

**Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks**

William J. “Billy Joe” Rish Recreation Area of T.H. Stone Memorial St. Joseph Peninsula State Park

Park Functions, Character, and Context

William J. “Billy Joe” Rish Recreation Area is located in Gulf County on the St. Joseph Peninsula, accessed by State Road 30E. Currently, the park comprises approximately 87 acres. The park was operated by the Florida Agency for Persons with Disabilities until November 30, 2021. On December 1, 2021, management of the park was transferred to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Division of Recreation and Parks for incorporation with the Florida State Parks system. The park is managed under nearby T.H. Stone Memorial St. Joseph Peninsula State Park and was reopened to the public on January 28, 2022. It is currently undergoing a comprehensive resource management and land use planning process for long-term improvements. Some short-term needs have been identified for the interim between acquisition as a state park and approval of the forthcoming unit management plan.

Rish Recreation Area is specifically designated to provide recreational opportunities for visitors with disabilities, their families, and caregivers. As such, the park facilities have been designed for the purposes of maximum accessibility. The park also serves an important role in natural resource conservation on the peninsula, protecting over one mile of Gulf and bay shoreline that includes sensitive scrub and dune vegetation, sea turtles, and endangered St. Andrews beach mice.

Project Concept and Need

The proposed project entails the installation of two hip shade structures (50’x40’ structure for the upper deck and 30’x20’ structure for the lower deck) to cover an existing area of exposed boardwalk adjacent to the existing pool and administration building/visitor center (Figure A). These structures are designed to consist of four metal posts set in individual poured concrete foundation blocks with a fabric shade canopy tensioned over a hip and ridge roof design (Figure B). As Rish Recreation Area currently offers no covered pavilions on the beachside area of the park, these hip shades will provide much needed shade and shelter to park visitors and will help the park better accommodate the special needs of its primary user group.

Construction will entail excavation of the sandy soil for the structural foundations and forming/pouring four 36-square-foot foundation blocks. For construction access purposes, existing decking and joists adjacent to the proposed shade structures will must be temporarily removed and replaced within original footprints.

The retractable or easily replaced canvas material of the shade structures are expected to be resilient to damages from coastal storm events.

Potential Impacts and Mitigation

Despite the prevalence of sensitive habitats and natural communities at Rish Recreation Area, it is not anticipated that this project will yield any impacts to natural or cultural resources. The proposed project is completely within the footprint of existing developed and altered areas and outside of the identified boundaries of St. Andrews beach mouse critical habitat (Figure C).

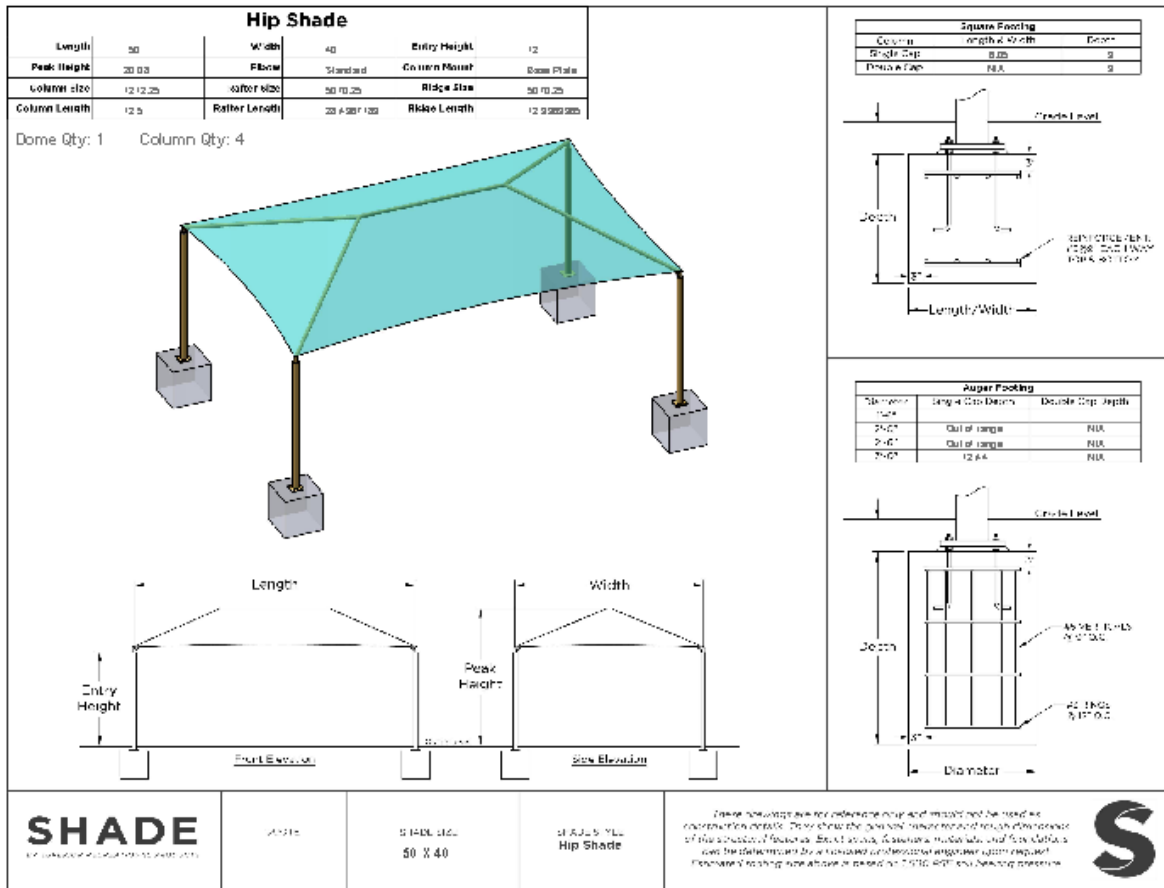
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks

