

County Connection

October 2025

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Stay Engaged. Click the logos to join us on social media



A New Fiscal Year

Another summer has passed us by and cooler months are on the way. I encourage you to take advantage of the outdoors in your free time and enjoy the various outdoor opportunities that we are fortunate to have.

As the County moves through a new fiscal year, we should remain determined to uphold the values of good customer service and quality workmanship that our residents expect and deserve.

I am inspired by the progress we have made in the County in preserving a pronounced quality of life with a focus on providing consistent essential services to our community. I am also encouraged by the work we have done to create more usable and available recreational space throughout the County, either via our tourism revenue, state appropriations or the responsible use of other revenue sources. These kinds of advancements have a great benefit to our visitors and residents that will have a lasting impact on the County.

Keep up the great work.



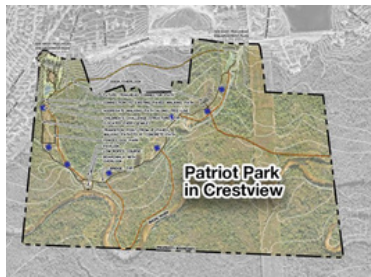
John Hofstad
County Administrator

Okaloosa approves all-inclusive playground equipment for Meigs Park in Niceville



The Board of County Commissioners approved a \$468,321.95 purchase order for playground structures, safety surfacing, sail shades, benches and installation at the Niceville park. [READ MORE>>](#)

Okaloosa approves 165-acre Patriot Park master plan in Crestview



The park will feature a 1.25-mile loop trail for walkers and runners using much of the existing cart path from a previous golf course. County staff are currently clearing the trail path and repairing bridges to connect the entire trail. [READ MORE>>](#)

Florida Cabinet approves \$84M purchase of Destin waterfront property for new state park



Gov. Ron DeSantis and the state Cabinet approved the purchase of approximately 4 acres of Destin waterfront property for \$84.5 million, converting land zoned for luxury condominiums into public parkland. [READ MORE>>](#)

Okaloosa approves artificial turf for two Shalimar Park baseball fields



Okaloosa County commissioners approved \$458,725 for artificial turf installation on two additional baseball fields leased by Shalimar Little League. [READ MORE>>](#)

Okaloosa celebrates opening of glow-in-the-dark Bridge-to-Bridge path



The 4-mile photoluminescent path on Okaloosa Island will connect the Brooks and Marler bridges, featuring unique glowing materials for nighttime use. [READ MORE>>](#)

Bridgeway Center breaks ground on 72-unit affordable housing project in Fort Walton Beach



The company's representative noted Okaloosa County has been supportive of the development, unlike many jurisdictions where they encounter roadblocks. [READ MORE>>](#)



New Park On the Way

Okaloosa County Commissioners recently passed the master plan for the 165-acre Patriot Park in Crestview. The property is located east of State Road 85 between Shoal River Drive and the Shoal River. This new park plan was developed with input from local residents and designed to keep as much of the natural aesthetic as possible. The new park will be completed in two phases. A portion of the first phase will open, possibly in spring 2026. View a video of the property at <https://youtu.be/IZJdiFqIDxE>



Research & Surveys Underway (Gulf Coast Solitary Bee)

Our Natural Resources Team will be conducting environmental research surveys in the dunes of John Bealsey Park on Okaloosa Island and on the spoil islands in Santa Rosa Sound in the month of October 2025. The intent of the surveys and monitoring is to learn more about the gulf coast solitary bee that lives underground and only emerges in late September and October. The bee has a mutual beneficial relationship with the coastalplain honeycombhead flower (pictured with a bee spotted this year). Our team has been granted the necessary permissions by Eglin Air Force Base to research this unique species and you may see authorized researchers in the dunes.



Housing Happenings

Community leaders gathered recently at the Niceville Community Center for the Housing Summit 2.0, where discussions and plans were made to positively affect housing availability and affordability in Okaloosa County. Together we can address the housing affordability/attainability issues that affect tens of thousands of us in Okaloosa County. This includes our teachers, first responders and yes, even our military. Thanks to Okaloosa County Health Improvement Partnership, the Emerald Coast Association of Realtors, and the Okaloosa County Housing Department for organizing this event.



