

**Vero Beach Lifeguard Association
Yearly Report
For
The Beaches of Vero Beach**

2016



Mission:

To promote water safety and lifeguarding in Vero Beach and the surrounding communities

Email: VeroBeachLA@Yahoo.com

Website: www.VBLA.org

Our Objective:

The purpose of our yearly report is to disseminate information and educate the public about the beaches within the City of Vero Beach. Our four miles of beach to include three lifeguarded beaches at Jaycee, Humiston and South Beach Parks is part of the identity of our town and the foundation for the economic, social and cultural life of our community. The report includes statistics, observations and recommendations gathered from the past year. In addition, we hope to educate those in the public who otherwise may not frequent the beach by providing statistical and environmental facts about our most important local resource. VBLA wishes to thank our members who have given their time, effort and passion towards our goal of promoting a better beach for all to enjoy.

2016 STATISTICS	
Total Beach Park Attendance	698375
Preventative Actions	12291
Minor Medicals	266
Major Medicals	25
Rescues	34
Fatalities in Guarded Area	1
Fatalities in Unguarded Area	0

Overview

Total park attendance increase by 40,000 patrons from 2015 to almost 700,000. Attendance does not include the beach outside the guarded areas and 100 yards north and south of each guarded beach. Estimates put the total number of people who visit our beach at over 1 million per year.

The total number of medical emergencies declined by 30% to just under 300. Water rescues were down 13% in 2016 with lifeguards rescuing 34 people from drowning. Approximately one half of all water rescues and medical emergencies occurred outside the guarded areas. Unfortunately, 1 fatality occurred in the water due to the dangers of breaking waves. Medical emergencies and water rescues occurred in almost every month despite the weather conditions or time of year.

March through July continued to see the largest crowds at our beach.

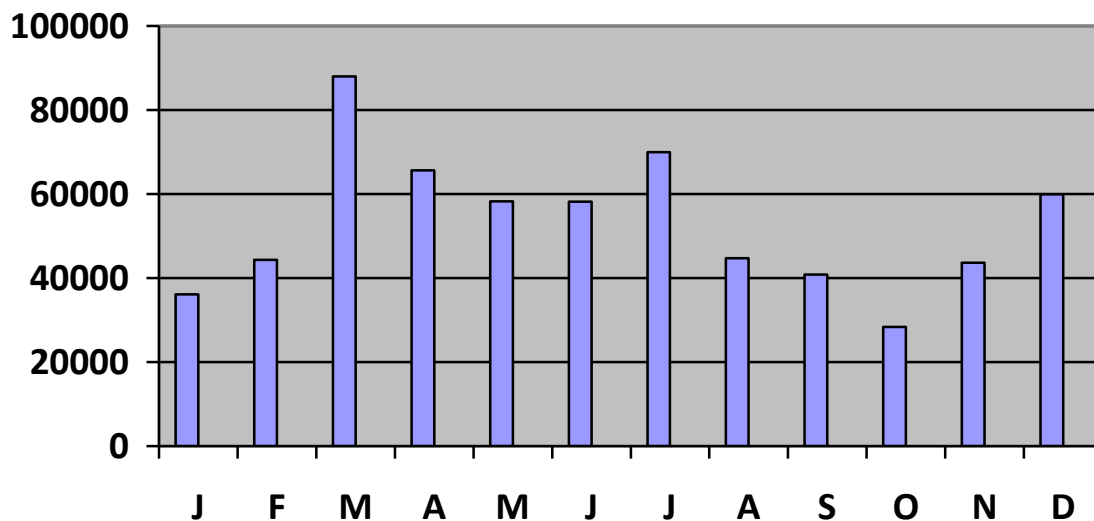
Turtle nesting season ran from April through October with turtle research volunteers marking 1 in every 15 nests.

Beach grooming was conducted by a subcontractor hired by the City of Vero Beach in the months before and after turtle nesting season.

