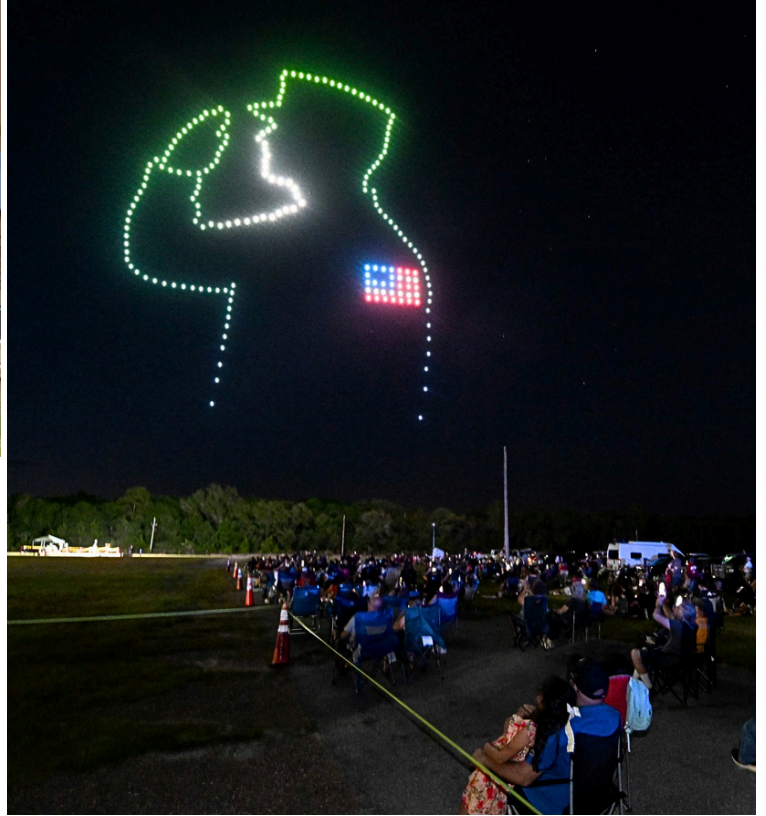


# County Connection

June 2026

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



## Focused and Committed

I recently presented an informational agenda item to the Board of County Commissioners regarding House Joint Resolution 1-F and its potential financial impact on Okaloosa County operations. You may view a clip of that portion of the meeting [here](#).

I encourage you to continue to share your experiences regarding the services you provide as a County employee with your family, friends and neighbors.

As I stated in my letter to you earlier this month,

We are actively assessing all available options to address these potential funding challenges in order to minimize any effects on the services our residents depend upon.

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to your supervisor. Thank you for your continued dedication, professionalism, and service to the residents of Okaloosa County. Your commitment is deeply appreciated and remains essential to the success of our organization and community.



**John Hofstad**  
County Administrator

## Okaloosa County considers paid parking at beaches, boat ramps to fund park improvements



The county says if approved, a management company would oversee the enforcement of these parking fees. It's still too soon to say how much the fee would be. [READ MORE>>](#)

## Rotary clubs expand rescue tube project across Okaloosa County beaches



The Rotary Club of Destin and Rotary Club of Fort Walton Beach installed 17 new public rescue tubes at Okaloosa Island beach accesses, with nine more planned. [READ MORE>>](#)

## Sen. Rick Scott joins local officials in Destin to kick off hurricane preparedness push



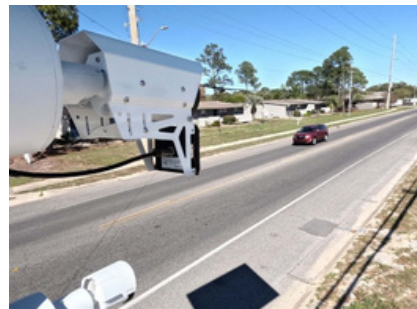
Scott, speaking to a crowd that included several Okaloosa County commissioners and local first responders, pointed to the deadly consequences of ignoring evacuation warnings. [READ MORE>>](#)

## New restroom installed at Cinco Bayou Boat Ramp as Okaloosa County continues site upgrades



Remaining [improvements at the Cinco Bayou Boat Ramp](#) include 16 to 18 parking spaces for boat trailers, improved access to the boat ramp, landscaping and future dock improvements, the county said. [READ MORE>>](#)

## Fort Walton Beach City Council declines county's broader speed camera refund request



The vote closes out a [back-and-forth](#) that has run for more than two months between the city and county over a school zone camera on Hollywood Boulevard near Fort Walton Beach High School, west of Wright Parkway. [READ MORE>>](#)

## Okaloosa County to suspend all fixed-route bus service by August, shifts focus to paratransit



EC Rider will phase out fixed-route transit service in two rounds this summer as the county moves toward a paratransit-only model. [READ MORE>>](#)

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## Dorcas Fire District Developments

Okaloosa County continues to improve and bolster the fire service in the Dorcas area through Board leadership and through the expertise of the Public Safety Department. A recent town hall meeting was held for the community to listen and ask questions about the recent progress at the fire district.



## Congratulations Earned

Okaloosa County Department of Corrections congratulates new officers Patterson Collins, Kendall Cook, Kyle Gaskin, and Ryan Traylor on their recent graduation from George Stone Criminal Justice Training Center Class #130. They successfully completed 445 hours of the Correctional Officer Basic Recruit Training Program.