Cleanup, Cleanup, Everybody Cleanup

Keep Okaloosa Beautiful hosted members of the Youth Leadership Council for their service project with a cleanup at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Rigdon Center (formerly NWF Fairgrounds). The Youth Leadership Council is a collaboration between the Board of County Commissioners and the Okaloosa School District with a goal of fostering leadership skills in students as they prepare for the next stage of their lives.





Ready for Anything

Okaloosa County employs over 1,100 people who interact with the public every day in numerous public buildings and facilities. It is important for us to remain prepared in any situation so we can better serve and keep the public safe. Recently, County employees attended active shooter training – A.L.I.C.E. taught by Public Safety Director Pat Maddox and Stop-the-Bleed training taught by EMS Captain Matt Hawley.



Beach Buddies

Beach Safety had a blast during a recent visit to Silver Sands School for their annual Community Helpers (Career) Day. Lieutenant Faith Watson and our favorite mascot Buddy the Dolphin (aka Lt. KaLee Pirtle) rolled up in a lifeguard truck full of gear to show students what it takes to keep our beaches safe.

Out & About

Okaloosa County EMS staff recently paid a visit to Crosspoint Church (Crestview Campus) to educate their young students on the essential and valued work of our local EMS professionals.



We Want You as a New Recruit

Water & Sewer staff recently attended the University of Florida Career Fair and Northwest Florida Fair to recruit new talented staff members to the Okaloosa County team.



Online Permitting Portal COMING SOON!

Beginning in early November 2025, applicants seeking licensing, building permits and development-related approvals can apply online using the Customer Service Support (CSS) portal.

Applicants are encouraged to create an account and apply for permits and approval using this online system.

This new system will provide a more efficient process without in-person visits to the office. Applicants will also be able to view all of the components of their project in one place and upload necessary documents via the new online permitting portal.

Citizens will also be able to create accounts and search for permits on a property. Some simpler applications, like ones for trades and irrigation, will be able to receive their permit the same day using the Department's new fast lane service. When these permits are applied for online they will go into the Fast Lane Queue for expedited processing. A new staff member has also been hired to help with account issues and online permitting questions. Questions? - email buildingpermitting@myokaloosa.com

**GROWTH
MANAGEMENT**
ONLINE PERMITTING
ROLL OUT



NOVEMBER 3, 2025
Applicants seeking licensing, building permits and development related approvals can apply online using the Customer Service Support Portal. Applicants are encouraged to create an online account and begin submitting online.




mypermits@okaloosa.com
**EMAIL BOX
CLOSED ON
11/21/2025**

**NOVEMBER 3 2025 TO
DECEMBER 31, 2025**
In person current operations - permit counters available in both the Shalimar and Crestview Building Department Offices for building permits

AFTER DECEMBER 31, 2025
Limited permit counter availability for walk in customers in both the Shalimar and Crestview Building Department Offices - **WALK IN PROJECTS WILL BE PLACED IN ONLINE QUEUES**




**HAVE ACCOUNT ISSUES
OR NEED ONLINE
PERMITTING HELP?**
Call or Email the Customer Support Specialist

LEARN MORE AT
<https://myokaloosa.com/gm/home>

Sea Turtle Success



Destin-Fort Walton Beach Sea Turtle Patrol has officially finished the 2025 sea turtle nesting season.

This year, we had a total of 19 loggerhead nests laid on our beaches and 9 loggerhead false crawls. A total of 1,988 eggs were laid and 1,247 of those eggs produced hatchlings. That gives our beaches a 62.7% hatch success for the season.

UF | **IFAS Extension**
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



Huge Volunteer Impacts for International Coastal Cleanup Day

International Coastal Cleanup Day is an annual, worldwide event where volunteers come together to remove trash and debris from beaches, rivers, and other waterways. Doing so is a community-driven action promoting increased awareness and protection of the natural environment. Danie Lasseigne, the Destin-Fort Walton Beach's Coastal Resource Coordinator, organized our efforts this year along the Emerald Coast.

On Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025, our volunteers had a measurable impact.

There were 491 volunteers who joined the 2025 International Coastal Cleanup Day. Volunteers spanned five locations and removed 405 pounds of trash and debris from our coastline.

Many thanks to these volunteers for contributing their time and effort with millions across the globe, unified as environmental stewards. If you are interested in participating in upcoming beach cleanup events of the 2026 International Coastal Cleanup Day, please contact Danie Lasseigne (lasseigne@myokaloosa.com) or Dana Stephens (dlbigham@ufl.edu).