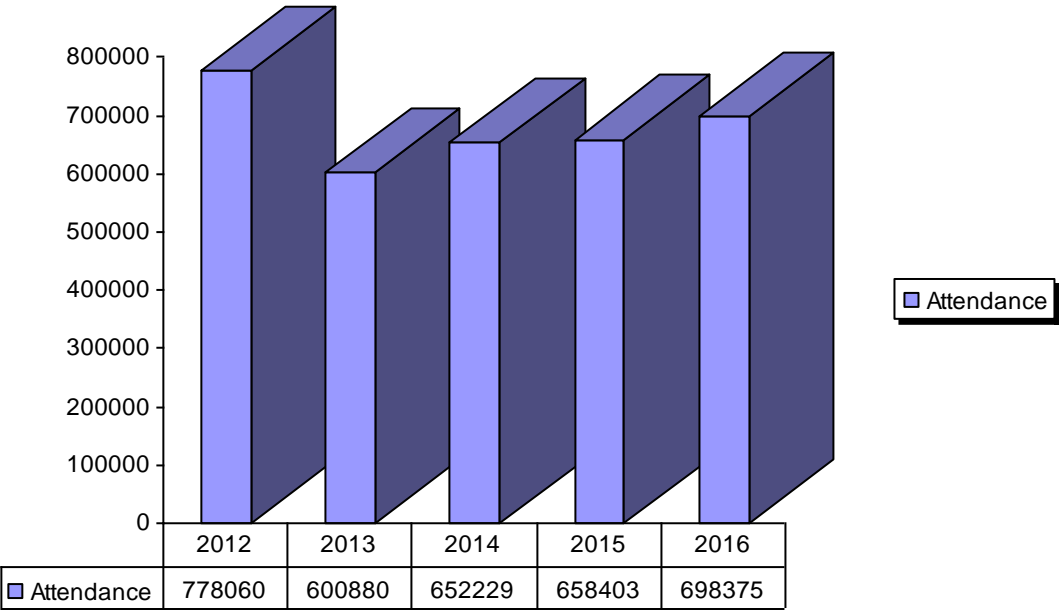
Trash collection by a subcontractor improved, however, beach patrons should remember to collect all their trash when leaving the beach.

Hurricane Matthew damaged parts of Humiston, Conn and JayCee Beach Parks. South Beach Park continues to see growth in its beach and dune lines due to migrating sand and restrictive beach grooming.

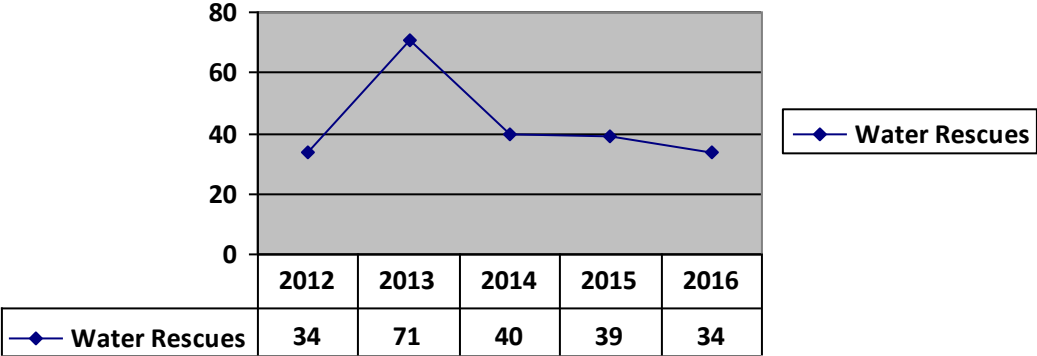
Total Beach Park Attendance: 2016 (month to month)



