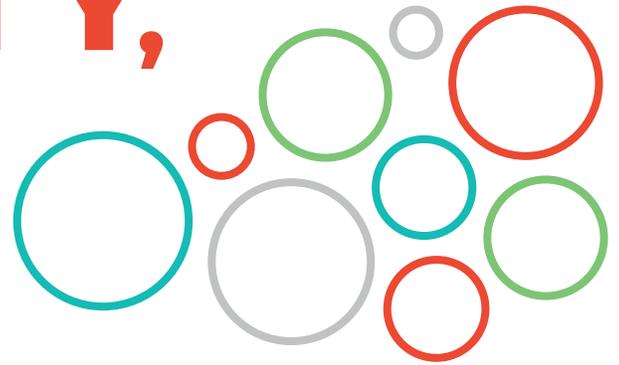




BAY COUNTY, FLORIDA



BAY COUNTY, FLORIDA



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

OCTOBER 1, 2019 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSION CHAIRMAN



As we continued to work on recovery from Hurricane Michael, 2020 brought with it another challenge -- the novel coronavirus pandemic.

This book aims to highlight our recovery efforts from both Hurricane Michael and the pandemic and to outline the many accomplishments that were made over the course of Fiscal Year 2020, which ran from Oct. 1, 2019 to Sept. 30, 2020. We hope to provide readers with a thorough understanding of how their government works daily to better all of Bay County, particularly in the wake of protracted dual disasters. As we continue to recover and rebuild, it is this board's responsibility to ensure to the best of our ability that we do so in a thoughtful, yet expedient, manner. The Bay County Board of County Commissioners is proud of the job our staff does every day to make our home a wonderful place to live and visit. We strive to ensure that our team is focused on being as customer and results oriented as possible while also being good stewards of taxpayers' dollars. Every member of this organization is committed to excellence and efficiency in government, and we are working every day to make sure that we are transparent and accountable to the citizens we serve. Our doors are always open to the public and we welcome input and feedback about how we can do and be better for the people of Bay County.

A copy of the this Annual Report for the Board of County Commissioners is available online at www.baycountyfl.gov.

philip "griff" griffitts
district 5





ABOUT THE COMMISSION

The Bay County Board of County Commissioners is a five-member governing board elected at-large to represent the citizens of Bay County. The board defines the role and guides the actions of the organization in ensuring the future of Bay County. The commission hires a county manager to implement policies established by the board and to manage the operations of the county. The commission annually adopts the millage rate and approves the budget, which determines the revenue and expenditures necessary to operate all county departments. The powers and duties of the county commission are established by Florida Statutes, Chapter 125.

The majority of offices of the Bay County Commission are located at the Bay County Government Center at 840 W. 11th St., Panama City. The campus also houses the offices of the Bay County Supervisor of Elections, the Tax Collector and the Property Appraiser.

THE 5 COUNTY DISTRICTS



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This publication can be viewed online in PDF format at the Bay County website: www.baycountyfl.gov

PRODUCED BY:
Bay County Communications
Department

LAYOUT & DESIGN BY:
GORGEOUS (GRGS.CO | 850-888-8GRG)

county manager



robert "bob" majka



MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTY MANAGER:

As Fiscal Year 2020 began, Bay County government continued its work recovering from Hurricane Michael's devastating strike just one year earlier. And while our community had made strides in rebuilding from the third-strongest storm on record to hit the U.S. mainland, a looming crisis would bring fresh uncertainty and turmoil. In March 2020, for the second time in less than two years, the people of Bay County faced an economy-scorching disaster with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both events have had devastating impacts on many of our residents' livelihoods, mental health, children's education, and much more. But the silver lining is that Hurricane Michael prepared our county to respond to the COVID-19 crisis better than most.

When other areas in Florida were trying to figure out how they were going to feed the hungry and homeless caused by the pandemic, Bay County leveraged existing relationships with national nonprofit feeding organizations to help deliver meals to those in need. Through Rebuild Bay County, a post-storm compilation of dozens of local nonprofit organizations, we were able to help continue to address the food, mental health, housing, and transportation needs of our most vulnerable populations.

Our logistics teams, who have continued to work in recovery since the storm, allowed Bay County to be among the first of Florida's 67 counties to enter requests to the state and start taking delivery of important personal protective equipment (PPE) - masks, gowns, hand sanitizer, and gloves - for use by our hospitals and nursing homes.

But on a larger scale, Bay County is uniquely poised to rebound from the challenges of the last two years.

Between \$700 and \$800 million in federal dollars continues to work through the state and federal government on its way to Bay County for myriad Hurricane Michael recovery projects. We are beginning now to see funding for roads, housing, stormwater, parks, and much more.

The Bay County Commission will continue to be good stewards of our residents' and property owners' tax dollars. We are committed to providing quality customer service while keeping our tax rates among the very lowest in the state.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the citizens of Bay County about the many ways in which we are working to reach our goals each year, established through our strategic planning process.

We have again included an employee spotlight in the pages of the annual report. Bay County employees strive daily to serve their friends and neighbors with dignity and integrity, and we are grateful for their continued hard work despite the challenges of the last couple of years.

A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020 INCLUDE:

- > Bay County's millage rate remained unchanged and among the lowest in the state at 4.43 mills.
- > We reduced retail water/sewer rates years earlier than originally anticipated and implemented the first of several reductions planned over the next few years.
- > Worked to bring more than 400 hurricane-damaged properties into code compliance.
- > Managed the Private Property Debris Removal Program administered by the federal government, garnering approval of federal funding to clean/demolish 967 properties with damaged or destroyed homes and storm debris at no cost to the homeowners.
- > Provided more than 58,000 free COVID-19 tests to the public.
- > Implemented the "Be a Hero" public information campaign aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19.
- > Issued a Request for Qualifications to assess a plan to reopen the Old Pass.
- > Established eight new permitted reef sites with 205 engineered concrete modules deployed as part of the Artificial Reef Program.
- > Began the process of permanently closing the Bay County Incinerator, which will result in an approximately 35-percent tipping fee reduction to customers.

CONTACT US:

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WHO WE ARE

The County Attorney's Office represents the Board of County Commissioners in all legal matters. The three attorneys on staff represent Bay County in lawsuits, administrative hearings, and at public meetings. In addition, legal staff prepares and reviews ordinances, contracts, and other legal instruments. The attorneys also render legal opinions and provide legal support to commissioners, boards, and departments.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

While continuing to assist Bay County in recovering from Hurricane Michael, county attorneys also spent the last year helping staff navigate the legal challenges of responding to a public health crisis. On March 17, 2020, the Bay County Board of County Commissioners adopted a resolution drafted by legal staff that proclaimed a local state of emergency in response to the threat of COVID-19. This emergency declaration recognizes the threat that the coronavirus posed to public health and allows the county to implement extraordinary actions to coordinate with the Department of Health and prepare supplies and facilities to respond. In the aftermath of this initial declaration, the County Attorney's Office prepared other emergency orders that temporarily closed public beaches, required health screening of county contractors, and adopted a vacation rental plan. In addition, county attorneys provided legal advice about federal legislation providing emergency paid sick leave, expansion of the Federal Medical Leave Act (FMLA), uses for the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding, as well as interpreting the many state executive orders that implemented various phases of pandemic restrictions and recovery.

In addition, legal staff worked on the following legal issues and projects this past year:

- > Completed the acquisition of a beachfront Navy parcel to be used as a future county park.
- > Negotiated and drafted an interlocal agreement with the City of Panama City Beach to more fairly distribute Front Beach Road revenues between the city and the county.
- > Prepared ordinances to protect county emblems, repeal hospital liens, modify procurement provisions, and amend code prohibitions involving blighted property and unsafe structures.
- > Bay County continues to be a plaintiff in nationwide litigation against opioid manufacturers and distributors. County attorneys continued to monitor settlement discussions, multi-state litigation, and also attended a roundtable discussion with the Florida Attorney General related to settlement efforts by the Statewide Task Force on Opioid Abuse.
- > Drafted an update to the Bay County Behavioral Health Transportation Plan, which brings together health care and ambulance providers to coordinate transportation for Baker Act/Marchman Act individuals.
- > Prepared communication tower leases to facilitate a new, improved 800 MHz public safety radio system.

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don banks



employee spotlight

BRIAN LEEBRICK

Brian Leebrick, who has worked as an assistant county attorney for three years, was a senior partner at Panama City law firm Barron and Redding for 17 years before leaving his successful private practice to pursue public interest law. Brian brings a wealth of legal experience to our office. Brian and his wife Candace, a guidance counselor and graduation coach at Rutherford High School, have three teenage daughters. He is very active at Holy Nativity Episcopal Church, and he enjoys hiking and camping, listening to geeky podcasts, and discovering new craft beers.



employee spotlight

JOHN PARKER

John Parker is a Budget Analyst in the county's Budget Office. He is a native of Bay County and only moved away long enough to earn a bachelor's degree in Finance from the University of Florida before returning to his hometown. Prior to joining the county in July 2017, John worked as an internal auditor at a local financial institution for 13 years. John spends most of his time with his two kids, Maddox and Ava. They enjoy going to the beach, fishing, camping, and cheering on the Florida Gators.



WHO WE ARE

The Budget Division creates, modifies, and monitors the annual budget for the Board of County Commissioners. We work closely with the county departments to develop the expenditure budget for the board. The office also develops financial projections for the county's revenues. It serves as a hub for financial data for the various departments under the board and assists the departments with any financial matters.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

- > Bay County's Hurricane Michael Burn Rate as of Oct. 12, 2020, including purchase orders and outstanding debris invoices, is as follows:

	PAYMENTS	P.O.s AND REMAINING DEBRIS INVOICES	REIMBURSEMENTS
FEMA A-Debris Removal	\$215,336,136	\$13,927,747	\$163,425,304
FEMA B-Emergency Protective Measures	\$27,046,696	\$225,039	\$7,501,810
FEMA C-Roads & Bridges	\$1,067,297	\$230,724	\$24,485
FEMA D-Water Control Facilities	\$598,134	-	-
FEMA E-Buildings and Equipment	\$36,877,186	\$3,736,047	\$213,710
FEMA F-Utilities	\$2,437,559	\$378,733	\$594,994
FEMA G-Parks, Recreational & Other	\$3,944,841	\$1,402,943	\$512,465
FEMA Z-Admin Cost	\$15,159,077	\$323,616	\$5,085,357
TOTAL	\$302,466,926	\$20,224,849	\$177,358,125

- > Bay County received 25 percent of \$30 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) funding allocated to the county by the State of Florida. The Budget Office began collecting documents from departments and municipalities for disbursement.
- > The Budget Office follows a Florida law known as TRIM (Truth-in-Millage). The Truth-in-Millage Law was passed by the Florida State Legislature and designed to keep the public informed about the taxes as proposed by local taxing authorities. The TRIM notice is the Notice of Proposed Property Taxes required by this law. Property owners receive their TRIM notice from the Bay County Property Appraiser once millage rates are established by a vote of each taxing authority. TRIM notices provide an estimate of each property, lists all taxing authorities, and provides an overall total estimated property tax. Property taxes are based on \$1 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. For example, on a \$100,000 property, one mill would generate \$100. Taxable value for the General Fund in Fiscal Year 2020 was \$16 billion, resulting in ad valorem tax collections of \$67.5 million.
- > Budget is responsible for all Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) calculations for county payment to the various established CRAs throughout the county. A CRA is established in counties and municipalities that have areas deemed to be in a state of slum or blight. Once established, the CRA area tax base, from which a taxing authority realizes tax revenues, is frozen for a period of 30 years, 40 years if extended. During the 30 years, the taxing authority may only receive tax revenue equal to the revenue collected in the base year. Revenue collected in excess of that amount is returned to the CRA for redevelopment projects within the CRA. A CRA is responsible for administering the activities and programs within the redevelopment area/district. A redevelopment district enables local governments to attract new business, make improvements, and rebuild underutilized areas. There are currently 12 CRAs within Bay County. Out of the \$67.5 million in ad valorem in the General Fund mentioned above, \$12.5 million was paid to CRAs in 2020.

