

County Connection

January 2025

p. 1 of 6



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Moving forward

Okaloosa County recently experienced an unprecedented snowstorm that affected roadways and caused multiple cancellations. I want to commend the efforts of those County employees who tirelessly supported the efforts to mitigate the dangers of this weather event while keeping essential operations in place.

While public safety matters are paramount to County staff, I hope you were able to take some time to enjoy nature's spectacular showing of something we rarely see in Northwest Florida.

We are well into the 2025 calendar year and moving toward the continuation of plans throughout all departments that will allow us to achieve our goals for our growing community.

As I look back on 2024, I am extremely proud of our staff and everything that we have accomplished. I expect that this momentum will allow us to push through any challenges in 2025 and allow us to continue to prosper.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to your department head or my office if you need anything.



John Hofstad
County Administrator

Okaloosa County recovers after rare snowstorm brings up to 9 inches of snow



"I think the residents did a fantastic job during this event," Maddox said. [READ MORE>>](#)

Okaloosa County approves \$3.3M for portion of Destin Crosstown Connector



The 0.4-mile road project aims to provide traffic relief in Destin, where record visitor numbers and local traffic create persistent bottlenecks along Highway 98. [READ MORE>>](#)

'Who fixes this road?': New app helps Okaloosa residents identify road jurisdictions



A new web-based application launched by Okaloosa County helps residents determine which government entity manages roads.

Okaloosa commissioners accept conceptual plan for Eglin Orphan Land development



County commissioners accepted initial plans for developing eight underutilized Eglin Air Force Base properties, marking an early step in a long-term development process. [READ MORE>>](#)

Okaloosa commissioners approve Jeff Peters as new parks and facilities director



"I'm excited that he's coming on board," Commissioner Trey Goodwin said, recalling his experience working with Peters over a decade ago while serving on the Fort Walton Beach City Council. [READ MORE>>](#)

SS United States artificial reef project remains on track despite temporary delay



According to Fogg, the vessel was previously towed from the Mediterranean to Philadelphia in its current condition without incident. [READ MORE>>](#)

Okaloosa commissioners honor retired clerk J.D. Peacock for decades of service



"It's been an honor to serve with you, both in your career in the sheriff's office, and in your career here with the county as a clerk," Mixon said during the presentation. [READ MORE>>](#)

Commissioner Carolyn Ketchel earns second Mitchell Award for public service



She first received the award in 2018, accepting it personally from Mitchell. [READ MORE>>](#)

Okaloosa County emerges as key player in big tech, ranking 17th among southern metros

"It has a lot to do with the research and development at Eglin Air Force Base and the support through special operations at Hurlburt," Goodwin said. [READ MORE>>](#)

Okaloosa Beach Safety starts lifeguard hiring for 2025 season



Beach Safety team saved 39 lives in 2024 while serving 1.8 million visitors to Okaloosa Island, with zero drownings reported and over 850,000 preventive education contacts made. [READ MORE>>](#)

Okaloosa County resource fair raises awareness on opioid crisis

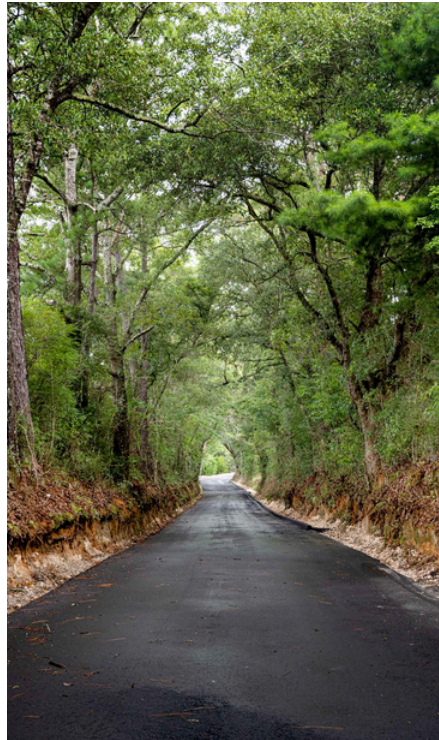


The event was hosted by the Post Overdose Support Team (POST), an Okaloosa County Health Improvement Partnership initiative, alongside several resource agencies. [READ MORE>>](#)



Wrapping up 2024

There have been many successes in 2024 across all departments. The photos on this page denote some notable projects and scenes captured within the County in 2024.

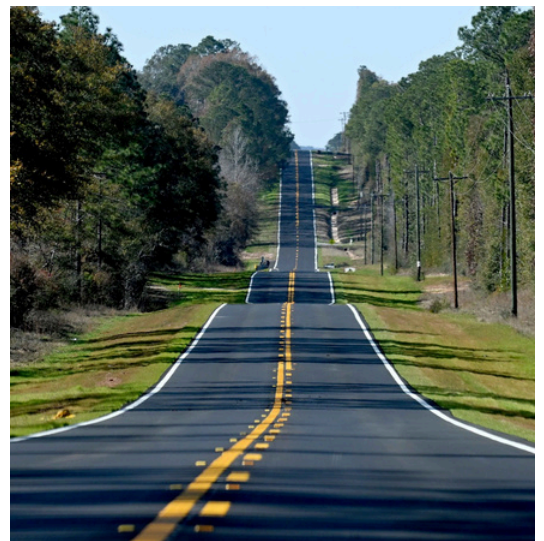


Surtax Success

Construction is substantially complete on the improvements to County Road 2 between State Roads 189 and 85. The wider lanes and bridge safety work that has been completed will improve safety for motorists who frequent the roadway. Here are some more details on this work:

- 9.44 miles of roadway were improved with a full-depth reclamation that involves grinding up the existing roadway, adding cement for a new base, then adding asphalt to finish.
- Widened each lane from 10 to 11 feet and added a one-foot shoulder on each side that previously was not there.
- Removed concrete barriers on bridge and replaced with durable, lighter-weight metal barriers for improved safety.
- Project pre-design, design, and construction began in 2020, but the actual construction began in early 2024 and is now largely complete.
- Project cost: \$14.5 million. The majority of the project was funded with voter-approved infrastructure surtax. Additional funding included a state appropriation.
- Improvements create a safer roadway for motorists and is another example of how the voter-approved infrastructure surtax continues to work for County residents.

Learn about other surtax projects [CLICK HERE>>](#)



Pictured left: The winners of the 2024 Public Works Christmas gathering cornhole tournament champions

In Case You Missed It

Regular Board Meetings

p. 6 of 6



January 7 - Meeting notes

- New GIS Road Maintenance web tool unveiled.
- Board approved appointment of Jeff Peters as the new Facility and Parks Director.
- Board approved interlocal agreement with City of Destin for portion of Crosstown Connector.
- Board accepted conceptual plan for Eglin Orphan Parcels.

TIDBITS



Flashback

This year marks 68 years since the Northwest Florida Air Terminal opened on Eglin Air Force Base. While there have been many changes to the facility (including the name) and airline offerings over the years, the one thing that hasn't is our commitment to the safe operation for our travelers at Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport.

Pictured: Okaloosa County Air Terminal taken in December of 1978.