

# County Connection

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May 2023

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## Prepare now, don't panic later

Most of us have lived in Northwest Florida long enough to know the potential for impacts from hurricanes and tropical storms. It is important that we do not become complacent and leave ourselves in a position where we are not prepared.

Our Emergency Management Team has done a great job preparing the County for storm events of this magnitude.

However, I encourage each of you to go over a storm plan with your family and update your hurricane box with the essential items.

Staff within Risk Management sent out hurricane preparedness resources earlier this month and we also have checklists, evacuation maps and other information, including this year's Hurricane Guide, on the Emergency Management section of our website at <https://myokaloosa.com/ps/emergency-management>.

Keep up the good work and stay safe.



**John Hofstad**  
County Administrator

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## Local flight school approved at Destin Executive Airport to train veterans with VA benefits

The approval of Destin Flight Works to train veterans with VA benefits is a great opportunity for local veterans to pursue a career in aviation and contribute to the growth of the industry. [READ MORE >>](#)



## Sea turtle nesting season begins



Jessica Valek emphasized that the public and visitors can also help protect the sea turtles by taking their belongings with them when they leave the beach, flattening sandcastles, and filling in holes. [READ MORE>>](#)

## Going viral -Artificial reef story makes the rounds, worldwide



Okaloosa County's sinking of the R/V Cyclops for an artificial reef south of Destin made the news as far as Jordan, Greece, Egypt and spread nationally as well.

## 28 Okaloosa women recognized for achievements at 'Women of Honor' event



The "Women of Honor" event was first established as "Wall of Honor" by the OCCSW in 1997, as an idea of its members who thought it would be a nice way for someone to honor the women in their lives whose works might be unknown to most others.

## New recycling facility coming soon

A new Material Recovery Facility (MRF) will be built by Waste Management on Ready Avenue. The company broke ground during a late April ceremony. It is expected to be operational in about one year. County Commissioners and other local officials were in attendance.





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# Department News

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Okaloosa County Destin-Fort Walton Beach Tourism and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission celebrate the 5th Annual Lionfish Removal & Awareness Festival on May 20-21, 2023 at the Destin Harbor. To volunteer and help count and measure lionfish, reach out to Jessica Valek with the TDD or [sign up here](#). If you want to learn more about the tournament and festival, visit [www.emeraldcoastopen.com](http://www.emeraldcoastopen.com)



Be Prepared - It's a motto used by a lot of organizations, including Okaloosa County. Various agencies and related stakeholders came to the Emergency Operations Center at Northwest Florida State College in late April for a simulated hurricane exercise. The purpose of the exercise was to practice and assess how agencies work together in a simulated Category 4 Hurricane situation and how they make decisions during the short-term and intermediate recovery.



The Corrections Department held the Food Truck Frenzy in early May. This annual event celebrates National Correctional Officers Week and National Nurses Appreciation Week. Over a dozen food truck vendors were present during the week and provided meals to corrections staff and the public.



The Tourism Development Department recently held an appreciation gathering at the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Convention Center for partners within the tourism industry for National Travel and Tourism Week.

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# Employee Spotlight

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## EMPLOYEE MILESTONES



Willie Scott celebrates his retirement at the May 16 Board meeting. Willie spent 15 years serving the County in the Information Technology Department.



## MAY ANNIVERSARIES

Pictured with County Administrator John Hofstad and County Commissioners are: Randy Showers, 20 years, Melissa Read, 5 years (Tourist Development), Virginia Ryals, 5 years (Public Works), Randy Woodruff, 5 years (Growth Management), and Darrel Welborn, 35 years (EMS).



## Other May Milestones

- Eugenia Jones, 5 years, Waste Resource Management
  - Nick Tomecek, 2 years, Public Information
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# In Case You Missed It

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## May 2 Board Meeting Quick Notes

- Board voted to "table" the issue of a dredging policy related to Lake Vivian Channel.
- Board approved funding for a larger vessel to the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Marine unit using TDD funds.
- Board approved budget transfer from the surtax reserve for construction costs for County Road 2 and bridge repairs.
- Commissioner Ponder updated the Board on the progress from the legislative delegation related to possible appropriations that may be coming to Okaloosa County.

## May 16 Board Meeting Quick Notes

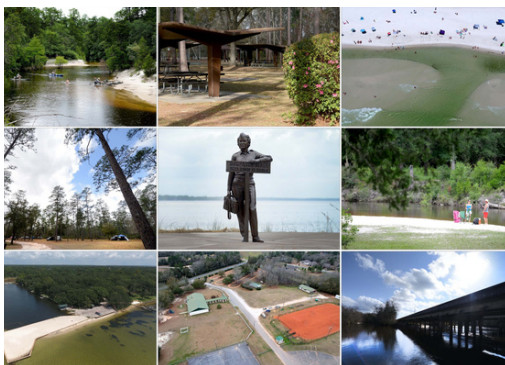
- Board designated May 21-27 as Emergency Medical Services Week.
- Board voted to "table" approval of Airport Minimum Standards for Bob Sikes Airport and Destin Executive Airport.
- Board approved proposed two-unit apartment with a restaurant (Beachview) for parcel on west end of Okaloosa Island.
- Board approved moving forward with grant proposal for Shoal River Ranch WRF in amount of \$10 million.

## TIDBITS

From free camping at Wilderness Landing in Baker to swimming at the beach, Okaloosa County has a diverse landscape that includes dozens of County-maintained parks. View an interactive map of their locations >> <https://gis.myokaloosa.com/apps/Parks>



We have security cameras at the Okaloosa County Administration building, but it helps to have another set of eyes every now and then.



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](https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/okaloosa)