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WHO WE ARE

The Bay County Communications Office is officially a staff of one person; however, with the increased workload since Hurricane Michael in 2018, storm recovery efforts in 2019, and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, this office has relied heavily on assistance from local communicators that comprise the Public Information Network (PIN).

The Bay County Communications Office aims to enhance the community's access to Bay County government both directly through social media and the county's website and also via traditional media outlets. We are responsible for maintaining positive community and media relations through frequent contact and constant availability; preparation and distribution of informational publications; television and print news stories; and through the use of social media outlets. Governmental transparency and integrity is of the utmost importance, and the Communications Office strives to ensure openness and accountability to the media and public.

Providing the public with timely, accurate, important information was critical throughout the challenges of 2020, and the Bay County Communications Office worked to provide information as it became available. The office, with assistance from area public information professionals, created and implemented the "Be a Hero" campaign, the county's bayhealthcovid19.org (and .com) page, and assisted in the orchestration of the AlertBay keyword "BayHealth" for COVID-19 updates.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

- > Collaborated with communicators from public and private agencies from throughout Bay County to coordinate broad response messaging for the COVID-19 pandemic.
- > Created and implemented the "Be a Hero" Campaign, aimed at encouraging members of the public to engage in mitigating behaviors to combat the spread of COVID-19. The campaign included public information ads on:
 - > Television
 - > Radio
 - > Digital (Spotify, Pandora, and YouTube)
 - > Newspaper/print
 - > Billboards
 - > Social media
- > Developed, coordinated, edited, and oversaw the production of the 2020 Annual Report and the 2020 Budget Summary.
- > Coordinated, with assistance from Panama City's Public Information Officer, a 2020 Census media/digital campaign.

employee spotlight

HEATHER KRETZER

While Heather Kretzer is not a Bay County Commission employee, she is a member of the Public Information Network (PIN), comprised of area communicators who, particularly throughout Hurricane Michael and the pandemic, work very closely together to ensure that information to the public flows as seamlessly as possible.

As the Public Information Officer (PIO) for the Florida Department of Health – Bay County, Heather acted as the lead PIO for the COVID-19 response. In that regard, she was responsible for directing the public information efforts of our area's PIN as it related to the pandemic.

The relationships and networking forged throughout the Hurricane Michael response were a tremendous help in the PIN's efforts to communicate about the pandemic, Heather said.

A graduate of Wewahitchka High School, Heather attended Gulf Coast State College and Florida State University, and worked for 17 years at local news station WMBB before taking on the role of PIO at FL-DOH Bay in 2016.

When she's not working, which is rare, Heather enjoys spending time with her husband and two young sons and reading, photography, and running.

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employee spotlight

CRYSTAL OWENS

Building Code Officer Crystal Owens exemplifies what it means to be a “go-getter.” She began working for Bay County in 2009 at entry level as a maintenance custodian, and, after receiving her associates degree from Gulf Coast College in 2016, began working as a receptionist in Builders Services. In 2017, Crystal became a Builders Services permit specialist, while also pursuing her bachelor’s degree in Applied Computer Science at Troy University. In 2018 she graduated and continued her education, receiving an International Code Council (ICC) Building Inspector certification, a Commercial Building Plans Examiner certification, and a Residential Energy Inspector and Plans certification. Crystal has the distinction of being Bay County’s first female Builders Services employee to hold this level of certification, but she’s not planning on stopping there.

“Eventually I hope to be in management, either in Builders Services or anywhere that the county needs me,” she said.

Crystal’s tenacity and talents are not limited to her professional pursuits, however. She is an accomplished bluegrass musician who began playing at age 8 and can play piano, clarinet, guitar, and stand-up bass. She toured with a band until school and work commitments became a priority.

“Now I play mostly for fun,” she said. “I love playing with my granddad. He plays guitar, and I enjoy spending time with him doing what we both love.”



WHO WE ARE

The Builders Services Division consists of Florida-licensed building code officials and staff dedicated to assisting the public in meeting the requirements of the Florida Building Code along with related state laws and local ordinances intended to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

Bay County has made significant progress in its recovery following Hurricane Michael. While we still have a long way to go, our department remains a leader in building safety and compliance.

Builders Services remains committed to helping Bay County and its citizens get back on their feet after many offices and businesses were ordered closed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This proved to be challenging as we are a department that deals largely in paper and face-to-face transactions. After all, building and construction requires hands-on attention. After being required to limit in-person contact our group immediately came up with a drop-box system that quickly filled the gap for permit submittals. While the process was not the same as an ‘in person’ experience, we were able to manage and help keep the recovery and growth moving forward, which is a true testament to hard work and long hours.

Since Oct. 1, 2019 a total of 14,628 permits were issued and 25,498 inspections were completed. Also, 430 new contractors were registered to work in Bay County. Licensing Coordinator Tina Hughes responded to more than 200 complaints for working without permits, unlicensed contractors, and owner complaints. Of the 234 working-without-a-permit cases that Builders Services investigated, 144 were resolved and closed. We continue to work closely with the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation and the Bay County Sheriff’s Office to combat unlicensed contractor activity in Bay County.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

We are pleased to currently have an Insurance Service Office (ISO), Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule (BCEGS) score of 3 for Residential and 2 for Commercial. This scoring matrix is 1-10 with 1 being the top spot.

CONTACT US:

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WHO WE ARE

A Code Enforcement Officer is an agent of the county with the authority to enforce any provision of the Bay County Nuisance Ordinance and Land Development regulations. The division currently consists of eight code enforcement officers, one temporary code enforcement officer, a coordinator, a senior staff assistant, and a manager.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

One year after Hurricane Michael, Code Enforcement began the lengthy process of taking action on more than 1,000 hurricane-damaged properties. Starting in October 2019, Notices of Violation were sent to properties that were severely damaged and showing no signs of improvement. Some 333 properties were successfully brought into compliance by property owners. To accommodate the vast number of properties that remained in violation, Code staff added two more public hearings per month, in addition to the two regularly scheduled Magistrate and Code Enforcement Board hearings. Although the COVID-19 crisis canceled several dates during the year, 166 hurricane-affected properties were presented before a Special Magistrate. As a result of the hearings, the county has demolished and cleaned 44 of these properties; 40 more were brought into compliance by the property owner after the hearing. As the clean-up carries on, Code Enforcement continues to find and address more properties that are deteriorating and posing a threat to our citizens - there are still 706 open Hurricane Michael cases and counting. The recovery will continue for years to come.

After more than 1,000 property owners applied for the Private Property Debris Removal (PPDR) program in FY19, the first PPDR demolition was celebrated on Feb. 14, 2020. A total of 967 properties have been successfully approved by the FEMA, State of Florida, and Bay County-sponsored program to help citizens demolish structures and clear dangerous debris. As of Sept. 30, 2020, the program is 65-percent complete. Code Enforcement staff have assisted Tetra Tech, the disaster recovery contractor assigned this lofty task, with property research, building inspections, asbestos surveys, applicant assistance, contractor coordination, and FEMA arrangements.

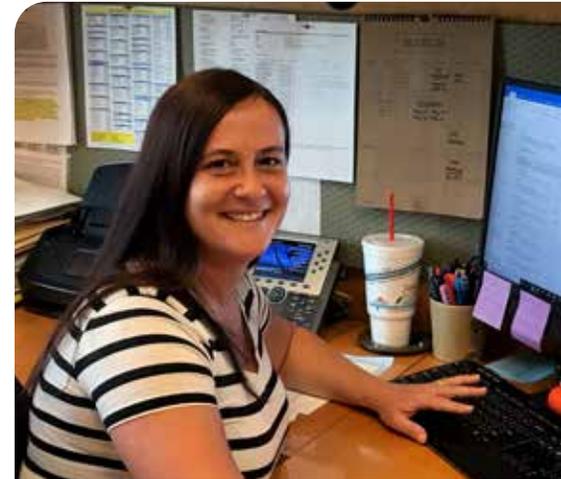
The staff operates as two teams - Team Code Enforcement and Team Hurricane Michael. Conventional code enforcement has continued as normal and occasionally in tandem with Hurricane Michael cases. Some 2,060 non-hurricane related code enforcement cases were opened in FY20. Of those, 97 were heard before the Special Magistrate and the Code Enforcement Board.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- > Three staff members passed the Florida Association of Code Enforcement (FACE) Fundamentals certification exam - all officers and support staff now have two or more certifications.
- > As members of the Panhandle Association of Code Enforcement (PAOCE), the local chapter of FACE, donated \$500 to Hurricane Michael relief efforts. Three staff members serve on the PAOCE board.

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employee spotlight

SUZIE KOGOT

Ever wonder who that cheerful person is that answers the phone when you call Code Enforcement? Well, since 2014, it is no other than our own Suzie Kogot! Suzie grew up in Pittsburgh, PA, has lived up and down the East Coast, and is enjoying her second time living in the Florida Panhandle. She loves everything Pittsburgh (especially sports), everything crafts, and everything animals. She and her husband typically have no fewer than 10 pets or fosters at any given time, ranging from dogs and cats, to lizards, snakes, toads, and turtles. While living in Maryland, Suzie worked at the Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, her ultimate dream workplace, as the sales manager and board liaison. Needless to say, her love of animals gives her that special ability to make everyone feel special.