Figure A – Proposed Project Footprints






**Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks**

Figure B – Shade Structure Design (for conceptual purposes only; does not represent final specification)





-  Park Boundary
-  Project Area
-  St. Andrew Beach Mouse Critical Habitat

0 150 300 600 US Feet

State of Florida, Maxar, Microsoft

**Interagency Review
Concurrence Letters
April 2022**

- Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources
- Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

RON DESANTIS
Governor

LAUREL M. LEE
Secretary of State

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks
3900 Commonwealth Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32399

March 31, 2022

Re: DHR No.: 2022-1571
Rish Recreation Area Shade Structure - T.H. Stone Memorial St. Joseph Peninsula State Park

To Whom It May Concern:

Our office reviewed the referenced project in accordance with Chapter 267, *Florida Statutes*, and implementing state regulations, for possible effects on historic properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the *National Register of Historic Places*, or otherwise of historical, architectural or archaeological value.

It is the opinion of this agency that ground-disturbing activities for the above project should be monitored by someone who has completed our Archaeological Resource Management (ARM) training program. Specifically, areas where culverts are being replaced and areas where asphalt is being removed and replaced at its full depth should be monitored. Areas where the asphalt is not being removed to its full depth do not require monitoring. Once the project is complete, the monitor should submit the appropriate monitoring forms to this agency. In the event that unmarked human remains are encountered during permitted activities, all work shall stop immediately and the proper authorities notified in accordance with Section 872.05, *Florida Statutes*.

If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Tobias, Historic Sites Specialist, by email at Jennifer.Tobias@dos.myflorida.com.

Sincerely,

Timothy A. Parsons, Ph.D.
Director, Division of Historical Resources and
State Historic Preservation Officer



April 4, 2022

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Mr. Daniel Alsentzer
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks
Office of Park Planning
3800 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-3000

Commissioners
Rodney Barreto
Chairman
Coral Gables

Michael W. Sole
Vice Chairman
Tequesta

Steven Hudson
Fort Lauderdale

Gary Lester
Oxford

Gary Nicklaus
Jupiter

Sonya Rood
St. Augustine

Robert A. Spottswood
Key West

Office of the
Executive Director
Eric Sutton
Executive Director

Thomas H. Eason, Ph.D.
Assistant Executive Director

Jennifer Fitzwater
Chief of Staff

Division of Habitat and
Species Conservation
Melissa Tucker
Director

(850) 488-3831
(850) 921-7793 FAX

Managing fish and wildlife
resources for their long-term
well-being and the benefit
of people.

620 South Meridian Street
Tallahassee, Florida
32399-1600
Voice: 850-488-4676

Hearing/speech-impaired:
800-955-8771 (T)
800 955-8770 (V)

MyFWC.com

RE: Proposed Interim Management Activity at Rish Recreation Area re: proposed shade structures concept

Dear Mr. Alsentzer,

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has completed their review of the proposed shade structure at the Rish Recreation Area. The following are comments prepared by the FWC.

1. *The FWC recommends that construction areas should be defined with silt fence or similar to limit the area disturbed during that work. This project appears to occur in an already disturbed area, however trapping for beach mice should be done before the taking or removal of any vegetated areas. Stacking, piling, storing, or placing of materials in vegetated areas should be avoided and the FWC recommends it occur outside designated construction areas.*
2. *FWC staff recommend all construction that may occur near shorebird nesting areas occur outside of the breeding season (February 15th – September 1st) to avoid potential impacts to shorebirds. If construction is planned to occur within the nesting season, we recommend contacting the Regional Shorebird Biologist as soon as possible for technical assistance.*
3. *FWC staff recommend continued coordination with FWC biologists to avoid any impacts from this activity to found wildlife and their habitat.*
4. *The FWC recommends the use of management guidelines in the FWC's published Species Action Plans for the management of imperiled and locally important bird species found on the area. The FWC Species Action Plans provide beneficial resource guidelines for habitat management and monitoring of the respective species. For your reference, the FWC Species Action Plans can be accessed at this web address:
<http://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/imperiled/species-action-plans/>.*

January 10, 2022

The FWC sincerely appreciates the opportunity to review the Rish Recreation Area proposed interim management activity. Please contact Dylan Haase at Dylan.Haase@MyFWC.com or at 850-487-9102 should there be any questions.

Thank you for allowing the FWC to review and make recommendations for this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Houston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Tom Houston, Land Conservation and Planning Administrator
Division of Habitat and Species Conservation