swim
- ◆ Never swim alone
- ◆ If in doubt, don't go out



The logo is a purple pentagon with a yellow border. Inside, there's a yellow circle with a red fire hydrant and a red fire truck. The words 'FORT MORGAN' are at the top, 'FIRE' on the left, and 'RESCUE' on the right.