At the office, Suzie is responsible for ensuring all legal requirements, documents, and deadlines are satisfied. With the additional cases from Hurricane Michael, this has been no small task. As our longest-tenured Code team member, her experience certainly keeps the "Code Enforcement Zoo" from being unbearable.





employee spotlight

TIM SMITH

Planning Manager Tim Smith joined the Planning Division in August 2019 with more than 15 years experience as a planner in the public and private sector. A native of Tallahassee with family throughout the Panhandle, he is happy to be back home. The new development in Bay County and constant rebuilding from Hurricane Michael has kept him working on many different projects.

Tim served as an officer in the Coast Guard Reserve for nine years, completing two active-duty tours. During one of these tours he was assigned in this area supervising beach cleanup operations during the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. Although initially disappointed in being recalled to active duty only to essentially be sent home to work, he was very happy to be working alongside Coasties from Alaska and California to clean up this area he loves so much. He has a circus at home with four kids, a dog, cats, and Grandma.

Tim loves fishing and the water, and his hobby is wooden boatbuilding. He has built two wooden boats from scratch and recently restored a classic Mako offshore boat, replacing the original transom design with an integrated full transom bracket.

WHO WE ARE

The Planning Division's mission is to affect an orderly and efficient growth pattern that promotes economic development and enhances the environment, aesthetics, and quality of life in Bay County.

The division is staffed by certified planners, a Florida-registered professional civil engineer, a certified floodplain manager, a senior planner, and an administrative coordinator dedicated to providing quality examination and review of new development projects for the citizens of Bay County. We also manage requests for sign permits, conditional use permits, variances, and land-use and zoning changes.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

The Planning Division had another busy and challenging year. Our workload remained higher than normal with continued effects of Hurricane Michael, and we also adapted to continue providing public service during the COVID-19 pandemic. Like the rest of the world, the COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted the way we conducted business and served the public.

Key efforts implemented by the Planning Division to ensure continuity of service included:

- > Holding Planning Commission meetings in the County Commission Chambers so attendees could have ample room for social distancing.
- > Placing a drop box outside the building where applicants could drop off applications and plans for review and we could place signed documents for their pickup.
- > Holding pre-application and other meetings with applicants via teleconference or the internet.

These three key changes were instrumental in allowing us to continue providing full services during the height of the pandemic. With the county offices reopening to the public during Florida's Phase II reopening plan, we installed protective barriers at our customer service desk allowing in-person service to resume in a manner safe for our staff and the public.

With long-term recovery from Hurricane Michael ongoing, our division continued to see an increased amount of development applications and reviews when compared to pre-hurricane levels. We received and reviewed approximately 45 percent more development order applications in FY2020 than in both FY2019 and FY2018. The number of low-impact development reviews we reviewed in support of the Builders Services Division also continued to increase to 2,429 in FY2020 from 2,304 in FY2019 and 1,673 in FY2018.

The Planning Division also reviews and oversees the process where applications to change the land use and zoning are considered by the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners. We also saw a large increase in the number of these applications in FY2020 with the number of small-scale land use and zone changes both tripling in number from FY2019 to FY2020.

The number of phone call customers served by the Planning Division in FY2020 at 9,378 slightly tapered off the high of 10,502 customers served following Hurricane Michael in FY2019. This 9,378 is still a 23-percent increase in the number served compared to FY2018, the last pre-hurricane reporting period.

Though Bay County did not sustain a direct hit from Hurricane Sally, that storm greatly affected our area by delivering more than 40 inches of rain over a six-day period. This heavy rain event resulted in localized flooding and standing water across the county. Planning staff answered a large amount of calls and conducted many site visits in response to these concerns.

The Planning Division also participated in development of the Bay-Walton Sector Plan, the Compatible Land Use Study with Tyndall Air Force Base and the Bay County Transportation Planning Organization's 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan.

CONTACT US:

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alertbay - emergency notification system

stay prepared in an
emergency.

When disaster strikes, how will you and your family be notified? Protect yourself and your loved ones in Bay County by signing up for **AlertBay Emergency Notifications.**

**ALERTBAY: A MASS NOTIFICATION SYSTEM**

In Bay County, we use AlertBay, a partnership with the State of Florida's Division of Emergency Management and the AlertFlorida mass notification system, to keep our citizens and visitors informed. The system is extremely valuable in keeping residents, visitors, government staff, and emergency personnel safe and in-the-know with quick and reliable emergency notifications and public safety announcements about a range of events, such as severe weather, fires, floods, active shooters, or other emergencies. Messages are sent to residents on their preferred contact paths—cell phone, SMS text messaging, home phone, email, and more—to ensure real-time access to potentially lifesaving information. The program is funded entirely by the state, saving Bay County taxpayers more than \$100,000 annually.

AlertBay has certainly come in handy over the last couple of years during protracted emergency events such as Hurricane Michael and the pandemic. In FY20, AlertBay issued more than 1,430 notifications between the county, municipalities, law enforcement, and the school district. Users were able to text keyword "Bayhealth" to 888777 to get regular updates about the COVID-19, including testing sites, mitigation efforts, and updates on cases. Some 384 keyword messages were issued.

To ensure notification when a specific location in Bay County is threatened by an event or severe weather, simply register an address and contact information into an AlertBay profile, available at www.alertbay.org. Users may set up a separate profile for each person in a household to ensure that each person gets the message. Once a message is confirmed, the system will not make any further contact about the event.

With multiple ways to subscribe, the free Everbridge app is the recommended way to receive alerts from AlertBay, as it allows alerts from throughout the state of Florida.

AlertBay is a partnership between the Bay County Commission, the Bay County Sheriff's Office, local municipalities, and the school district, enabling each entity to send out emergency calls specific to their citizens and visitors.

Visitors to Bay County can subscribe to AlertBay by texting the keyword **ALERTBAY** to **888777**, and opt in to receive important alerts during their stay.

**FIND US ON FACEBOOK
 @ BAYCOUNTYFLEMERGENCYSERVICES**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT
 ALERTBAY OR FOR HELP REGISTERING,
 CONTACT BAY COUNTY EMERGENCY
 SERVICES AT (850) 248-6040.**

emergency management



employee spotlight

ERIC KUNZMAN

Emergency Management Planner Eric Kunzman was born in St. Petersburg, FL and lived in Clearwater, FL until he joined the Air Force in September 2000. Public service is in his blood; his mother was a sergeant for the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, and his father worked in parking enforcement for the Clearwater Police Department.

One of Eric's hobbies is furniture making. He has built numerous pieces of furniture for his home. Other passions include hunting, fishing, hiking, and outdoor activities with his wife and teenage son.

Eric joined the Air Force in 2000. In 2006, he entered the Air Force Fire Academy where he graduated first in his class. Eric obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in fire administration and a master's in emergency management. He was a member of the Air Force Fire and Emergency Services where he rose through the ranks to become an assistant chief of Operations, assistant chief of Health and Safety, and Center for Public Safety Excellence Accreditation manager for his department.

During his 20 years of service, Eric deployed eight times in support of the War on Terrorism and various other operations across the globe. Eric also held positions in the Emergency Operations Center and as an exercise evaluator and subject matter expert for the Inspector General Office at Fairchild AFB, WA. He has received multiple campaign and service medals including the Air Force Commendation Medal three times.

WHO WE ARE

Emergency Management is responsible for coordinating the emergency preparedness efforts of the county. We provide assistance to local jurisdictions and county agencies before, during, and after disaster strikes.

Our department manages the Emergency Operations Center, which facilitates planning and aid in the aftermath of a disaster. The center is made up of a staff of professionals and liaisons from area public safety agencies, non-governmental organizations, schools, military partners, and other key community stakeholders.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

- > Bay County is home to 10 WeatherSTEM solar-powered weather-monitoring systems. These aid emergency management officials in preparing, planning for, and responding to weather events. The units are rated for 185-mph winds, solar powered, and provide such data points as past, current, and forecasted conditions, temperature, lightning strikes, barometric readings, rainfall rates and wind speed. WeatherSTEM offers mobile apps for iOS and Android, and the camera feeds for all units are available at <https://bay.weatherstem.com>.
- > Bay County Emergency Management staff worked closely with local municipalities to update and adopt a new Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) Plan in September 2020. FEMA requires local governments to develop and adopt such hazard mitigation plans as a condition for receiving certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for mitigation projects. On Sept. 14, 2020, Hurricane Sally made landfall in Alabama. Heavy rain from the hurricane caused significant flooding in parts of Bay County that impacted multiple homeowners, municipalities, and businesses.
- > Since the federal disaster declaration for Hurricane Sally, Bay County residents have received approximately \$9.8 million in total federal funds. Some 233 homeowners and renters were approved for more than \$1.1 million in federal grants through FEMA's Individuals and Households Program. This includes more than \$877,000 in Housing Assistance grants for housing repair costs, home replacement and rental payments and more than \$288,000 in Other Needs Assistance grants to replace essential household items and for other critical disaster-related costs.
- > In August, Bay County Emergency Management opened COVID-19 testing sites to meet the needs of our citizens. More than 50,000 tests were provided at no charge to our residents.
- > Emergency Management also worked in conjunction with the Florida Department of Health in Bay County and the Bay County Library to open and staff a Citizen's Information Center.
- > Bay County received the Everbridge 2019 Critical Event Management Impact Award for Hurricane Michael. This award program recognizes organizations and individuals for their inspiring, creative, and innovative use of Everbridge platforms for life safety and business continuity initiatives.

Bay County Logistics for COVID-19:

- > EOC Logistics handled and distributed the equivalent of seven full-length tractor trailers of personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing equipment, or 155 pallets.
- > PPE was distributed to 18 nursing homes, assisted living, and long-term care facilities, plus three hospitals during the peak of state and federal support for the PPE supply chain.

Bay County Hurricane Michael:

- > Bay County Logistics transported more than 100,000 pounds of food for Rebuild Bay County Inc. for event drives.
- > Logistics supported an out-of-state mission to Dothan, AL to retrieve approximately 14 pallets worth of furniture and mattresses. Rebuild Bay County used the furniture to move hurricane-displaced residents back into St. Andrews Towers on Harrison Ave.

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WHO WE ARE

The Bay County Communications Division oversees county operations of the 9-1-1 call center. We are co-located with the Bay County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) at the Emergency Operations Center. The call center is continuously staffed to field emergency and non-emergency calls from our citizens and visitors.

Because emergencies happen any time of day, our communications operators are always ready to take calls. We are responsible for all 9-1-1 medical and fire calls in Bay County. We also dispatch after-hours for Bay County Animal Control, Roads and Bridges, Traffic Engineering, Utilities, and the American Red Cross.

Our telecommunication operators are highly trained to handle extremely serious and stressful calls. Many callers who use 9-1-1 services are experiencing what they would consider the worst day of their lives. It is the job of our communications operators to get them the help and resources they need.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

Additional Staff

As call volume continues to increase, the Communications Division worked with the BCSO to add six 9-1-1 call takers. These call takers answer all calls into the call center. After determining basic information on the nature of the emergency and where services are needed, 9-1-1 call takers then transfer callers to the correct emergency provider. Our 9-1-1 call takers are the logistical experts of the system, as they are responsible for expeditiously answering and transferring all calls that come in requesting emergency services.