## Are you Storm Ready?

Hundreds of Okaloosa County residents attended the recent Hurricane Preparedness Expo at the Okaloosa County Administration Building for informative presentations, freebies and interactive storm preparedness booths.



## We are Storm Ready

First responders, County and municipal staff and community volunteers gathered recently for the annual hurricane simulation at the Emergency Operations Center in Niceville to train on how agencies work together to provide continuity of essential services before, during and after a storm.





## Navigate Summer Safely: Travel Tips

As summer travel season kicks off, it is important to stay alert about your digital security. Keep these quick rules in mind:

- **Delay Social Posts:** Do not post your travel plans or location in real-time on social media. Wait until you get back home to share your updates so scammers cannot use that information against you.
- **Verify Wi-Fi:** Fake networks easily trick you by pretending to be hotel or airport Wi-Fi. Always ask staff for the exact network name. Use your County VPN on work devices, and a personal VPN or cellular hotspot on your own devices.
- **Use Your Own Power:** Avoid plugging straight into USB ports; use your own power brick and plug into a standard wall outlet instead.
- **Block Fake MFA:** Scammers look for people who are out of the office. They will flood your phone with login approvals, hoping you click "allow" by mistake. If you get an unexpected prompt, deny it instantly and alert Information Security.

Thank you for staying alert and committed to our security! [ITSecurity@myokaloosa.com](mailto:ITSecurity@myokaloosa.com)



**UF** IFAS Extension  
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



### Okaloosa County 4-H Forest Ecology participates in the statewide competition

Three Okaloosa County 4-H Forest Ecology team members competed at the statewide 4-H Forest Ecology Competition in May 2026 at the Austin Cary Forest in Gainesville, Florida. Youth from across Florida counties joined together to share and test their knowledge and skills in forest ecology, forest management, map and compass, tree measurement, and natural history.

Philip Thames competed in the junior-aged individual competition, Kayleigh Thames in the intermediate-aged individual competition, and Izzy Wise in the senior-aged individual competition. Kayleigh achieved 2nd in the state in the intermediate-aged individual competition. Congratulations to Kayleigh, Philip, and Izzy! We are proud of them all, as they represented Okaloosa County well.

### Get involved in Okaloosa 4-H camps this summer

- **June 30-July 2: Drone Camp 2026**

Get ready to take flight at our 4-H Drone Day Camp! June 30-July 2, 2026, from 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. This exciting 3-day summer camp is designed for youth of all experience levels — whether you're just learning what a drone is or already love flying. Campers will explore the world of drones through hands-on activities, flight challenges, games, STEM learning, and team competitions. Throughout the week, youth will build confidence in drone safety, navigation, technology, and problem-solving while making new friends and having tons of fun. From beginner basics to advanced flying skills, this camp is the perfect opportunity to discover how drones are shaping the future of agriculture, technology, photography, and more!  
\$20 per child.  
Limited spots available

- **July 22-24: Trails, Tails, and Tides**

Join us for an outdoor adventure for three days, exploring all things nature in the Panhandle. From Oceans to Forest, we will learn it all!  
\$20 per child  
Limited spots available  
Sign-up opening soon



Okaloosa County 4-H Forest Ecology members, from left, Izzy Wise, Kayleigh Thames, and Philip Thames.

## Recent Milestones



Congratulations to these County employees who are celebrating their work anniversaries. Pictured with County Administrator John Hofstad and County Commissioners are James Lewis, 2 years (Road Maintenance), Dusty Ricketts, 2 years (Commissioners Aide), Jerry Semkiw, 2 years (Senior Facility and Parks Operations Manager) and John Mateleska, 5 years (Construction Supervisor).

Thank you for your service to Okaloosa County.



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# In Case You Missed It

Regular Board Meetings

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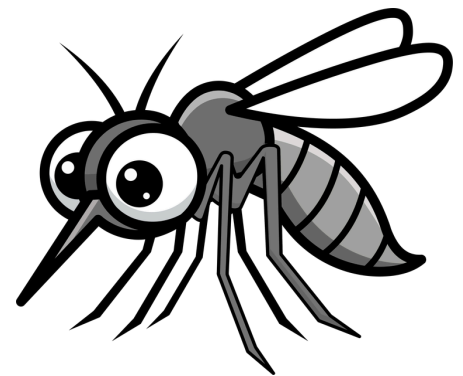
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## June 16

- Board approved moving forward with standing up an animal control division and exploring opportunities to ask voters if they would like to have a half-cent tax for animal services and other items.
- Board approved creating a task force to address panhandling and vagrancy.
- County Administrator provided an update on the potential impacts of a voter-approved increase to the homestead exemption.
- Board approved using surtax funding for Lewis Turner/Poquito Road intersection signal.
- Board approved moving forward with applying for a grant for funding of the Traffic Management Center.
- Board approved accepting a grant for stormwater improvements in the Gap Creek area.
- Board approved two new staffing additions to the Community Paramedicine Team using opioid settlement funding.

## TIDBITS



Okaloosa County Mosquito Control technicians have begun spray operations. Treatments are set to start at sunset. View a map of the spray areas and schedule at <https://myokaloosa.com/pw/environmental/mosquito-control>