



GALVESTON  
★ ISLAND ★  
*Park Board of Trustees*

## **Park Board Beach Maintenance Policy**

The Galveston Park Board undertakes coastal zone management and beach maintenance for the Galveston coast as required by the Texas Natural Resource Code, Chapter 61: Use and Maintenance of Public Beaches.

The Natural Resource Code defines “public beach” as “any beach area, whether publically or privately owned, extending inland from the line of mean low tide to the line of vegetation bordering on the Gulf of Mexico to which the public has acquired the right of use.”

The Code further defines “clean and maintain” as the “collection and removal of litter and debris and the supervision and elimination of sanitary and safety conditions that would pose a threat to personal health or safety if not otherwise corrected and includes the employment of lifeguards, beach patrols and litter patrols.” *Sargassum* removal or relocation is not included in the definition of “clean and maintain” and is not required as a function of beach maintenance and is therefore an optional service that may be provided.

*Sargassum* removal or relocation requires specific permits from both the City of Galveston (Beachfront Construction Permit) and the US Army Corp of Engineers (Beach Cleaning Permit to conduct work in Federal waters). No seaweed removal or relocation can be undertaken without the appropriate permits in place or outside the approved terms and conditions, which are tied to geographic boundaries on the ground.

Park Board obtains the necessary City Permits on annual basis and just recently completed the two year process of obtaining its federal permit valid till 2022. US Army Corp of Engineers permit SWG# 2014-00448 permits the Park Board to conduct beach maintenance activities including:

1. Grooming the beaches, including the removal of all non-natural material such as trash and debris including lumber, plastic, bottles, cans, etc..., from the beach and disposing them appropriately.
2. Use mechanical equipment for the relocation of *Sargassum* or seaweed during extraordinary circumstances determined by the TAMUG Wrack Scale greater than 3.0, or at least 10% of the template described in the Biological Assessment.

To undertake the above mentioned activities, the City of Galveston and the State of Texas dedicate portions of the locally collected Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) to these activities. The City of Galveston allocates 11% of all locally collected HOT, while the State of Texas dedicates 33% of the total locally collected HOT. These funds are supplemented in some areas with Beach User Fees (BUF) generated by gate admissions at Galveston’s popular beach parks.

### **TRASH CAN MAINTENANCE, LITTER and DEBRIS REMOVAL**

The Park Board provides litter and emergency debris removal for the entire 32 miles of Galveston beaches, with the exception of the beachfront contained within the Galveston Island State Park and Jamaica Beach. Handpicking of litter is undertaken daily, unless prohibited by climatic conditions.

The Park Board empties or “tips” waste barrels on the beach and in the beach access points regularly. During the summer season (March to October), cans are tipped daily as needed along the seawall beach and four times weekly on the west end access points and atop the Seawall. During the off season (October to February), cans are tipped up to three times weekly on the seawall and twice weekly at west end access points.

All barrels located at the beach parks and along the seawall are tipped each morning by the Coastal Zone Management team and then maintained throughout the day by park board staff. All beach parks and the seawall now offer recycling options for beachgoers. Data on the amount and type of recyclables is being recorded for reporting purposes.

## **SARGASSUM RELOCATION**

Seaweed, also known as gulfweed or *Sargassum*, is a free-floating algae found in warm coastal waters. Seaweed provides an essential habitat for a wide variety of marine animals in the open ocean as well as onshore for animals like sea turtles and marine birds.

Seaweed season on the Gulf Coast fluctuates as Mother Nature sees fit. However, seaweed typically washes up on Galveston’s beaches May through July.

Seaweed has many environmental benefits, including helping to retain sand on Galveston’s beaches and providing an environment for natural dune formations.

Seaweed maintenance crews operate as needed depending on seaweed levels, which can be daily during peak season if necessary. For safety reasons, the crews operate at low-traffic times for the beach parks, typically in the early predawn hours through mid-morning.

In determining *Sargassum* relocation policies, the Park Board follows a “Best Practice Guide” and considers the following factors:

- A.** Necessity of proposed action,
- B.** Seasonal and species impacts of proposed actions,
- C.** Least intrusive method possible,
- D.** Protection of native vegetation,
- E.** Public Safety.

The Park Board will only relocate *Sargassum* on those beaches that are;

1. Currently permitted in US Army Corp of Engineers permit SWG# 2014-00448 and are
2. Clearly within the public domain and have been assigned to the Park Board for management or, are
3. Engineered beaches on which the City of Galveston or Park Board of Trustees have
  - a. made public investments, and
  - b. where private land owners have assigned dedicated or prescribed easements, and
  - c. where the private land owners have given written consent expressly to the Park Board to undertaken cleaning and maintenance, and
  - d. where the private land owners agree not to undertake any cleaning efforts on their own and have assigned the City of Galveston Beachfront Construction permit to the Park Board.

Public beaches under the jurisdiction of the Park Board of Trustees on which *Sargassum* relocation will be undertaken are RA Apffel Park (East Beach), Stewart Beach, Seawall Urban Park (public ownership only), Dellanera RV park and County Pocket Parks 1 and 2 on Galveston Island's west end.

Public beaches which are engineered beaches and have specifically dedicated or prescribed easements on them include End of Seawall to Dellanera RV Park.

When the Park Board does determine the need to relocate seaweed is present we will do so as outlined in our terms and conditions of our permit.

1. Implement all Conservation Measures in the permit as agreed upon;
  - a. all personnel involved in beach maintenance activities to receive training each year, on how to recognize and avoid impacts to sea turtles and shorebirds
  - b. require all Wildlife Monitors to receive an initial training and refresher course each year from Service-approved trainers. Monitors must stay on site and with the equipment at all times
  - c. use the Wrack Scale to determine thresholds for commencing seaweed maintenance activities along with the *Sargassum* (Seaweed) Cleaning Policy
  - d. staff will use the appropriate and authorized equipment to perform necessary work.
  - e. a wrack line will remain after beach grooming is complete for the day
  - f. beaches will not be scraped, gouged or scoured.

**-End-**