These call takers allow our telecommunicators to focus on dispatching the help needed and to ensure our field crews have the information and resources to respond safely and efficiently. Hundreds of calls flow into our call center daily; our fuller staff allows us to improve upon the already excellent emergency response we provide to our communities.

Public Safety Communication System Upgrade

The Bay County Public Safety Communication System is responsible for providing county-wide public safety two-way radio communications, fire alert paging, radio dispatch console systems, and microwave linking systems for the entire county. The current analog system is being upgraded to a \$13 million digital system that provides more coverage and faster response times. The project is funded through a partnership with local municipalities and from a portion of traffic fines.

In 2012, new communication standards were issued by the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO). These standards, known as Project 25 (P25), were established to address compatibility of communication systems nationwide. The goal of P25 is to enable public safety responders to communicate with each other and, thus, achieve enhanced coordination, timely response, and efficient and effective use of communications equipment.

Our upgrade to P25 ensures that Bay County will be able to meet the interoperability and mutual aid needs of our first responders and our public safety partners within and outside of Bay County well into the future. The upgrade delivers portable radio coverage within Bay County and extends three miles into adjacent counties, providing solid and reliable communications capabilities that were not present in the old system. The P25 upgrade has the added benefit to the end user of both reduced costs and increased flexibility and choice.

The upgrade is slated to be complete in March of 2021.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- > Telecommunicator Brandi Tew was awarded Bay County Chamber of Commerce 9-1-1 Responder of the Year for her mentoring and training efforts for both the county and the Bay County Sheriff's Office.
- > Also, 9-1-1 Coordinator Lesil Taylor was awarded the The Eye Center of Northwest Florida Lasik for Heroes award and a free custom Lasik procedure for her work with the county's 9-1-1 system.



employee spotlight

ALEX PEARCE

Telecommunications Operator Alex Pearce is the epitome of resilience and determination. Alex began his career with Bay County Fire Rescue in October 2011. Alex was inspired to obtain his EMT and paramedic certifications and was stationed at Sand Hills Fire Department. Unfortunately, Alex was sidelined by a back injury in 2018.

Alex was scheduled for corrective surgery in October 2018. Unable to undergo surgery due to the approach of Hurricane Michael and having already lost the ability to walk, Alex was forced to ride out the hurricane in his home. His injuries worsened as he helped his family leave after landfall.

Alex was evacuated from Bay County by air ambulance and received emergency surgery for his severe spinal injury. After several months of inpatient recovery and intensive physical therapy in Atlanta, he was able to learn to walk again and regain his sense of independence.

While he continued his recovery, Alex was assigned to our 9-1-1 call center where he has flourished as a telecommunication operator. His emergency services family has cheered his progress as he has fully regained his mobility.

Alex will always miss the fire service but his perspective has changed after his injury. The chance for re-injury is simply too great. He is grateful for the little things, including being able to play with and carry his young son, Lucas.

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emergency medical services (ems)



employee spotlight

LAURA KERR

Emergency Medical Technician Laura Kerr spent years learning and competing in Irish and Scottish dance. During her competitive years of Irish dancing she was ranked top three in the region, 12th in the nation and 32nd in the world! Laura also began to teach Scottish dancing, known as Highland dance, for free in her home to any children who wanted to learn. She hoped to continue to pass on the Scottish heritage here in Bay County.

After graduating from high school, Laura moved to Scotland to pursue a career in Irish dance. She lived there for seven years, touring the world professionally as an Irish dancer. Laura decided she wanted to continue to pass on her heritage. At the age of 25 she became a certified Irish dance instructor, and in 2017 Laura opened her own dance studio located at Roberts Hall in Lynn Haven. A year later, Laura and a group of instructors opened the Carpenter Academy of Irish Dance. They have five locations across Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida.

Laura is a part of the Bay County EMS Honor Guard and plays the bagpipes during ceremonies as well as in the community. Her father was a member of the original Panama City Pipes and Drums which formed in her kitchen in 1998. She has been playing the bagpipes since she was nine years old.

Laura graduated from EMT school in 2019 and began working with Bay County the same year. Laura is also attending Gulf Coast State College to achieve her paramedic certification.

WHO WE ARE

Bay County Emergency Medical Services Division (EMS) is a state-licensed Advanced Life Support (paramedic level) service. We answer all 9-1-1 emergency calls for service throughout Bay County, including the municipalities of Callaway, Lynn Haven, Panama City, Panama City Beach, Parker, and Springfield, along with the unincorporated portions of Bay County such as Southport, West Bay, Bayou George, Youngstown, and Fountain.

Working in conjunction with our municipal and county first-responder fire department and law-enforcement partners, Bay County EMS answers nearly 30,000 calls for service each year.

We provide emergency care, treatment, and transport for incidents such as heart attacks, strokes, illness, traumatic injuries, vehicle accidents, water rescues, industrial incidents, and rescues and structure fires in support of our fire department partners. We more than 70 Florida-licensed EMTs and paramedics operating under the medical direction of Dr. Linda Fox. EMS operates between seven and 10 mobile intensive-care ambulances along with field operations command staff 24 hours a day, seven days a week from eight strategically placed stations located throughout Bay County.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

The dynamic of emergency response for medical care changed drastically during 2020. The emergence of COVID-19 in Bay County, while still recovering from Hurricane Michael, proved difficult; however, it is during these difficult times that our EMTs and paramedics shine.

Changes to personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements during responses to 9-1-1 calls were mandated by Medical Director Dr. Linda Fox. EMTs and paramedics were instructed to wear gloves, eye protection, N-95 masks, and gowns for all potential and confirmed COVID-19 patients.

Fire department personnel engineered a disinfectant sprayer to assist with ambulance decontamination post transport. The sprayer was adapted to fit a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) so that EMS personnel could spray surgical room-quality disinfectant on all surfaces of the ambulance as well as equipment on the ambulance to minimize contamination.

During these difficult times, EMS personnel maintained their professionalism and exemplary patient care skills. Knowing their work was essential and that they were at risk at every moment of their day did not deter them from responding with grace and compassion. As we continue to navigate through life during this pandemic, EMS will continue to support Bay County in every way.

- Despite college campus changes as well as hospital clinical procedure changes, in July of 2020, Bay County EMS had seven employees graduate from the paramedic program at Gulf Coast State College. This program is a strenuous three-semester program that is offered once a year, beginning every fall. The program involves clinical rotations not only on the ambulance, but in the operating room, emergency room, catheterization lab, labor and delivery, pediatrics unit, and a respiratory rotation. Congratulations to Bobby Birdsell, James Gillam-Jenkins, Drew Hilliard, Meredith Lee, David Lerner, Taylor Smith, and Lindsey Wooden on this accomplishment.

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emergency medical services (ems)

- > Our paramedics and EMTs constantly train to provide the best pre-hospital treatment possible. Throughout the year, we hosted numerous internal training courses, while still maintaining COVID-19 restriction requirements. Several of our employees are certified instructors, which saves the taxpayers thousands of dollars annually.
- > In September, EMS instructors hosted a prehospital trauma life support course. This 16-hour certification course covers topics such as the treatment of injuries related to breathing, ventilation, circulation, hemorrhage, and shock. Providers are also reminded of the special circumstances involving children and senior adults during treatment. Patient simulations allow for a hands-on approach for students to learn.
- > Refresher courses were provided for advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) as well as basic life support (BLS). EMTs and paramedics are required to renew their respective certifications in each of these disciplines every two years. The ACLS course reviews the treatment of cardiac arrest, stroke, myocardial infarction, and other life-threatening cardiovascular emergencies. The BLS course reviews the skills needed to provide cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) for all patients from infants to senior adults.
- > In September, several members of the EMS supervisory staff provided training to local fire departments including prehospital trauma life support for first responders to the Panama City Fire Department and ambulance familiarization training to Springfield Fire Rescue. Providing training to fire departments in Bay County improves the service level of these responders, which in turn, improves patient care outcomes.
- > Nine new Stryker stair chairs were placed in service on the ambulances to facilitate easier access to patient extrication from their homes. The new design of the stair chair lessens the amount of lifting needed to move a patient down a flight of stairs. The new stair chair allows EMS personnel to do their jobs safely and provide a better experience for our patients.
- > We continue to participate in community events, including medical standbys for high school football games. The "#FridayNightLights" campaign is popular on the Bay County, FL Emergency Services Facebook page. Bay County EMS also participates in high profile standby events such as the Ironman and Gulf Coast triathlon.
- > Several EMS personnel participated in training at local schools throughout the year. Training includes visits to local schools to "show-and-tell" all things related to EMS. Students were allowed the opportunity to climb inside the ambulance, watch stretcher operations, and learn about patient vital signs, including blood pressure, respirations, and heart rates. In March, fifth graders at Bozeman school rotated through three different stations to learn the ins-and-outs of being a paramedic. They were shown many different things from CPR and cardiac monitors to bleeding control and first-aid.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- > Chief Danny Page was selected by Florida First Lady Casey DeSantis to assist in her initiative to improve mental health resources for first responders in Florida. Chief Page has long been an advocate for critical incident stress management (CISM) for our employees and other first responders in Bay County. Chief Page will continue to leverage this position to help first responders in Bay County and beyond. "I am honored to have been chosen to participate in this important effort to assist first responders in coping with the challenges that life and work present," Page said. "Bay County has a record of making mental health resources available to county employees, and I am grateful to have an opportunity to help my colleagues here and throughout the state as we all work to navigate the unique challenges presented in our line of work."
- > Lieutenants Jessica Lundeen and Gina Salaty, as well as Training Captain Bridgette Whately, were honored by Girls Inc. of Bay County in their #WorkLikeAGirl campaign. Girls Inc. representatives took the COVID-19 pandemic and turned it into a positive by spotlighting essential female workers on the front lines. The stories of each of these ladies' backgrounds and their advice to young girls were posted on the Girls Inc. of Bay County Facebook page.
- > In November, during the Bay County Chamber of Commerce First Responder Appreciation Luncheon held at the FSU-PC Holley Center, Paramedic Kelly Guillory was named "Responder of the year" for her outreach and donations to Waller Elementary School.





employee spotlight

BOB & MEGAN LAVERY

It is not uncommon for a family to have several generations of firefighters. Usually a child follows in a parent or grandparent's footsteps. Our department has a father-daughter duo, Bob and Megan Lavery, where the opposite is true.

