

# County Connection

June 2024

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## Summer safety and Independence

Safety is the highest priority when it comes to the well-being of County staff.

Many of you are hard at work outside the comfort of an air-conditioned office. Please be sure you take precautions and ensure you are staying hydrated as well as avoiding prolonged exposure to the heat. I want to recognize the challenges of working in these hot conditions and thank you for all of your efforts.

I would also like to echo and extend this advice to all employees, especially as you enjoy the outdoors on your time off, heading into the Fourth of July holiday.

Independence Day is a great opportunity to spend time with family and sample what I am sure are the very best meals from your grill.

Take a moment during your comradery to remember how fortunate we are to live in this country and the freedoms we regularly enjoy but sometimes take for granted.

Thanks as always for your continued hard work and reach out to me or your Department head if you need anything.



**John Hofstad**  
County Administrator

## Okaloosa County celebrates Women Veterans Day, honors Col. Allison Black and Lt. Gen. Gordon Fornell



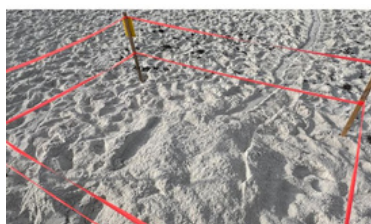
Okaloosa County celebrated Women Veterans Day, honoring the service and sacrifices of women in the U.S. military. Keynote speaker Col. Allison Black and Lt. Gen. Gordon Fornell were recognized for their extraordinary contributions and leadership. [READ MORE>>](#)

## Okaloosa County approves \$2M for SR 85 Crestview Evening Relief Project



The project aims to add a third northbound lane between Live Oak Church Road and the Crestview Bypass to increase vehicle capacity on SR 85 into Crestview. [READ MORE>>](#)

## Strong start to sea turtle nesting season in Destin-Fort Walton Beach



Of the four nests, three belong to Kemp's ridley sea turtles, while one belongs to a loggerhead. [READ MORE>>](#)

## Okaloosa County releases draft report on North Okaloosa Planning Study



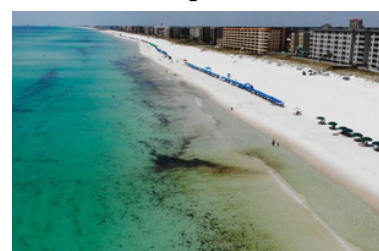
According to the report, the study area population is projected to increase by 4,823 residents (11.8%) through 2035 based on 10-year population projections. [READ MORE >>](#)

## Okaloosa County approves \$1.5M for Traffic Management Center in Niceville



The TMC staff will be able to respond to real-time operational adjustment needs and immediate incident response tasks to improve traffic flow and dispatch emergency response to roadway incidents, stalled vehicles, and weather-related incidents. [READ MORE>>](#)

## Northwest Florida tourism to get boost from \$10.5 million Triumph Gulf Coast grant



The grant will fund a three-year initiative to enhance marketing efforts. [READ MORE>>](#)

## Coins Awarded: 8 core, give me more



Okaloosa County offers its leaders a training program called Training Zone. This program is designed to strengthen their leadership skillset. There are 11 Training Zone classes in the program but eight core classes focus on policies and procedures. Any foreman, supervisor or manager who completes the eight core classes (since 2022) earns the Training Zone Challenge Coin. Training Zone challenge coins were recently awarded to 13 Okaloosa County leaders.

Pictured from left to right: (back row) Cory Lewis, Bill Stroheker, Johnathan Helfrich, Michael Kelley, Greg Basye, Randy Broxson, Julian Perez, Marcus Nelson, Mark Seymour (front row) Becca Autry, Training & Development Coordinator, Shelby Serna, Shannon Harms, and Amanda Maxwell. Any foreman, supervisor or manager who wants to sign up for courses, [login](#) to Training Zone or to find out what classes you are lacking, contact Becca Autry at 850-689-5873

## Traffic Techs signal their way to 2nd championship



Traffic Signal Technicians Austin Folkerts and Austin Hickey pose following their recent win at the Public Works Appreciation Lunch and Cornhole Tournament held May 23 at the Baker Recreation Center. This is the second consecutive win for the pair.

Okaloosa County Traffic Engineer Dr. Randy Showers expressed his excitement and pride for his fellow staff members' win.

