

Biloxi Parks & Recreation

www.biloxi.ms.us

The City's Parks & Recreation Department currently operates and maintains 53 facilities throughout Biloxi; offers a Special Needs Program for residents with physical or mental handicaps; organizes numerous annual events, programs, and activities for residents of all ages; and coordinates the City's sports leagues. The department also coordinates and promotes the local Farmers Market.

Following Hurricane Katrina, equipment for City playgrounds was donated by KaBoom, Home Depot, the Allstate Foundation, and the Injury Free Coalition for Kids, and installed with the assistance of hundreds of volunteers. Hands On America provided considerable volunteer resources to help rebuild John Henry Beck Park in East Biloxi, and both Miramar Park and the park at the Margaret Sherry Memorial Library in North Biloxi have been enhanced through corporate donations and volunteer labor.



Annual Activities

- Children's Mardi Gras Parade
- Easter Egg Hunts
- Senior Games
- End of School & Back to School Pool Parties
- Juneteenth Celebration
- "July is Parks & Recreation Month" Activities
- KaBoom Play Day
- Halloween at the Town Green and in Woolmarket
- Fishing Rodeo
- Mayor's Cup Run
- Christmas on the Town Green and in Woolmarket

Biloxi's Special Needs Program

Biloxi's Special Needs Program is the only one like it on the Coast, offering year-round activities for residents of all ages with mental and physical disabilities. Participation in the special needs sports league has increased by 75% in recent years. All activities in this program, including participation in league sports, are offered at no cost to residents. Efforts are underway to add a soccer league and to expand the special events monthly roster.

Biloxi's Age-Specific Recreation Programs

The Summer Playground Program is hosted at various public school sites across Biloxi to serve children 5 to 14 years of age; Sun Camp, serving those with physical and mental disabilities, is hosted at the Mercy Cross Recreation Center. All camps run from June 1 to July 31, Monday – Friday, from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. In the City's **Start Smart Program**, Koosh products are used to teach children ages 3 – 6 basic sports skills and how to play organized sports including baseball, soccer and basketball. The Parks & Recreation Department also is an active partner in the

Biloxi Excel by 5 Program, a public-private partnership that focuses on assisting parents prepare their children to succeed in school.

Activities, programs and events for **adults age 55 and older** include monthly luncheons, an ongoing arts and crafts program, a senior prom, and an annual Senior Games and Awards Banquet. Programs for those age 55 and older are regularly scheduled at both of the City's Community Centers.

Biloxi Parks & Recreation Resources

Park acreage	258*
Playgrounds	20
Ball fields	30
Community Centers	2
Natatorium	1

*In response to citizen input provided during development of the Biloxi 2010 Comprehensive Plan, the City is engaged in ongoing site evaluation to identify and purchase land for parks and recreational activities in the Woolmarket area.



Special Needs Programs & Sports Leagues

- Challenger League Baseball
- Miracle on the Court Basketball
- Special Needs Easter Egg Hunt
- Arbor Day Disability Walk
- Fishing Rodeo
- Disability Fair at Edgewater Mall
- Sun Camp
- Art Ability Program with Biloxi Public Schools
- Movie Nights



Biloxi City League Sports Participation

League	2009	2010
Baseball	641	613
Softball	338	323
Basketball	388	362
Soccer	1120	700
Football/Cheerleading	562	420
TOPS soccer*	100	115
Hispanic Soccer	250	325
Total Participants	3,399	2,858

*TOPS soccer is a league for those with physical or mental handicaps
 Source: Parks & Recreation Annual Reports



Renaissance Garden at Hiller Park

Planning is ongoing for development of a Renaissance Garden at Hiller Park, which is led by the volunteer efforts of the Mississippi Renaissance Garden nonprofit organization. Preliminary project components include development of therapeutic and educational gardens and a public horticulture center.