Firefighter Engineer/Paramedic Megan Lavery is a talented employee who began her career as a volunteer with BCFR. Megan has been in emergency services since 2013 and obtained her EMT, firefighter, and paramedic certifications through the Division of Public Safety at Gulf Coast State College. She holds the distinction of being BCFR's first female firefighter engineer.

Megan is happiest when giving back to her community. She is one of the first to sign up for open shifts in both the fire and EMS divisions and shines in public outreach events. Firefighter Bob Lavery is a fixture within our department and serves as the volunteer coordinator for the Sand Hills District. He is often first on first on the scene for structure or wildland fires. He ensures that our volunteers receive the same level of training as career personnel and meet the same high expectations of all county employees.

WHO WE ARE

Bay County Fire Services serves the rural and suburban unincorporated areas of Bay County responding to structure and wildland fires as well as first responder calls in assistance to Bay County Emergency Medical Services. Bay County Fire Rescue has Advanced Life Support (ALS) engines at three stations for quick response to the Sand Hills, West End, Youngstown and Fountain districts.

Bay County Fire Services responds to mutual aid and automatic aid calls with county municipal fire departments. The Bay County Hazardous Materials Team is operated by Fire Services and responds throughout the region to assist fire departments and law enforcement agencies with hazardous materials issues. BCFR consists of 65 career personnel and 35 volunteers. BCFR occupies 13 stations in unincorporated Bay County.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

Sprung Fire Stations

When Category 5 Hurricane Michael ripped through Bay County on Oct. 11, 2018, the blow it dealt the small Florida Panhandle community was stunning in its severity. The storm - the third-strongest on record to reach U.S. shores - killed more than two dozen people, caused more than \$1 billion in property damage, and left thousands of people homeless.

For Bay County government, the storm totally destroyed eight public buildings, at a value of approximately \$12 million, and damaged many others. Three Bay County fire stations were among those considered a total loss.

Enter Sprung Structures, a Utah-based company that specializes in tension fabric membrane structures aimed at providing durable, functional, rapid, and economical solutions to construction problems. The technology has been embraced by manufacturing giants such as Elon Musk at a Fremont, CA-based Tesla assembly plant and Amazon-founder Jeff Bezos' Kent, WA space exploration headquarters.

Tyndall Air Force Base (TAFB) was decimated by Hurricane Michael; the storm's eyewall passed directly over the base, damaging or destroying some 1,200 buildings and leaving the base's future in uncertain territory. But in February 2019 the federal government pledged \$3 billion over five years to construct "the installation of the future" that includes the erection of more than two dozen Sprung buildings so far.

Tyndall's projects so impressed county officials that they pursued replacing two of the destroyed fire stations with portable structures. At \$1.5 million each, Sprung was the low bidder, and in just under three months, once construction began in February 2020, the county's firefighters were finally able to return to work at their stations full time.

Command Vehicle

For many years local first responder agencies have needed a resource for mobile response. A barricaded shooter event and Hurricane Michael brought the need to the forefront. Through a partnership with the Bay County Sheriff's Office and using funds from fire impact fees, a state-of-the-art mobile unified command vehicle was purchased. The Bay County Sheriff's Office matched county funds.

The vehicle is equipped to respond to emergencies such as woods fires, hazardous materials incidents, structure fires, or law enforcement incidents. The vehicle can arrive on the scene within minutes during an emergency. The vehicle is also deployed in support of large-scale planned events such as the Gulf Coast Jam or the IRONMAN Florida triathlons.

The vehicle serves as a mobile emergency operations center for both emergency and planned events. The vehicle is compatible with the county 9-1-1 system, allowing telecommunicators to deploy with the vehicle and maintain communication with police, fire, and other rescue operations. It also has a conference room with multimedia computer capabilities where area public information officers can assemble and share critical information to the media and the public.

Wildfires

The devastation of Hurricane Michael has created a wildfire threat that will linger for years to come. Three million acres of trees were decimated in the counties impacted by the storm. While county, state, and federal efforts are ongoing to remove debris, branches, tree tops,

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and other vegetative matter, debris continues to pose increased fire threats to our county. The sheer amount of vegetative debris has caused fire officials to adapt their wildland fire-fighting tactics. Simply accessing a wildfire is time-consuming and exhausting. Crews have to remove debris or cut fire lines through countless fallen trees before they can begin to fight the wildfire.

Additionally, the Florida Forest Service (FFS) estimates that there is more than 10 times more fuel per acre to sustain wildfires than before the storm. As a result, it takes more time and personnel to control wildfires since the storm. Wildfires that were once quickly contained now become threats to life and property.

A prime example of this increased wildfire threat was in May of 2020 with the Winter Hill Fire. Named for a nearby road, this fire quickly went from a small acreage fire to 120 acres. While FFS and BCFR crews quickly established protection lines for homes, residents were forced to evacuate as a precaution. Crews battled the fire for almost a week.

We are proud that no homes were damaged and all residents returned home safely. The outpouring of gratitude from these residents was humbling. We continue to adapt to the wildland challenges from the hurricane through training and planning.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

COVID-19 Decontamination System

Several Bay County firefighters identified a need for swift decontamination measures to mitigate and prevent the spread of COVID-19 to our first responders and patients. Bay County crews assembled an air bottle with a spray attachment to quickly disinfect ambulances after every medical run. With EMS averaging about 100 calls a day, it was critical that the devices be quick and efficient.

The device uses a hospital-grade disinfectant which is non-corrosive and safe for use on electronics. The devices quickly became popular among other agencies with firefighters training local departments on how to assemble and use them. Included in the training was the Bay County Sheriff's Office for their vehicles and on a much larger scale, jail operations.

In addition to its use decontaminating ambulances between calls, the device is used to regularly decontaminate fire and EMS stations and the 9-1-1 call center. Thanks to the ingenuity of Capt. Gabriel Moschella and Firefighters Michael Ashmore, Brandon Luczaj, and Mike Jorgenson, we were able to keep our department healthy.

The devices received local and national media coverage. We were happy to share the instructions for the device with numerous fire departments across the country.

Dogs for Dispatch

In September of 2020, a particularly heartbreaking call was received by our dispatchers regarding an infant who had died after being left in a hot car. At the time, Firefighter Alan Ford was serving in a light duty capacity in the Emergency Operations Center. Having heard about the call and subsequent heartache the dispatchers felt, Firefighter Ford jumped into action and "Dogs for Dispatch" was born. Firefighter Ford retrieved his furry friend, Clementine, a 1-year-old Golden Retriever, and let her visit the dispatchers. Clementine offered sloppy kisses and warm fuzzy hugs to brighten spirits and boost morale.

The "Dogs for Dispatch" program has grown and now consists of seven dogs, including Clementine, who visit our dispatchers regularly, both day and night shifts, to lend a loving paw. The program has also expanded to not only dispatchers, but other first responders who may have had a difficult call. Even though Firefighter Ford is back to full duty, he is still running the program and actively recruiting new pups to make their dispatch debuts.

The program received national media attention and Clementine is a star in her own right, having been featured in Twitter campaigns by fire apparatus manufacturer, Pierce Manufacturing.





employee spotlight

STEVEN CARTER

Each employee at Bay County Animal Control was affected by COVID-19, both at work and at home. All employees at one point found themselves quarantined at home due to possible exposure to the virus, and all have made full recoveries.

After Hurricane Michael, BCAC Supervisor Steven Carter was displaced and moved back to his home county next door in Washington County, though he continued to serve Bay County with pride. Still reeling from the effects of Hurricane Michael, when COVID-19 threatened to change life once again, Steven stepped up to meet the need.

In 2020 Steven was promoted to his supervisory position, where he intends to use the skills learned through experiencing the hurricane and subsequent pandemic and pass them on to the team of officers now under his supervision.

"I would not be where I am, with the level of success I have seen, if it had not been for God, my family at home, and the amazing family that I am a part of at Bay County Animal Control," he said.

Outside of Animal Control Steven is often found surrounded by friends or serving at his local church where he is on a team of ministers tasked with teaching and seeing to the needs of the congregation. Despite the pandemic, Steven continues to seek opportunities to grow and help carry his team forward to a bright, safe, and successful future.



WHO WE ARE

Bay County Animal Control is responsible for protecting the public's health and safety and enforcing Florida state statutes and Bay County ordinances related to animal issues and owners' responsibility for animals. Services are provided to all of the municipalities in Bay County, except the City of Lynn Haven, through interlocal agreements. Our goal is to protect the interests of animals, owners, and non-owners alike.

We are also responsible for the operations of Bay County's only open-admission animal shelter where all stray, unowned, and owned animals are accepted. We provide daily care for these animals while working to reunite them with their owners or find them a new home. Our shelter serves as the location for all Animal Control operations.

The Animal Control Division has 16 staff members, all of whom are trained to handle any of the tasks related to our operations.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

In light of 2020's COVID-19 and Hurricane Sally, our division had to operate outside of our normal protocols while working to maintain public health and safety.

- > COVID-19 caused the closure of the Bay County Animal Control shelter as we evaluated how to best serve the community and provide a safe environment for the public, our staff, and the many animals in our care.
- > During the closure of county offices, staff continued to report for work to care for the animals at the shelter. Animal Control officers continued to respond to calls for service to assist with animal-related issues and maintain a community presence. Social distancing and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines required revisions to keep everyone safe.

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- > While the shelter campus remained closed to the public, staff seized the opportunity to update the facility. This included a new, modern look to the lobby and extra structures for the dogs in the walking parks, such as tunnels, a teeter-totter, and hurdles.
- > Animal Control quickly implemented an appointment-only schedule that allowed for serving the community while maintaining social distancing and CDC guidelines. Thanks to citizen cooperation, this appointment schedule has seen great success in managing the population of animals at the shelter and maintaining staff health.
- > Despite precautions and efforts taken to continue a "normal as possible" routine, Animal Control recognized that innovative programs would be needed to find homes for the animals in their care. This brought on the beginning of many regularly scheduled adoption events.
- > The first scheduled event would prove that not only were the citizens of Bay County ready and willing to open their homes, but others animal lovers from as far away as Boston, MA would fly down and camp out overnight to adopt a new family member.
- > Adoption events continued weekly, resulting in regular adoption of the majority of available animals, sometimes prior to the advertised close of the event.
- > In the midst of managing the chaos created by COVID-19, our community felt the effects of Hurricane Sally. Animal Control officers continued to work the roads of Bay County right up to and immediately after the storms had passed, helping to ensure the safety of the public and animals.

For Bay County Animal Control, 2020 was a year of learning and adaptation. We intend to use what we learned and the unique skill sets developed because of adversity to better serve Bay County. Thanks to Hurricane Michael, Hurricane Sally, and now COVID-19, Bay County Animal Control will never look the same.





employee spotlight

EDDIE BOZEMAN

Eddie Bozeman started as a parks worker with Bay County in June 1996. For 24 years, his continual dedication and work ethic has been an inspiration to his co-workers and supervisory staff. Eddie's skills and knowledge of ballfield maintenance, irrigation, and tournament procedures are a real asset to the division and he is typically the first to volunteer his time and energy to ensure the success of an event.

