

# County Connection

March, 2023

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Crestview Bypass - Fallen Heroes Way looking west



Shoreline Villas - Affordable Housing



Tarpon Beach Access cleared

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



## Stay safe this spring and summer

I hope you are enjoying the warmer weather. Spring has a way of reminding us of why we choose to live in an area that is so diverse and beautiful.

As you make plans to enjoy our outdoor playground, whether it be on a boat or at the beach, please take a moment to keep safety in mind. We want all of you to take advantage of your time off to make memories with your family and return to work refreshed and healthy.

On a related note, at the March 14 meeting, the Board approved a one-time wellness incentive to employees who elected to have County healthcare coverage. Single plan members will receive \$200 and family plan members will receive \$400. You should see that incentive payout on the first paycheck in April. This incentive is due in large part to employees maintaining healthy habits that reduce the number of claims to the insurance company. Keep it up! Feel free to reach out to your Department head or me if you need anything. Thanks for your continued hard work.



**John Hofstad**  
County Administrator

## Okaloosa County Water and Sewer urging residents to avoid flushing ‘flushable wipes’

“People just flush anything down the toilet and of course they shouldn’t because it goes somewhere,” said Darren Alford, Wastewater Operations Manager for Okaloosa County. “It goes to the collection system and eventually it comes to here and it causes trouble from one end to the other.” [CLICK TO READ FULL STORY >>](#)



## County building relationships, possible Aquatic Center in the future

Niceville Mayor Dan Henkel and Okaloosa Board Chairman Trey Goodwin had the opportunity to share their thoughts during an interview with WEAR-TV about a proposed Aquatic Center that is being considered by the Niceville Community Redevelopment Agency. The County is exploring opportunities to work with the City and related stakeholders to make this a reality.



## Okaloosa adopts new fees for commercial beach vending such as photography, weddings, & food



As it stands today, the requirements to obtain a permit are very minimal, and the rules governing beach activities are also minimal in many ways. According to the county, the changes in the Resolution are designed to address the growing number of vendors and increasing activity on the beach. [CLICK TO READ FULL STORY >>](#)

## Okaloosa’s 5-Year Artificial Reef Plan advances with \$1.71 million in new reef projects for 2023

The Okaloosa County 5-Year Artificial Reef Plan is aimed at making Destin – Fort Walton Beach the dive capital of the state of Florida and build upon its status as a premier fishing destination. The Plan provides for an annual budget of \$1.5M, excluding any grant funds or partner contributions. Staff plans to complete the project over the next 18 months. [READ THE FULL STORY >>](#)



## Affordable housing and celebrity visit

Commissioners and Growth Management staff attended a recent ribbon cutting for Shoreline Villas, an affordable housing complex for seniors 62 and older. One of the speakers at the event was former NBA superstar Alonzo Mourning. Following the ribbon cutting he met with a group of children from the neighborhood for some words of encouragement and to pose for photos. [View a video of Alonzo Mourning from his visit to Okaloosa County >>](#)



**Keep Okaloosa Beautiful works to make the County litter-free >>** Keep Okaloosa Beautiful Director Kali Hiemier joined forces with the Public Works Department of the City of Valparaiso to clean up Johnson Street. They collected over 2,500 pounds of trash.



**Destin-Fort Walton Beach tourism Coastal Resources team works to stabilize sand dunes in Destin >>** About a dozen volunteers installed sand fencing at James Lee Park. About 70 fences along 1,500 linear feet of the beach were placed at the edge of the protected dunes. Thanks to all the volunteers!

The installation of the dune fences will help enlarge the dunes over time and provide an additional protective barrier for structures in the area, as well as provide a robust ecosystem for the species of animals that depend on the dunes to survive.

[WATCH VIDEO >>](#)



## Be prepared: Training, training, and more training

Okaloosa County Emergency Medical Services recently organized two Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC) classes to train civilian first responders such as EMTs, nurses and other prehospital providers in an active shooter situation. [VIEW MORE PHOTOS >>](#)



Okaloosa Beach Safety lifeguards completed the lifeguard academy in late February and early March. Lifeguards are now patrolling Okaloosa Island Beaches. If you go to the beach, they are ready to answer any safety questions you may have.



## MARCH EMPLOYEE MILESTONES



Deputy Director of Water & Sewer, Mark Wise, has served Okaloosa County for 15 years. He is pictured at the March 14 Board meeting with County Administrator John Hofstad and the Commissioners.



### Other March Milestones

- Jimmie Miller, 5 years, Program Technician, Corrections
  - Christopher Pelfrey, 20, Water Operations Supervisor, Water & Sewer
  - Mitchell Case, 5 years, Electronics Technician, Water & Sewer
  - Natalie Oler, 5 years, Administrative Assistant II, Growth Management
  - Shane Oglesby, WWTP Operator "C", 30 years (Water & Sewer)
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# In Case You Missed It

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## February 21 Board Meeting Quick Notes

- Capt. Kelly Windes requested exploring deploying more Fish Aggregating Devices.
- Board approved 50% deposit for new digital sign in front of OCAB.
- Board adopted changes to the beach vending resolution and ordinances designed to address the growing number of vendors and increasing activity on the beach.
- Board was updated by Growth Management on various ongoing Code Enforcement cases.

## March 14 Board Meeting Quick Notes

- Homelessness & Housing Alliance gave an update on the number of people experiencing homelessness in Okaloosa/Walton counties.
- In a proclamation, March 29 declared National Vietnam War Veterans Day.
- Board approved a one-time wellness incentive payment to County employees enrolled in healthcare plans.
- Board approved the purchase and sale agreement related to the company, Project LS2, at Shoal River Ranch.
- Board approved an interlocal agreement with the City of Fort Walton Beach to purchase the majority of NWF Fairground property.
- Board approved of park layout concept to move forward with Crystal Beach and Tarpon Beach public beach accesses/parks.

# TIDBITS

**FLASHBACK:** Learn why Laurel Hill is known as the home of the hoboes>>



Do you know someone looking for a great career? There are plenty of opportunities with Okaloosa County. Send them to <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/okaloosa>

Did you know the County offers a free Prescription savings card through UniversalRx? GET YOUR CARD: At [www.okaloosarxcard.com](http://www.okaloosarxcard.com)

WORKS FOR PET MEDS TOO: Ask the vet to write your furry friend's prescription for a pharmacy and save up to 50%

