

St. Marks Lighthouse - Restoration Milestones

The following timeline shows some of the restoration milestones:

2014

- Refuge Association received grants totaling \$22,900 from the Florida Lighthouse Association for Lantern Room restoration

2015 - 2016

- A tremendous show of support from the community during public hearings was key to awards of \$50,000 to repair the deteriorating lantern room and \$500,000 to repair the tower and Keeper's Quarters.
- The newly refurbished lantern room - with completely restored metalwork, a new roof, new safety glass with no cracks, and A high-tech breathable coat of paint to prevent condensation - was completed in August 2016.
- Proposals were submitted for additional funds to complete the anticipated \$1.6 million preservation project that will include more work on the keeper's quarters, including handicapped access and state-of-the-art museum exhibits that tell the fascinating story of the second oldest lighthouse in Florida.
- To cover a \$50,000 shortfall in funds needed to cover the cost of highly skilled labor, an enthusiastic effort was launched by the Lighthouse Fundraising Committee consisting of Dr. Richard Chichetti, Kim Williams, Chuck Shields, and Bartow Rainey. Led by Friends Board Member Tom Baird, this group put together the resources needed to complete the project.
- The fundraising Committee also garnered a generous grant from the Duke Energy Foundation and launched successful crowd-funding campaign
- Proposals were submitted for additional funds to complete the anticipated \$1.6 million preservation project
- Construction fencing was installed around the lighthouse and repairs to protect and preserve this historic treasure were begun

2016-2017

- Asbestos abatement procedures were successfully completed at the lighthouse by Cason environmental from January 26 through 28. Southern Earth Sciences ran the final air clearance test, which the lighthouse passed all clear
- Once the asbestos was removed, major questions about conditions beneath the floor of the keeper's quarters arose. Rick Kanaski, US FWS historic preservation officer, began removing flooring and documenting subfloor conditions.
- The condition of subfloor supports were found to be dire, which substantially increased the floor restoration cost above prior estimates.
- The legislature appropriated \$50,000 toward the cost of a ramp to the lighthouse porch for people with disabilities, making the future museum ADA compliant.
- Despite delays caused by required reviews and approvals, further renovations of the lighthouse and keepers quarters began in the Fall of 2017.

2017-2018

- The historic St. Marks Lighthouse and Keeper's Quarters have are stabilized and restored, thanks to grants from the State Division of Historical Resources, Florida Lighthouse Association and contributions from many private donors.
- This historic beauty gleams in the sun with a new roof and new coats of white paint. Her brass hinges and metal work shine.
- New lighting is installed, and the structure is made safe and is climate-controlled. A ramp for accessibility has been constructed allowing everyone who wishes to enter the lighthouse to do so.

2018-2019

- The new accessibility ramp was completed with landscaping allowing everyone access to the keeper's quarters.
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- The St. Marks Lighthouse Keeper's Quarters hosted its first event for the public on Saturday, September 29, from 10 am - 4 pm.
- A storm surge from Hurricane Michael swept away the steps to the keeper's house, damaged the lower end of the accessibility ramp, eroded the lighthouse base, destroyed outdoor signage, and damaged the porch door.
- Fortunately, no water got inside the house. All the damage was quickly repaired and the lighthouse is fully intact.
- The keeper's quarters are now open on a scheduled basis, and visitors can now tour the restored facility and learn from and enjoy the exhibits.
- On May 17, the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation presented the Friends the award for Meritorious Achievement in Restoration/Rehabilitation for the four-year St. Marks Lighthouse Restoration project. The award recipients also included the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, Kenneth Smith Architects, and Rippee Construction.
- A replica of the historic Fourth Order Fresnel Lens was constructed by Artworks Florida and installed in the restored lantern room on July 12. For the first time since 2000, the St. Marks Lighthouse briefly flashed its beam out to sea once again.
- A new brick walkway is installed leading from the parking lot to the steps of the lighthouse.
- On October 31, 2019, the 88th birthday of St. Marks NWR, the new light atop the lighthouse tower will be lit, 'Bringing the Past to Light'