Following the aftermath of Hurricane Michael, Eddie put the needs of the county before his personal needs. Like many in the community, Eddie lost his home and a few months later his beloved brother. With the extreme amount of debris Solid Waste received after the storm, Eddie was reassigned to the Solid Waste Division, never complaining about his workload and long hours. After several months, Eddie returned to the Parks and Recreation Department with a smile and enthusiastic attitude.

The COVID-19 pandemic created new challenges for everyone. As essential workers, Parks employees continued our duties, providing the community an outlet from home confinement via walking trails, playgrounds, and outdoor spaces. Eddie maintained a clear understanding of how crucial this basic need has been for providing a safe outlet for the community. He continued the upkeep and safety measures of our parks, playgrounds, and ballfields. We are proud that Eddie is part of our team and of the Parks and Recreation Division family.



WHO WE ARE

The Bay County Parks and Recreation Division provides recreational services and facilities for use by Bay County citizens and visitors. The division is tasked with the maintenance and operations of 26 recreational and athletic parks, 21 boat ramps, 10 canoe/kayak launches, 44 beach accesses, the M.B. Miller County Pier, and the Bay County Shooting Range. The Bay County Parks and Recreation Division works diligently to understand the recreational needs of the citizens of Bay County and through community outreach and input, planning, and project development, ensures that these needs are fulfilled.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

During 2020, the Bay County Parks and Recreation Division has continued its recovery from the damages caused by Hurricane Michael which devastated the county's park facilities in October of 2018. Hurricane repair projects included new fencing, backstops, and LED athletic field lighting at both Hiland Park Recreational Complex and Harder's Park. Also, several hurricane-damaged boat landings and docks received extensive repairs. Listed below are some of our other highlights:

- > Installed new floating docks at Safari, Quail, Shoreline, and Highpoint ramps and a stationary dock at Dolphin boat ramp.
- > All baseball and softball field infields have been reworked and are maintained year round by in-house staff to ensure safety and optimum playability.
- > The McElvey Skate Park received a major renovation through a joint effort between Earnest Watkins Construction, who donated labor for the project, and the Bay County Parks and Recreation Division.
- > Fully redesigned the Disc Golf Course at Majette, which is now nicknamed the Monster at Majette by disc golf enthusiasts.
- > Geocaches are installed in many parks for visitors to find.
- > A rodeo arena has been constructed at the Youngstown/Fountain Recreational Complex and was the site of this year's Shriners Rodeo event.
- > The M.B. Miller Pier remained operational for fishing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- > The Bay County Parks and Recreation Division's lifeguard staff monitored the beaches at M.B. Miller Pier and Rick Seltzer Park with no fatalities during the summer of 2020.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Recreation Division Manager Travis Barbee was selected as a speaker for the Florida Parks and Recreation Association Conference held in Orlando, FL.

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WHO WE ARE

Bay County Facilities Management provides maintenance and support to the buildings and departments under the purview of the Bay County Board of County Commissioners. Facilities maintains/manages 110 buildings/structures totaling 1.2 million square feet. Services provided by Facilities Management include large/small building improvements, routine and preventive building maintenance, custodial services, project management, and grounds maintenance.

Facilities Management is dedicated to the enhancement of our customers' working environment while remaining good stewards of the facilities that serve Bay County citizens.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

In addition to our normal daily maintenance operations, Facilities Management continued Hurricane Michael recovery efforts by completing more than \$30 million in permanent repairs to county properties. Further challenging Facilities Management this year was the COVID-19 pandemic. In an effort to minimize the threat of COVID-19, Facilities Management took several recommended actions to protect both our employees and the public. In addition to the recommended social distancing and mask wearing, we executed sanitizing services and preventive treatment contracts for multiple key facilities. Additionally, Facilities purchased body temperature kiosks to monitor the health of employees and the public accessing county facilities. Our staff has once again risen to the occasion and has been integral to providing the great service Bay County residents have become accustomed to receiving.

Storm Recovery Efforts:

- > Completed replacement of the jail's 260,000-square-foot roof, 62 HVAC units and associated ductwork, the fire protection system, and perimeter fencing, lighting, and camera systems. (\$1.75 million)
- > Completed Council on Aging Annex roof replacement and interior repairs. (\$73,400)
- > State Attorney/Public Defender building - replaced 52 storm-damaged windows. (\$17,500)
- > 225 McKenzie - replaced 11,870 SF standing seam metal roof. (\$149,900)
- > Sheriff's Office Substations - helicopter hanger and Camp Flowers shooting range post-storm repairs. (\$102,000)
- > Completed Animal Control post-storm exterior repairs. (\$58,500)
- > Completed East Bay Fire Station post-storm exterior and interior repairs. (\$91,000)
- > Medical Examiner's Office - post-storm exterior and interior repairs. (\$138,000)
- > Parks and Recreation - facility repairs and ballfield lighting repair/replacements. (\$730,000)

COVID-19 Efforts

- > Government Center Building, library, courthouse, Majette Yard, and Utilities Services - set up cleaning contracts for these facilities specifically for sanitizing high-touch surface areas.
- > Bay County Tax Offices and the Supervisor of Elections Office - set up a contract for monthly treatments of these high-use facilities. Service includes treatment with a non-toxic, anti-microbial, protective coating that prevents the transfer of contaminants on surfaces for 30 days.
- > Purchased 36 body temperature kiosks for use throughout the county to monitor the health of the employees and public accessing county facilities.

Permanent Repairs to Hurricane Damaged Facilities

To date, Facilities Management has initiated and managed 73 contracts to make permanent repairs to facilities in excess of \$30 million. All of this work has been initiated conforming to purchasing procedures to ensure FEMA reimbursement.

**employee spotlight****RAYFORD JONES**

The Facilities Management Division would like to recognize Rayford Jones for exemplary performance over the past year. Electrical tradesworker Rayford Jones has worked for Bay County Facilities Management for 15 years. During this timeframe he has gained extensive working knowledge of the electrical systems maintained by Facilities and has proven to be a critical asset to the division and to Bay County. Over the past year, he was tasked with resolving everything from simple lighting issues, up to and including the rewiring of crucial information technology equipment in order to ensure continuous operation during power outages. Whether the job is big or small, during normal hours or after hours, you can count on Rayford to be there and to get the job done.

While not at work, Rayford enjoys tinkering around the house, spending time with his family, and when he can find the time...fishing.

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employee spotlight

JAMES "JIMMY" GEORGE

James "Jimmy" George is in the spotlight this year for his outstanding performance at the Solid Waste Division. A lifelong resident of Bay County, James George has been dedicated to the Solid Waste Division since 1984. He is an extremely skilled senior heavy equipment operator and employee. James began his career at Majette Landfill, prior to the construction of the Steelfield Landfill. Over his years of service, he has seen many changes in landfill operations. Since he began work at the Steelfield Landfill, the facility has accepted more than 4 million tons of waste and debris. Mr. George has literally participated in making a mountain out of a molehill.

An avid shadetree mechanic, James is constantly in the process of rebuilding a vehicle. He lives with his daughter, Ashley, and her husband, and he will welcome his first grandchild in 2021.



WHO WE ARE

The Solid Waste Division provides solid waste disposal, household hazardous material disposal, and recycling services for all of the citizens of Bay County. The division is comprised of the Bay County Waste to Energy (WTE) facility; the Steelfield Road Landfill; Recycling, Household Hazardous Waste and the Small-Quantity Generator environmental programs. The division is also responsible for the long-term care and environmental monitoring of Majette Park, which is a closed landfill.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

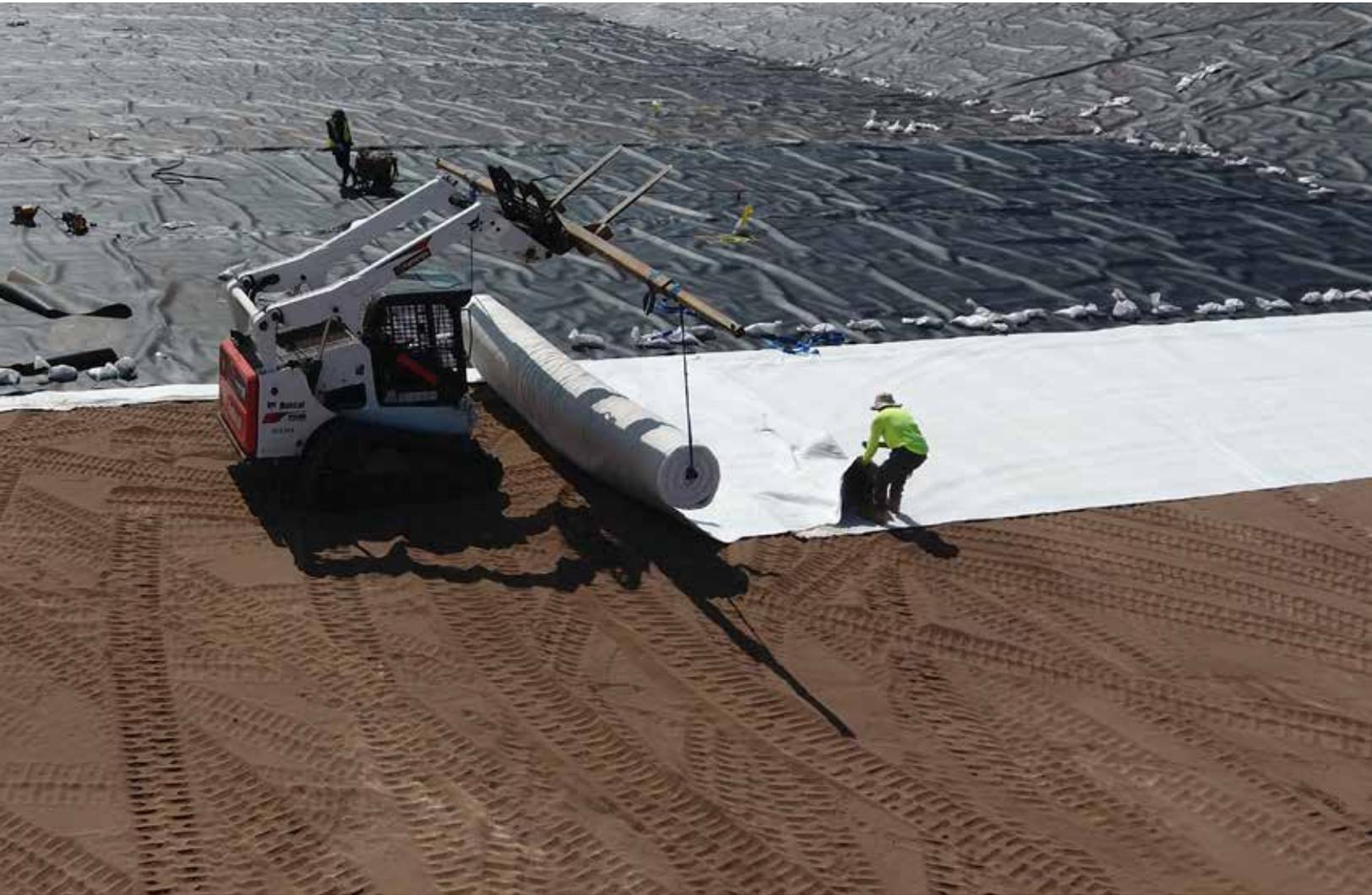
Hurricane Michael continues to impact landfill operations. The vast amounts of debris that we received significantly diminished the life and capacity of the existing disposal area. As a result, we have begun the process of constructing a new 34-acre disposal area. The construction project, scheduled for completion in January 2021, will provide disposal capacity to the year 2037.