"Weee, are the champions, of the Board!," said Dr. Showers.

# All paths lead to ADA Safety

The Facility and Parks Maintenance Department recently installed about 1,650 feet of new ADA-compliant sidewalks at Veterans Park on Okaloosa Island.

According to Butch Hendrick, Okaloosa County Facility and Parks Maintenance Director, 475 feet of a wooden walkway remains to be constructed on the portion that runs parallel to the beach/water.

Crews will eventually be pouring five concrete pads that connect to the walkway for picnic tables, expected to be complete at the end of summer.



# Corrections and Youth Day

It was an honor for our team members at the Okaloosa County Department of Corrections to be invited to participate in this year's Okaloosa Sheriff's Youth Day at the Northwest Florida Fairgrounds. Thanks to OCSO for allowing us to tag along and share such a great experience with the youth from within our community.



# Prepare Now, Don't Panic Later

The annual Hurricane Simulation Exercise was very well attended by multiple agencies across the County including representation from the municipalities, County departments, and local elected officials. The exercise took place at the Emergency Operations Center on the campus of Northwest Florida State College in Niceville. It was organized by staff from the Emergency Management team within the Public Safety Department. The exercise put into practice how the County would prepare, respond, and recover from a natural disaster, all while utilizing the resources and communication between Emergency Support Functions (ESFs).



## Convention Center Happenings

DESTIN  
FORT  
WALTON  
BEACH  
FLORIDA



### Recent Events of note at the DFWBCC:

- Platinum National Dance Competition – this is their second year with us, with about 2,500 people over the course of 3 days. This group brings an economic impact of about 500 room nights within the county's hotels.
- 2nd Annual Women Veteran's Day Recognition (with Commissioner Ketchel) – back on site for their 2nd annual event with about 500 people.
- Mark of Excellence (Dance Competition) – back on site for their 5th year in a row. This event has about 3000 people over the course of 6 days with an economic impact of about 500 room nights.

This past spring (Feb., March and April), the convention center generated an economic impact of about \$426,000.00 in room revenue with the local hotels.

## June Milestones



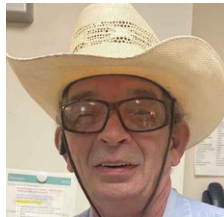
Congratulations to these County employees who are celebrating their work anniversaries. They are pictured with County Administrator John Hofstad and Commissioners: Dino Brasseur (Corrections, 17 years-retirement), William Henderson (Engineering, 25 years), Carlos Jones, Sr. (Growth Management, 10 years), Patrick Milton II (Airport Maintenance, 5 years).



## OTHER MILESTONES



- Steve Hoerter, Corrections, 20 years
- William Purvis, Corrections, 20 years
- Austin Folkerts, Traffic Operations, 5 years
- Fred Frantz, Roads Division, 5 years



**20 years**

Eleuterio Delvalle, Jr.  
Water & Sewer



**10 years**

Richard Armstrong  
Corrections



**2 years**

Renae Harrison  
Court Services

# In Case You Missed It

Regular Board Meetings



## June - Meeting notes

### June 4

- Board listened to updates on the 2024 Legislative Session.
- Board approved allocation of Surtax Reserves: \$1.5 million for Traffic Management Center, \$2 million for continued dirt road stabilization and \$2 million for SR 85 Crestview Evening Relief Project.
- Board approved contract for South County Extension Office.
- Board approved Task Order for construction, and technical phases for Jerry D. Mitchem Water Reclamation Facility Absorption Bed Expansion Project.

### June 18

- Board approved a new ordinance updating the Airport Rules and Regulations and Minimum Standards for Bob Sikes Airport and Destin Executive Airport.
- Board approved design for Mary Esther Cristobal Park.
- Board approved funding \$3.075 million for construction of a new well in Seminole for potable water.
- Board suspended current operations at the Dorcas Fire District and implemented mutual aid agreements with neighboring fire districts to sustain the continuity of emergency services for Dorcas area residents following the signing of HB 897.

## TIDBITS



Okaloosa County routinely holds online auctions for surplus items. The auction is open to the public. Live auctions will be posted at this link:  
<https://www.publicsurplus.com/sms/okaloosaco,fl/list/current?orgid=1024171>