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Summer reopening possible for Anne's Beach

By Kevin Wadlow Free Press Staff

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J. Michael Marshall Photography Islamorada Anne's Beach is a popular roadside stop for picnickers, sunbathers and kiteboarders. The oceanfront park's boardwalk, pictured above, was destroyed by Hurricane Irma in September 2017.

ISLAMORADA — The skeleton of a new boardwalk snakes its way through the mangroves at Anne's Beach, a measure of progress for the hurricane-ravaged park.

If work by contractor Island Villa Construction continues at the pace achieved in the first four months of the reconstruction project, the Lower Matecumbe Key oceanfront park may open before its contracted Oct. 15 date, Islamorada Public Works Director A.J. Engelmeyer said this week.

“I don’t see them taking that long,” he said. “We don’t have a definitive date. There’s a progress meeting coming up, so we’ll know more after that.”



(<https://keysnews.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/55/2019/02/2019022010947594.jpg>)

KEVIN WADLOW/Free Press
An elevated walkway under construction at Anne’s Beach on Lower Matecumbe Key. The oceanfront park at mile marker 73 will remain closed until the restoration project is complete.

Island Villa, an Islamorada firm, won the \$1.49 million contract last October to rebuild 1,280 linear feet of boardwalk and six pavilions destroyed by storm surge, and replace both the north and south parking lots off U.S. 1.

“That includes fixing a lot of the erosion that happened on both the lots,” Engelmeyer said.

Planning and inspections add another \$110,000 to the overall cost. Islamorada Public Works likely will rebuild the restrooms at the mile marker 73.5 recreation area.

“I’ve been getting calls about Anne’s Beach pretty much since the [winter] season started, asking when it’s going to open or why can’t people use parts of it,” Engelmeyer said. “The bottom line is the entire park is an active construction site. It’s just not safe yet.

“The contractor is putting a lot into it. Since it’s his first government contract, he wants to make it nice. My gut feeling is that if all goes well, [the park] might open sometime this summer.”

Anne's Beach has been off-limits to the public since the September 2017 hurricane.

Slow arrival of federal disaster-relief funds slowed reconstruction progress. The Anne's Beach repair hit another snag last summer when the original request for bids drew several offers that seemed to be a bargain, notably lower than expected costs.

However, the project had to be rebid when it was discovered none of the applicants could meet the work requirements at their submitted prices.

Island Villa won the second bid over four other companies that sent proposals ranging from \$1.65 million to more than \$2 million.

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