Every American in 2020 was affected in one way or another by the COVID-19 virus. All of the employees of the Solid Waste Division are considered critical employees and have been required to work throughout the pandemic. All employees interact with the public in some man-



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ner, whether it be in the scale house, at the tipping face, in our household hazardous waste building, or by assisting customers in the administration building. Extensive precautionary procedures were taken to keep our customers and employees safe throughout the pandemic.

A large portion of the storm debris that was collected from Hurricane Michael was brought to the Debris Management Site at Steelfield Landfill. On Oct. 17, 2019, the site caught fire from spontaneous combustion. Dirt was hauled to cover up the massive amount of debris. Crews from Solid Waste, Waste-to-Energy, and the Roads and Bridges divisions battled the fire until it was finally contained on Nov. 30, 2019.

In FY 2020 the Steelfield Landfill received 138,361 tons of waste. The Bay County Waste-to-Energy Facility processed 121,035 tons of material. Combined, the Solid Waste Division processed a total of 259,395 tons of waste last year.



cooperative extension



employee spotlight

MELANIE TAYLOR

Bay County Extension Agent Melanie Taylor grew up in Virginia, moving to Bay County in 2009. She received her bachelor's degree from Radford University and furthered her education with a master's degree from Virginia Tech in 2004, while working full time for Virginia Cooperative Extension for eight years. Melanie followed in her father's footsteps, becoming a 4-H youth development extension agent and working in Gulf County as the 4-H and Family & Consumer Sciences Extension Agent for 10 years. She transferred to UF/IFAS Extension Bay County in December 2019. Her FCS focus areas are health and wellness, prevention of chronic diseases, and strengthening families within our communities.

Since joining the UF/IFAS Bay County team, Melanie has had quite the adventure. She has always suffered from a genetic kidney disease, but after the stress of Hurricane Michael her kidney function was quickly impaired to the point of needing a kidney transplant. In February 2019 she was unexpectedly called and told a local matching donor was found. After postponements due to COVID-19, she had a successful kidney transplant on May 1, 2020 at Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville. Her donor and life-changing hero is Jennifer Bowman, a Panama City realtor. Melanie spent much of her summer in recovery and returned to work in early September, feeling better than she has in years. Outside of work Melanie is active in the Junior League of Panama City.

WHO WE ARE

UF/IFAS Extension Bay County provides educational information to Bay County citizens through the combined efforts of state and county faculty, staff, volunteers, advisory committees, and local partners. We apply research and university expertise to solve problems that relate to 4-H Youth Development, Horticulture, Marine/Coastal issues, and Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS).

UF/IFAS Extension had many challenges in the past year due to COVID-19. The mission of our office is to provide science-based information to the public to enhance their quality of life. As a result of the pandemic and Hurricane Michael, the need for valid information was increased. Despite these challenging events, we found alternative methods to communicate and respond to our community during this critical time.

As Extension educators we had the advantage of experience using video conferencing and social media to reach clients before the pandemic forced us to rely on this as a primary means of contact.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

Contacts

- > Average Number of Unique Volunteers Per Month – 41
- > Individual Calls, Office Visits, & Emails – 5,433
- > Group Education Participants – 3,456
- > Engaged Social Media Users – 25,727

Horticulture

- > Prior to suspension of in-person group teaching activities due to COVID-19, the Horticulture Program held nine classes for Green Industry Professionals and five for homeowners, including the Fall Encore Education series. The agent and Master Gardener volunteers participated in two tree giveaways in partnership with Florida Forestry and Bay County Parks and Recreation, distributing more than 400 trees to the community.
- > Master Gardener volunteers held "Ask a Master Gardener" plant clinics at garden centers, farmers markets, and other events offering horticulture advice to citizens of Bay County through early Spring. They also provided educational support to the Kingdom Impact Center Community Garden in Millville by participating in monthly workdays and teaching gardeners about vegetable gardening in a hands-on setting.
- > Although many events had to be postponed this Spring, we found creative ways to continue to reach clientele:
 - > The UF IFAS Extension Bay County Facebook Gardening Group was created in March of 2020 and has more than 300 members.
 - > Gardening in the Panhandle LIVE! is a collaborative effort among Northwest District Horticulture Agents (Jefferson to Escambia County) offering live webinars using both Zoom and Facebook Live to interact with the public twice a month on timely gardening topics. From May to Oct. 12, sessions reached a live audience of 825 viewers and more than 600 YouTube views of recordings.
 - > Other online classes have been available to volunteers and home landscape audiences such as Butterfly Gardening, Predatory Insects, Plant Toxicity, and the Regional Master Gardener Conference throughout the summer and fall.
 - > In July 2020 green industry certification classes and pesticide exam testing resumed in Bay County. The Bay County Horticulture Agent also partnered with the Florida Medical Entomology Lab to start offering virtual continuing education classes for Florida mosquito control public health applicators. In addition to supporting local mosquito control districts, because of the online format these classes have included participation from people in several other states and Europe.

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4-H Youth Development

- > 4-H and Horticulture faculty and staff collaborated with faculty from Holmes and Walton counties and 4-H teens to create an eight-week virtual educational opportunity for 4-H youth called 4-H Seed to Food Plant to Plate Camp.
- > This program featured the science behind growing plants to eating them. It also covered artistic expression for stress relief. This camp was for youth ages 8-11 that they could work at their own pace, covering all parts of the plant. Youth could create a small garden or container garden.
- > There were 185 participants in the camp, and the site had more than 2,230 page views during the summer. This program is being adapted to become a statewide virtual plant science project.
- > 4-H faculty collaborated with other 4-H faculty across the state to create a four-week virtual educational program "Touring Florida" for youth ages 11 and up.
- > Youth met twice a week with faculty and worked through weekly projects on the website. This program featured wildlife, coastal water, fresh water, and climate change in Florida. It also covered career information and virtual tours around Florida.
- > There were 122 participants in the camp, and the site had more than 1,060 page views during the summer. This program is also being adapted to become a statewide virtual science project.
- > Immediately after the "Safer at Home" declaration, 4-H faculty from Bay, Holmes, and Walton counties worked with 38 4-H teens to create the 4-H LifeSkill Masters Program.
- > Faculty worked with teens to plan, create, and post 48 daily 4-H videos highlighting activities for younger youth to do at home during the pandemic.
- > Faculty posted the information to county Facebook pages and had a total reach of 18,966, with 1,717 engaged users.
- > 4-H Faculty collaborated with other faculty to provide virtual training for volunteers on how to use technology and still reach and engage youth during the pandemic.
- > As the State Military Liaison, the 4-H Military Partnership Programs continued to operate during the pandemic.

Marine/Coastal**Hurricane Michael Debris Removal Project**

- > Over the course of the last year the program has gone from initial grant writing to validating the targets for removal.
- > From October 2019 to March 2020 the project has successfully completed the writing of the \$3 million grant.
- > During time of travel and other restrictions from April to September:
 - > We hired and trained staff. Worked with local code enforcement officers, the FWC Derelict Vessel Removal Program, and other Bay County departments.
 - > Bay County Geographical Information Systems created the aerial maps to support field collection of the location data for Hurricane Michael-damaged vessels.
 - > Updated and examined aerial maps locating more than 100 targeted vessels and 800 marine debris targets in Gulf, Franklin, and Bay counties.
 - > Coordinated and monitored the removal of five abandoned vessels for Bay County with funds from FWC's Derelict Vessel Removal Program and Boating Improvement funds.

- > NOAA completed review of proposed field work in September and removal activities are scheduled to continue from now into 2021.

Artificial Reefs

- > Worked with the Board of County Commissioners, Planning and Zoning, Purchasing, and GIS departments to support Bay County's Artificial Reef Program.
- > Partnered with the Mexico Beach Artificial Reef Association and made progress toward completing a large-scale project. Bay County's Natural Resources Damage Assessment (NRDA) funding totals more than \$900,000 and was scheduled for completion in calendar year 2020.
- > Permitting activities to support the Artificial Reef RESTORE project were also initiated with milestones completed for draft regulatory application and side-scan survey activities. Deployment for this \$500,000 project is expected in 2021.

Family and Consumer Sciences

Melanie Taylor began her new position as the Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Extension Agent in Bay County in December 2019.

- > Collaborated on multi-county programming with northwest district FCS agents and taught food preservation classes in multiple counties, including Bay.
- > Designed and planned, with northwest district FCS agents, Living Well Wednesdays. This bi-weekly webinar offered program topics ranging from Proper Mold Clean Up to Teaching a Child to Save Money to How to Prevent Falls in the Home. Webinar sessions were presented all Summer and Fall 2020 to offer virtual programming since face-to-face had to be postponed.
- > Utilized UF/IFAS Extension Bay County social media and website to provide updated COVID-19 and other FCS-related topics to the public in a timely manner.
- > Researched and formed partnerships in the communities and agencies in which FCS plans to collaborate with on future programming efforts.
- > Currently planning a needs assessment to determine citizen needs for programming after recovering from Hurricane Michael and now COVID-19.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- > 4-H received the Florida Cooperative Extension Service Professional Development Award to attend Virtual Experiential Facilitation 101
- > Florida Master Gardener Award of Excellence Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Ask a Master Gardener Volunteer Booth (State Award)
- > Florida Master Gardener Award of Excellence Outstanding Team for Landscape Recovery Series (State Award)
- > Association of Natural Resources Extension Professionals, Innovative Program Award, "Expanding the Dark Skies to Improve Sea Turtle Nesting Beaches in NW FL" (National Award)



employee spotlight

JEREMY JERNIGAN

Jeremy Jernigan, Human Resources specialist/HRIS coordinator, donates his time to serve on the board of directors for the Arc of the Bay/St. Andrews Bay Center, a nonprofit organization that provides support and opportunities for people with disabilities to choose and participate in valued adult activities.

