

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Board of County Commissioners

February 3, 2026



Okaloosa County to Conduct Prescribed Burns at Shoal River Preserve

Crestview, Florida – Okaloosa County’s Land Resources Division of Destin-Fort Walton Beach in coordination with the Florida Forest Service, Okaloosa County Public Safety and area fire departments that include North Okaloosa, Crestview and Dorcas Fire Departments, will conduct multiple prescribed burns beginning later this week and continuing into the month of February at the Shoal River Preserve in northeast Okaloosa County.

The prescribed burn operation will include about 400 acres on the property. It is weather-dependent and residents in the area should expect minimal smoke impacts.

“These burns are a necessary part of creating a healthy wildlife habitat and an important part of creating an ideal space that will soon be open for the enjoyment of residents and visitors,” said Okaloosa County Board Chairman Trey Goodwin. “Okaloosa County is fortunate to have a robust tourism industry that has funded the purchase of this land and others in north Okaloosa County to leave a lasting positive impact for the public.”

By using prescribed fire, we get these benefits:

- Community protection: Florida is one of the top states in the nation for use of prescribed fire. By clearing out overgrowth, prescribed fire reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfires and the subsequent devastation to communities.
- Firefighter protection: Prescribed fires clear out overgrowth that can fuel bigger wildfires. When forests are maintained with prescribed fire, any wildfires that do occur are less severe and easier for firefighters to control.
- Protection of native habitats: Prescribed fire provides openings in the vegetation that many species need, improves nutrient availability, and promotes fresh plant growth.
- The bottom line: Prescribed fire allows us to choose the conditions and areas we burn. This isn’t the case with wildfires, which usually occur in weather conditions that make them hard to control and produce a lot of smoke. Fire has shaped our forests and grasslands for thousands of years, and allows us to work with this natural process to experience its many benefits.

For more information, go to <https://whyprescribedfire.org/>

About Shoal River Preserve

The Shoal River Preserve is roughly 408 acres of mixed pine and hardwood forest along the north shore of the Shoal River near Crestview, purchased using tourism revenue. The land will benefit visitors and residents with outdoor adventure opportunities for hiking, paddling and bird watching. The Shoal River Preserve is expected to open to the public in the spring of 2026.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER NICK TOMECEK AT 850.651.7321 - NTOMECEK@MYOKALOOSA.COM