Biloxi Community Centers

The 43,000 square foot **Donal Snyder, Sr. Community Center** features a four lane lap pool with ramp access; a therapeutic pool; a wooden-floor gymnasium; an indoor walking track; racquetball courts; fitness room; and various table games. A downstairs multi-purpose room, which has an adjoining kitchen, and two meeting rooms on the second floor support many community programs and meetings.

The **Dr. Frank G. Gruich, Sr. Community Center** will continue to house programs and recreational activities sponsored by the City's Recreation Division for adults age 55 and older as well as be available for community meetings and private events. This center has a stage, second floor balcony seating on three sides, and catering kitchen facilities.

City of Biloxi Sports League

www.biloxi.ms.us/PR
 email: sports@biloxi.ms.us

The Biloxi Parks & Recreation Department coordinates NFL Punt, Pass and Kick and MLB Pitch, Hit and Run Programs as well as league activities for five different sports.

Biloxi Sports Complex

765 Wells Drive

The 68-acre Complex includes concession stands, 9 press boxes, restrooms, and storage. All fields and tennis courts are lighted and parking is available for more than 500 vehicles. Little league batting cages and softball batting cages are located on site as well as four softball, five little league, and one adult baseball field, all with natural turf. There are nine soccer playing fields with goals and three International fields, also with natural turf. In 2010, the Complex hosted the USTA League Tennis Championships on its eight hard-surface tennis courts.

Popp's Ferry Recreation Area

2150 Popp's Ferry Drive

This 15-acre recreation area has lighted playing fields and courts, 18 sets of soccer goals, concessions, restrooms, a pavilion and storage. Parking capacity exceeds 500 vehicles. There are two International, two U-10 and four U-6 natural turf soccer fields and four hard-surfaced tennis courts.

Hiller Park

380 Hiller Drive

Amenities include lighted fields and courts, a batting cage, concessions, restrooms, pavilions, walking trails, boat launch facilities and parking for more than 500 vehicles. There also are two natural turf softball fields and eight hard-surface tennis courts.

Biloxi Natatorium

email: aquatics@biloxi.ms.us

1384 Father Ryan Avenue

The Biloxi Natatorium has an Olympic size pool with digital touch pads for electronic timing and bleacher seating that can accommodate 250 for swim meets and other events. The Aquatics Division offers swim lessons, lifeguarding classes, and sponsors a summer swim team.

Biloxi Parks, Public Open Spaces & Playgrounds

(parks/public open spaces exceeding 1/2-acre)

- Biloxi Town Green
- Businessmen's Park
- Cavalier Ball Park
- Circle Park
- D'Anella Park
- Doris C. Bush Park
- Edgewater Park
- Hiller Park
- I-110 Overpass Pedestrian Walkway
- John Henry Beck Park
- John Joseph O'Reilly Park
- Larry Bogard Volunteer Ball Park
- Lopez Park
- McDonald Ball Park
- Miramar Park
- Park/playgrounds at 3 of 4 Biloxi Public Library Branches
- Penzoil Park
- Point Cadet Waterfront Area
- Popp's Ferry Causeway Park
- Savarro Park
- St. Mary's Park
- Todd Miguez Park

Other City Recreational and Environmental Resources

A master plan for redeveloping 17-acres of public waterfront property on the eastern tip of Point Cadet is evolving, led by the City with assistance from the Tulane Regional Urban Design Center and guided by community input. The \$24 million preliminary **Point Cadet Redevelopment** project includes an educational, recreational and entertainment district anchored by reconstruction of the **Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum**. The first phase also proposes marina expansion, an open air pavilion, and initial work on a playground, landscaping, paving and walkways to connect the Point under the Biloxi-Ocean Springs Bridge. Public investment will be complemented by privately-operated restaurant and retail development.

The 10-acre **Popp's Ferry Causeway Park**, located in North Biloxi, was purchased by the City in 2000 to enhance the area for the public's enjoyment and to preserve the ecosystems of this unique estuarine environment, where the fresh water of the Tchoutacabouffa and Biloxi Rivers meets the salt water of the Back Bay of Biloxi. Recreational improvements include boat launch ramps, open air pavilions, raised boardwalks and walking trails.

