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Forbidden Sovereign Land



This 'No Trespassing' sign next to an entrance area of the public beach at Saint Augustine Beach was photographed Thursday morning (Dec. 15).



A St. Johns County worker was informed of the sign. He looked at it and left. Before he left the area, however, the worker said there was a time after

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Hurricane Matthew when the fishing pier at that beach was having reconstruction performed upon it. He said work crews did not want people to be endangered from falling material. There is another sign on the pier that says 'No pedestrians within 20 feet of pier. Falling objects may be hazardous.' The prohibitions imposed by sign posters in Saint Johns County may be contrary to the Florida Constitution and Florida statutes. Articles about sovereign land in Florida include the citation of Article X (ten), of the Florida Constitution, where it states in part that 'The title to lands under navigable waters, within the boundaries of the state, which have not been alienated, including beaches below mean high water lines, is held by the state, by virtue of its sovereignty in trust for all the people.' After the United States acquired Florida from Spain in the early 1800s, the lands under the navigable waters, including the shores, were held by the United States for the benefit of the people. That land eventually went to the future state for the use of its residents and visitors. The State of Florida, in its sovereign capacity, holds title to the beds of navigable waters, including the shore and the space between high and low water marks, in trust for the people of the state who have rights of navigation, commerce, fishing, boating and other public uses. On Monday morning (Dec. 19), Saint Johns County Attorney Patrick McCormack said the county does have jurisdiction for the enforcement of beach issues (such as protecting people from the danger to people of objects falling from the pier). However, by observing tourists for about 20 minutes on the morning of Dec. 15, it became apparent that people unfamiliar with the area simply turned around left, because they saw the public was not welcome to that beach at that time. County Attorney McCormack said he would look at this possible issue and provide an update at some point later in time. Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi's Office has been made aware of the possible issue of people being told they are 'trespassing' if they go on what appears to be a public beach.

Photos by Jeff M. Hardison © Dec. 19, 2016 at 1:47 p.m.

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Surfers Ride The Waves

A couple of the surfers who were catching waves in the Atlantic Ocean near Saint Augustine Beach on Thursday (Dec. 15) are seen here. This set of photos taken that morning, show the sunlight reflecting from the water as



well.

These pictures were taken from the fishing pier at that beach. It costs \$1 per person to walk onto the pier.



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There is a slightly higher fee imposed to fish from the pier. Tourism is a relatively strong business in Florida. On the west coast, next to the Gulf of Mexico, tourists do not surf much because the waves are usually too small to ride on a surfboard. Levy and Dixie counties are the coastal counties in the Tri-County Area of Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties. Another draw for tourists to the Tri-County Area is the environment inland as well as on the coast. There are rivers and lakes to catch fish from in all three counties.



There are wildlife management areas, and private hunt clubs, for hunters. There is the Nature Coast Trail for bicyclists and pedestrians. People who

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enjoy equestrian activities may want to check on opportunities at Goethe State Forest or at the Black Prong Equestrian Center in Levy County. Bird-watching is another activity that may be enjoyed in the Tri-County Area as well.



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