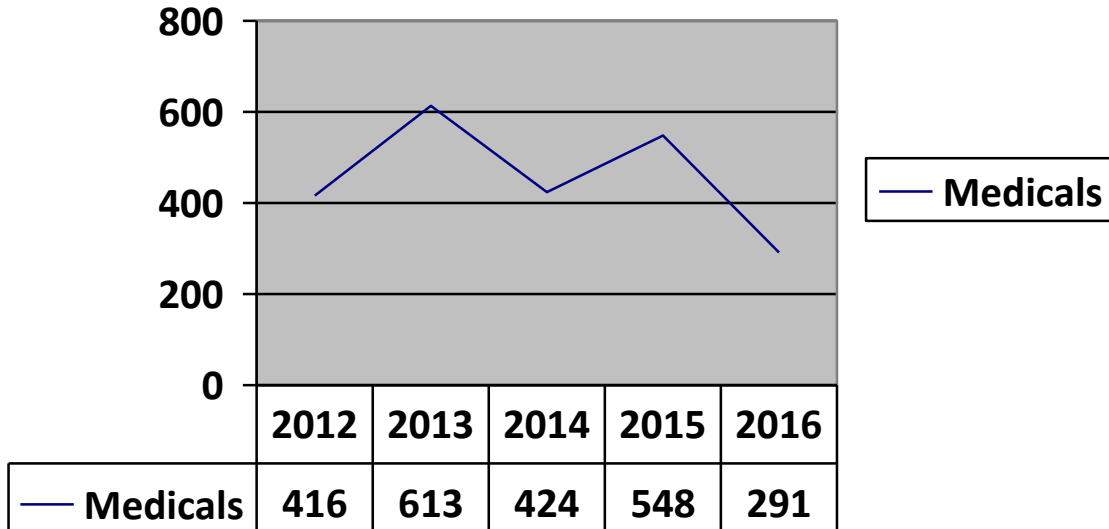
Beach Park Attendance: Year to Year Comparison



Water Rescues: Year to Year Comparison



Medical Emergencies: Year to Year Comparison



Observations & Recommendations

Beach erosion seemed to be minimal except during times of large ocean swells and hurricanes when dunes and sea walls sustained damage around the areas of Conn Beach and Central Beach. "The Cove" (the area from Rio Mar reef south to Porpoise Point) beach is growing every year as is evident by the need to move the South Beach lifeguard tower eastward once again.

The City provided beach grooming from November through March. The company performing the task is doing a fair job at keeping the beach free from debris and excess seaweed. It is important to note however that by grooming the beach seaweed is removed which traps seeds and other natural materials that promote dune growth. In addition, seabirds and crabs feed on insects and bugs found in the seaweed.

The disadvantage of grooming the beach can be observed at South Beach Park where the groomed area is void of dunes. In contrast, the areas not groomed have accumulated healthy dunes which protect private and public property during hurricanes.

Patrons bringing dogs on the beach continued to be a problem. The law does not allow dogs on any city-owned beach park except for service dogs. Countless owners are bringing their dogs on the beach. It has been observed that a significant number of owners do not clean up after their dogs and/or are unaware of the ordinance. It is recommended that the law is enforced and an awareness campaign be initiated which educates dog owners about the law. Continued defecation by dogs is unpleasant and a health hazard.

Sexton Plaza located on Central Beach continues to be popular with tourists staying at the beach side hotels. Most of these patrons are unfamiliar with ocean conditions and are unaware of potential threats including the PEP reef which runs the length of Central Beach and lies just beneath the ocean surface along the shoreline. VBLA recommends that this stretch of beach be staffed with lifeguards.

Many people visit the beach after 5pm when lifeguards leave the beach for the day. VBLA recommends that lifeguard hours be extended to 7pm to minimize the risk of drownings.

In an effort to be proactive, VBLA is raising money to build a lifeguard tower at Humiston Park which will give lifeguards better fields of vision and protection from the elements and unsafe situations. In addition, we are producing a beach safety video specifically addressing the safety considerations

and precautions at our local beach. The video will be available at no charge to area hotels, civic organizations, schools and the general public.

Key

Park Attendance: patrons within the park and areas immediately north and south of each park

Preventative Actions: stopping potential incidents before they occur

Minor Medicals: a medical incident which is treated on-site by lifeguard/EMT personnel

Major Medicals: a medical incident that required additional Emergency Medical Services

About VBLA

This report is furnished by the Vero Beach Lifeguard Association, a non-profit, 501C3 organization. Its mission is to promote water safety and lifeguarding in Vero Beach and the surrounding communities. Contact us at VeroBeachLA@Yahoo.com or (908)797-8725. Visit us at www.VBLA.org. Donations are appreciated. Monies raised are used to purchase equipment, supplies and training for the lifeguards from the city of Vero Beach. Donations via check can be mailed to : VBLA, 1351 White Heron Lane, Vero Beach, FL 32963.