In addition to providing and maintaining numerous public piers, pavilions, marinas and boat launch ramps, the City of Biloxi is reconstructing the **Point Cadet Fishing Bridge** at a cost of about \$7.7 million. Concrete rubble from the old bridge is being barged south of Deer Island to expand the Katrina fishing reef. The reconstructed 4,700 foot long pier will feature two vehicle lanes bordered by ADA-compliant sidewalks.

Plans for reconstruction of the Biloxi Small Craft Harbor's **bait shop and fuel dock** are being reviewed by FEMA. With an estimated cost of \$1.1 million, this project will support recreational and commercial boaters with facilities built to withstand 140 mph winds. While new floodplain maps require the facility to be built 19 feet above sea level, fuel pumps and bait tanks will be at ground level. An elevator will facilitate access for handicapped individuals to the 2nd floor tackle shop area.





- Approximately 20 pieces of public art are located in the median of U.S. Highway 90 in Biloxi. One of the Coast's top visitor attractions, the marine-related wood sculptures are carved from standing dead trees killed by Hurricane Katrina's storm surge. Created by artists Marlin Miller and Dayton Scoggins, these works of art are referred to collectively as the **Highway 90 Sculpture Garden**.
- The Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport also is expanding public access to the arts through its **Arts in the Airport**, which invites artists to submit works for display to showcase the Coast's cultural heritage.
- The **Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra** is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2011!
- Biloxi is listed as #6 on the City-Data list of "Top 100 cities with strongest arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services industries" in its size category.



Biloxi Arts & Cultural Heritage

There is a long history of public and private support for the arts in Biloxi, as demonstrated by consistently high levels of attendance at local performances and productions, exhibits, cultural activities and festivals as well as through generous monetary and other contributions. For such a small metro area, Biloxi residents and visitors enjoy access to a surprisingly diverse and affordable range of high quality visual and performing arts.

Performing Arts

Biloxi's historic **Saenger Theatre for the Performing Arts** is the host site for many events throughout the year, including concerts by the **Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra** and **Youth Orchestra**, programs sponsored by the **Coast Community Concert Association**, productions of the **Mississippi Gulf Coast Opera Theatre** and performances by the **Gulf Coast Ballet Theatre**.

Other Biloxi arts entities that provide regularly-scheduled performances are **Center Stage Theatre**, the **Biloxi Little Theatre**, **KNS Theatre**, and the **Mississippi Coast Jazz Society**.

Visual Arts

Named "Best New Arts Venue" in the January 2011 edition of *Southern Living* magazine, Phase I of the Frank Gehry-designed **Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art**, opened in 2010. Phase I complex includes the Mississippi Sound Welcome Center, IP Casino Resort Spa Exhibitions Gallery, Gallery of African American Art and the Pleasant Reed House. The City of Biloxi Center for Ceramics and the John S. and James L. Knight Gallery are under construction and are scheduled to open in 2012.

The Museum showcases the works of local, regional and international artists, hosts a variety of art classes and special exhibits and sponsors **Mud Daubers Camp**, a five-week summer camp for children.

Gallery 782 Co-Art, a nonprofit arts cooperative, is the anchor of a burgeoning downtown arts district. Advocating arts-based redevelopment of the historic downtown, the Gallery works collaboratively with Biloxi Main Street and the nearby **Duste Bonge Art Foundation** to entice residents and visitors into the downtown through public art receptions, exhibits, workshops and special events.

The **Duste Bonge Art Foundation** features a rotating exhibit of original works by the Biloxi native, along with other works. The Foundation is planning a new book about Bongé, one of the few female abstractionists, to be published by the University Press of Mississippi.

