

Daphne expanding Village Point boardwalk



The boardwalk at Daphne's Village Point Preserve will soon be expanded with federal grant funds. GUY BUSBY Posted Thursday, August 22, 2019 6:00 am **By Guy Busby**

DAPHNE – The boardwalk at Village Point Park will get an extension of more than 800 feet into areas of the preserve now inaccessible with Daphne's share of \$2.7 million in state trail funding, Mayor Dane Haygood said.

The city will receive \$210,205 to build 814 feet of boardwalk at the park on Mobile Bay, the mayor said. He said plans are completed and the city will start preparing to go out for bids on construction.

The grant was one of 10 announced statewide by Gov. Kay Ivey. The Daphne project is the only one announced for Baldwin County. The grants were awarded from funds made available to the state from the Federal Highway Administration's Recreation Trails Program.

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs administers the program in the state.

The project will extend the existing boardwalk along Mobile Bay into a cypress swamp, Selena Vaughn of the Village Point Preserve Foundation, said.

“The boardwalk will allow visitors into the heart of a wetland cypress swamp in the preserve that is otherwise inaccessible,” she said. “The boardwalk running north and south from the pier is the most popular trail in the park. This will link to that and run east and west from the shoreline into the swamp.”

She said the boardwalk will be handicapped accessible, allowing disabled preserve visitors a chance to tour areas that now cannot be reached by any visitors. The boardwalk will extend from the bay through the swamp and into the upland areas of the park allowing visitors to see a variety of coastal environments on their walking tour.

The project is the second phase of a project begun with a grant from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs in 2015, Vaughn said.

She said the route of the boardwalk is planned to require the removal of as few trees as possible. The project calls for the cutting of 54 trees, but most are less than 10 inches in diameter and are species abundant in the preserve. Haygood said volunteers and officials planned the route to avoid as many trees as possible.

Construction plans also call for as little environmental disturbance as possible, she said. The crews will extend the boardwalk and then work from the boardwalk rather than clearing areas of the swamp to build the walkway.

“It’s a very expensive process, but it really does minimal disturbance to the site,” she said.

Village Point Preserve and the adjoining Bayfront Park are an 80-acre city environmental park area on Mobile Bay on Main Street. The park also includes the D’Olive Cemetery and site of Jackson’s Oak. The preserve has received a National Trails Award. The Village Point Foundation is in the process of applying for National Historic Register status for the site of the 18th century D’Olive Plantation located on the preserve grounds.