Volunteers in the 2025 International Coastal Cleanup Day pose for a photo at the Surf Hut cleanup location.

Recent Milestones



Congratulations to these Okaloosa County employees who are celebrating their work anniversaries. Pictured with County Administrator John Hofstad and County Commissioners are Kyla Orinick (2 years, Transit), Paul Philippou (2 years, Water & Sewer), Moses MaCaulay (2 years, Facility & Parks), John McGlaughn (2 years, Facility and Parks) Randall Overly (15 years, Facility and Parks), and Vicky Stever (Retirement: 13 years, Library Cooperative).



Michael Sowell is celebrating five years with the Corrections Department.



Robert Dallons is celebrating two years with the Information Technology Department.

Other notable milestones

- Harry Paulus, 15 years, Water & Sewer
- Deborah Barry, 2 years, Corrections
- Jill Breslawski, 10 years, Extension Services
- Karen Thomas, Retirement: 7 years, HR & Risk
- Tina Ward, Retirement: 30 years, Growth Management

In Case You Missed It

Regular Board Meetings

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- Board approved TDD FY 2026 Strategic Marketing Plan (SMP)
- Board approved Patriot Park Master Concept Plan developed working with Kimley Horn & Associates Inc., County staff, and local neighborhood input.
- Board approved \$250,000 of RESTORE funding for the design and permitting services for the Beachview Drive Stormwater Improvements Project
- Board considered an Interlocal Agreement with the City of Laurel Hill for the construction of Laurel Hill School sidewalks.

October 21

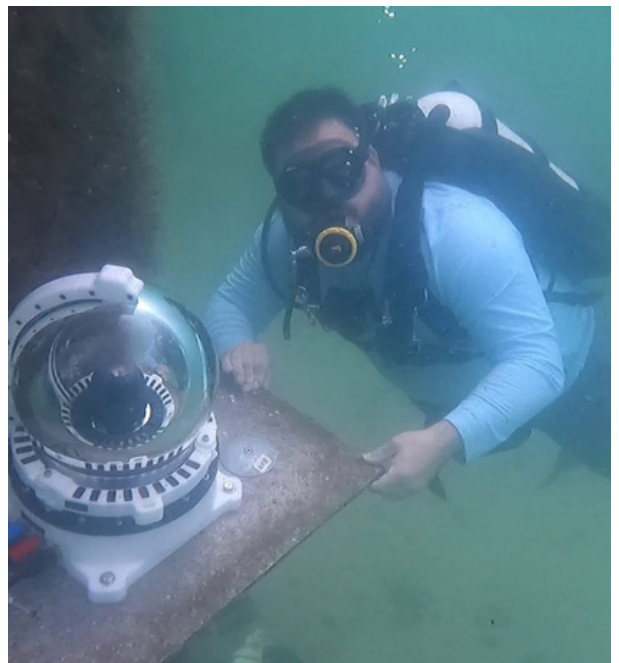
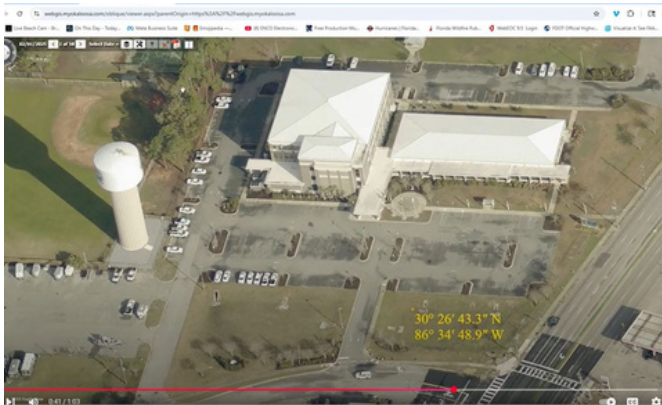
- Board approved process for donations of surplus equipment to nonprofits.
- Board approved Interlocal Agreement with Santa Rosa County to perform the "Connecting Collector," study.
- Board approved \$1million in state grant funding for construction of Phase 1 of the Santa Rosa Boulevard Improvement Project.

TIDBITS

Sideview option now available on GIS

[Click to view a video of how to use it>>](#)

[Click to view the LIVE fish cam at the Okaloosa Pier>>](#)



New 2025 imagery and a new sideview option are now available on Okaloosa County's GIS maps. Go to maps at <https://webgis.myokaloosa.com/>