Biloxi Museums and Cultural Heritage

Biloxi's Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum operates two 65' two-masted Biloxi Schooners, offering sailing experiences to the public. The schooners dock at the Schooner Pier Complex on U.S. Highway 90, which also is host site for the annual **Billy Creel Memorial Wooden Boat Show**.

Temporarily located at Edgewater Mall, the Museum conducts year-round educational programs and a summer **Sea-n-Sail Adventure Camp** for children. Reconstruction of a 25,000 square foot museum is estimated to cost between \$7 – 8 million; construction and exhibit fabrication and installation are projected to be complete within two years, following FEMA design approval.

Beauvoir, Harrison County's only **National Historic Landmark**, reopened in 2008 after extensive restoration work. Beauvoir was the last home of Davis, the only President of the Confederacy; the mansion has been

restored to reflect the period during which he was in residence, 1879-1889. The grounds, House Museum, reconstructed pavilions and a gift shop are open to the public seven days a week. The Presidential Library and Museum Building is scheduled for completion in the fall of 2011.

The **Magnolia Hotel**, restored at a cost of about \$694,000, is scheduled to open in early 2012 as the **Biloxi Mardi Gras Museum**, featuring state-of-the-art exhibits and original Mardi Gras costumes to interpret the history and traditions of Biloxi's Mardi Gras season.

The **West End Hose Company No. 3 Fire Museum** on Howard Avenue interprets the history of Biloxi firefighters through exhibits and displays of vintage equipment.

The **Purple Heart Memorial** and the **USS Biloxi Bell/US Navy Biloxi Mast** remind those visiting **Glennon Park/Guice Park** by the Biloxi Small Craft Harbor of the sacrifices past generations have made to preserve democracy. The **Hurricane Camille Memorial** and the **Hurricane Katrina Memorial** remind residents and visitors of two devastating events that reshaped Biloxi's built environment.

Annual Local Cultural Events

- Mardi Gras Celebration
- St. Patrick's Day Parade
- Fireman's Day Parade
- Mississippi Gulf Coast Spring Pilgrimage
- Crawfish Festival at the Coast Coliseum
- Smokin' the Sound
- Scrapin' the Coast
- Blessing of the Fleet
- Billy Creel Memorial Wooden Boat Show
- Great Biloxi Schooner Races, "Race of the White Wings"
- 4th of July Fireworks Display
- Summer Fair at the Coast Coliseum
- Biloxi Seafood Festival
- Fall Muster at Beauvoir
- Cruisin' the Coast
- Old Biloxi Cemetery Tours
- Veterans Day Parade
- Christmas in the City festivities
- Christmas on the Water Boat Parade
- Blues Festival at the Coliseum
- Preservation in May Programs

Environmental Conservation & Enhancement

The City of Biloxi actively supports conservation and restoration of the natural resources that provide a vast array of recreational and commercial opportunities to its residents and visitors. For instance, the City of Biloxi was one of the first cities in the state to employ a full-time City arborist and to adopt a **tree protection ordinance** to safeguard its magnificent Live Oaks, magnolias and other significant trees; the City is a long-time **Tree City, USA** designee.

A partner of the **Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain**, established to conserve and protect local open spaces of ecological, cultural or scenic significance, the City of Biloxi also was one of the first cities in Mississippi to establish a **Community Court** system to facilitate enforcement of local codes to improve the safety and appearance of residential and commercial property throughout Biloxi. Enforcement of local codes in 2010 resulted in 2,576 code violations being resolved, of which 937 involved the clearing of weeds and debris.

Biloxi's **Comprehensive Land Development Ordinance** requires a specific ratio of pervious surface to impervious area for residential and commercial development, which enhances stormwater management efforts in compliance with federal and state-mandated regulations.

Biloxi Code Enforcement

Year	Code Violation Requests Processed	Total # Cleared
2011*	844	641
2010	2435	2576
2009	4787	3928
2008	3739	603
2007	1983	1847

*Through July 15, 2011
Source: Biloxi Community Development Department Annual Reports

Development of a comprehensive **Stormwater and Flood Management Ordinance** is underway, with adoption anticipated in early 2012, which will not only help minimize residential and commercial property damage from flood events, but will improve local water quality and erosion control efforts.

The City contracts for citywide, weekly **recycling pickup service** and participates in the Harrison County Beautification Program, a public-private partnership, to provide the monthly **Household Hazardous Waste Collection Program** to protect air, water and soil resources by providing a free alternative to illegal dumping and improper disposal

of harmful waste in local landfills. The City also participates in annual Telephone Directory Recycling, Christmas Tree Recycling, and Great American Clean Up Programs.

Deer Island and the Gulf Islands National Seashore

Located directly off of Point Cadet, the City annexed **Deer Island** in 1999. In 2002, 90% of the island was purchased by the state from private owners to become part of the **Mississippi Coastal Preserves System**, which is comprised of natural areas managed by the state to restore, enhance and maintain their ecological integrity.

Through its participation with the **Gulf Coast Heritage Trails Partnership** (GCHTP), the Biloxi Parks and Recreation Department is working with the Coastal Preserves Program and National Park Service to create a Deer Island Blueway that will highlight the ecological, cultural and historical resources of the island and enhance public access through designated canoe and kayak paddling routes and, possibly, pedestrian boat-ferry services.

Inclusion of Horn Island, Petit Bois Island, Ship Island, and two miles of the western tip of Cat Island in the **Gulf Islands National Seashore** ensures that these offshore resources are protected through federal reef re-establishment, erosion control and other island conservation programs. In 1978, Congress designated Horn Island and Petit Bois Island as national wilderness areas to minimize human impact on their ecosystems. All four of these barrier islands, located 10 -12 miles south of Biloxi, are home to a diverse range of plant and animal life, including a greater variety of bird species than any other ecosystem in the continental U.S. Lands and waters of the barrier island system provide habitat for marine creatures, insects, birds and mammals, including threatened and endangered species.



The **Gulf Coast Heritage Trails Partnership** is a public-private effort to establish a safe, coast-wide network of trails connecting neighborhoods, businesses, schools, and green and blue spaces to enhance the general public's enjoyment of and access to scenic, historic, educational and natural areas. The **Bike Biloxi Program**, which hosts a "Dinner Ride in Downtown" series and - thus far - has established downtown and East Biloxi bicycle routes, is one product of this partnership.

Biloxi's social offerings, aesthetics and openness are what attach residents to the community, according to the Knight Foundation and Gallop's 2010 "Soul of the Community" study.

A designated **Preserve America Community**, Biloxi's built environment benefits from the commitment of City officials and residents to preserve and enhance historic buildings, sites and cultural activities. The **Biloxi Preservation in May Celebration** is an annual collaborative effort of the City, Biloxi Main Street, Biloxi Bay Chamber, Biloxi Chamber of Commerce, Local History and Genealogy Department of the Biloxi Library and Biloxi Public School District that honors the past and showcases the City's rich cultural heritage through special programs, exhibits and receptions.



The Mississippi Gulf Coast's variety of environmental resources contributes greatly to residents' high quality of life and growth in the **ecotourism market** has favorably impacted these resources by expanding support for conservation and enhancement programs.

Local Biodiversity

The **Mississippi Coastal Bird Checklist** identifies the 387 local bird species and is available online, in a print-friendly format, at www.pascagoulariver.audubon.org and www.mscoastaudubon.org.



The Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative

www.gulfresearchinitiative.org

The **Gulf of Mexico Alliance** is a partnership of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, formed with the goal of increasing regional collaboration to enhance the ecological and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico. In 2011, BP and the Gulf of Mexico Alliance executed an agreement for the implementation of BP's \$500 million **Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative** (GRI) to coordinate scientific studies, over a 10-year period, of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill effects and associated impacts on the environment and public health.

“Biloxi is the name that people know and the place that people love.”

Mayor A.J. Holloway