Since 1957, The Arc of the Bay has provided training and services for more than 200 individuals with disabilities in our community to assist them in becoming as self-sufficient and independent as possible. A few of these programs include Adult Day Training, the Culinary Institute, Personal Support Programs, and Employment Services. The goal of the center is to teach individuals with disabilities necessary life and employment skills to allow them to enjoy a higher quality of life and to find gainful employment.

Recent accomplishments by the board include the establishment of a retirement plan for Arc employees, the creation of a Culinary Institute, fundraising activities (such as the Annual Fashion Show), the creation of sub-committees within the board to allow for succession planning, and the development of an advisory board to develop future board members.

We appreciate Jeremy's volunteer spirit and commitment to enriching the lives of Bay County citizens with disabilities.

For more information on The Arc of the Bay, visit www.bayarc.org.

WHO WE ARE

The Human Resources Department is made up of six dedicated team members whose daily mission is to serve our more than 600 employees as well as the citizens of Bay County. We provide support and guidance concerning employment, benefits, retirement, continuing education, and more. We are passionate about our goal to provide the highest caliber of workplace experience that values personal growth, fairness, diversity, and mutual respect. In doing so, we can continue to offer a working environment that ensures success at every stage of employment and makes the Bay County Board of County Commissioners a coveted place to work.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

This past year was very unusual for everyone due to COVID-19. The Human Resources Department never missed a beat, despite two of our team members falling ill with this virus. Our office in the Bay County Government Center remained open and fully staffed throughout the pandemic where we have helped employees navigate through COVID-19 illnesses and issues by assisting them with required paperwork and establishing special pay codes to track COVID-19-related time off.

- > HR received 1,260 online employment applications and 89 paper applications.
- > HR reviewed and referred 1,193 candidates and rejected 165 applications that did not meet minimum qualifications.
- > On-boarded 116 new hires.
- > Processed 68 promotions, 56 resignations, 13 retirements, 20 probationary discharges, four involuntary separations, and 43 disciplinary actions.
- > Processed 109 Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) packets.

Training and Development

In November 2019, we debuted Servant Leadership training for our Fire and EMS supervisory staff, which consisted of two four-hour classes with 32 employees in attendance. It was so successful that we are integrating this training into our Leadership Development Program as the capstone course.

During Phase One of the pandemic, we were forced to cancel all of our employee training, but as we moved to Phases Two and Three, we moved quickly to catch up with the missed training opportunities for our employees.

In spite of the cancellations, we were still able to provide 24 classes in the New Employee Academy with 126 new employees participating.

We also provided 14 different courses for 31 employees in the Leadership Development Academy with 31 employees in attendance.

We also provided wellness learning opportunities by hosting various presentations and trainings by wellness consultant JT Thompson including Nutrition 101; Exercises 101; Breathing with Bethany; Top 10 Nutrition Myths; Reading Food Labels, Carbs & Fiber; Yoga Sessions; and Mobility Training.

Technological Advances

Automated Online On-boarding for new employees was officially launched through our Human Resources Information System (HRIS) last year. This new capability allows our new hires to participate in an interactive on-boarding process which better integrates them into the workplace from the very first day of employment.

We are also continuing efforts to convert our entire HRIS database to a new vendor to greatly improve our efficiency, reporting capabilities, and employee access.

Performance Management Program

Annual performance evaluations are an essential part of our organization's personnel management program by giving employees valuable feedback on their work performance every year. Last year we reviewed more than 576 evaluations with an above average score of 3.53 out of 5.

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Wellness Initiative

Our 2020 Health Fairs went on despite COVID-19. This year's health fairs marked the 16th consecutive year the BOCC, in conjunction with FL Blue, has provided this free biometric screening for all employees, including several of the constitutional offices. This screening includes a blood test for cholesterol and diabetes and also measures blood pressure and body mass index. As the number of employees identified with critical values at these screenings decreases, we can clearly see the value in providing this service to our employees every year. In 2020, 275 (72 percent) BOCC employees attended these health fairs.

The Evolve With JT Workplace Wellness Initiative also continues to be a success. It is an on-site personal nutrition, exercise, and coaching service provided free to employees and their spouses led by "JT" James Thompson, a highly qualified and sought after personal coach. With 108 new client appointments and 1,289 follow up appointments, JT's success can be measured by the more than 2,300 pounds and 2,600 inches lost by BOCC employees over the last year under his guidance. As a result, employees were also able to stop taking more than 150 medications.

Giving Back to the Community

Our employees continued to support our citizens by participating in all three blood drives that we hosted. In 2020, we were OneBlood's biggest supporter for donations. This year, because of COVID-19, it was very difficult to get people to donate blood. We not only exceeded every goal set at every drive but actually hosted the first convalescent plasma drive in our region, ranging from Tallahassee to Pensacola. Research found that plasma from COVID-19 survivors was very beneficial for hospitalized COVID-19 patients. We were able to collect 22 convalescent plasma donations, potentially saving the lives of up to 66 patients hospitalized with COVID-19.

During our 2020 blood drives, we donated a total of 508 units of blood. These donations helped those in need locally and are generally used within 48 to 72 hours. Each unit of blood can be divided into three products that can go to three different people, so our drives in 2020 impacted approximately 1,524 lives.

In another effort to help our community during the economic struggles caused by the pandemic, we worked with Rebuild Bay County to host a mobile food pantry in July at the Bay County Government Center. Once again, our employees stepped up and volunteered their time alongside other community volunteers to distribute 45,000 pounds of food to citizens in need. At least 425 cars passed through and we were able to help about 900 families with donations of much-needed food.

Bay County continued helping our employees and citizens with Hurricane Michael recovery, by partnering with local accounting firm Tipton, Marler, Garner & Chastain in February 2020 to present three free workshops on the Hurricane Michael Tax Relief Act and its implications on tax filings for employees, friends, and relatives.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- > Seven employees were recognized for 20 years of service with Bay County
- > Six employees were recognized for 25 years of service with Bay County
- > Seven employees were recognized for 30 years of service with Bay County
- > Two employees were recognized for 35 years of service with Bay County



library services



employee spotlight

STEPHEN EFIRD

NWRLS Head of Circulation Stephen Efirid enjoys the uncomfortable silence after a bad joke, and he hates binge watching; he thinks you should take your time to watch more movies and truly savor the bad ones. He has an uncanny knowledge of horror, film, comics, pop culture, punk rock, and metal music.

Stephen wants to live in a world where Halloween comes twice a year so that he could build more yard haunts. Over the years his yard decorations include tentacles, windmills, a haunted corn field, crashed U.F.O, and an undead skeleton army.

With more than 20 years of library experience, he's been a Special Agent for the U.S. Government, taught lifesaving and rowing, has received votes in at least two presidential campaigns, and has made appearances on film, television, and radio. Currently he is the Head of Circulation for the Northwest Regional Library System and masquerading as an amateur chef/film critic.

When not providing you with your fix of education, information, literature, and pop culture, he can be found rolling dice, slaying dragons, and making miniature terrain for role-playing games. In 2020, Stephen taught lessons on how to make miniature grass and forest scenes for gaming and model railroads as part of the library's virtual programming.

He has lived and worked in Bay County for seven years with his even more classified wife, kids, and, sadly, one remaining doggo.



WHO WE ARE

The Northwest Regional Library System has seven locations in Bay, Gulf, and Liberty counties. Our headquarters are at the Bay County Public Library in Panama City. We served 167,286 visitors in 2020, providing access to more than 316,406 books, audiobooks, DVDs, e-books, downloadable audiobooks, magazines, and more. We offer public computers with internet access and Wi-Fi access in all locations. We also offer a variety of programming for all ages.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

- > The Northwest Regional Library System received a limited number of Career Online High School scholarships funded by the State of Florida. The first Career Online High School Graduation Ceremony took place on March 9 to celebrate the first 14 graduates. "Earning a high school diploma is a key stepping stone to achieving long-term goals," Library Director Robin Shader said. Additional scholarship funding for Career Online High School will be available for the 2020-2021 Fiscal Year through a CARES Act grant.
- > In response to COVID-19, the Northwest Regional Library System began Virtual Programming on March 16, 2020. Library staff learned how to produce pre-recorded video programs as well as lead live Zoom Book Clubs, Early Literacy Programs, Author Talks, and an Art History Lecture Series. From March to September, some 6,092 total participants took part in 178 virtual programs. The Northwest Regional Library System FL YouTube Channel had 77 new subscribers. BCPL Unstacked Podcast began in May, producing eight episodes and 278 total listens. Several library locations provided take-home craft kits geared primarily for children ages 3 to 5.
- > The Citizen Information Center (CIC), staffed by the Bay County Public Library Reference Department, answered 1,387 phone calls for COVID-19 questions.
- > Locations closed to the public on March 24, 2020 due to COVID-19. All branches provided curbside pickup services for items placed on hold. The Northwest Regional Library System continued to purchase and process new items for the collection. Library materials are quarantined after return, following national guidelines for libraries.
- > While the locations were closed to the public, the Bay County Public Library had a small computer lab set up for essential tasks for community accessibility, with a total of 4,679 one-hour sessions.
- > All NWRLS locations reopened for "grab-and-go" library services in September and October to allow patrons to use in-person library services in a safe environment, including social distancing measures.

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- > The Northwest Regional Library System Mobile Library was delivered in September 2020 and has begun providing Mobile Library Services, including registering for a library card, borrowing and returning materials, and accessing Wi-Fi. The Mobile Library was funded through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- > Heather Ogilvie received the prestigious 2020 American Library Association Lemony Snicket Prize for Nobel Librarians Faced with Adversity for her Outreach in the community after Hurricane Michael.
- > Verizon donated \$10,000 to the Friends of the Bay County Public Library for purchasing new library books and materials for the community's Hurricane Michael recovery, which was then donated to the library.
- > Several librarians became certified as Microsoft Office specialists. Lynn Elliott and Ashley Burlon are certified in Microsoft Excel and Word. Laura Laspee is certified in Microsoft Word. The classes have already proven beneficial in assisting patrons, computer classes, and sharing tips in Tech Talk videos.
- > Heather Ogilvie was selected as an American Library Association Peer Reviewer for Resilient Communities: Libraries Respond to Climate Change.
- > Kat Kan was a panelist for "Comic-Con Celebrates 15 Years of Eisner Librarians" at the virtual Comic-Con International in July. Kat Kan was the first librarian jury member of the Eisner Awards in 2005.
- > PLAN Innovation Project "Bridging the Deaf and Hearing Community" was awarded to Sarah Burris for \$1,800 to provide American Sign Language (ASL) Zoom Classes and enhance the collection's ASL and Deaf Culture resources.
- > PLAN Innovation Project "Dungeons and Dragons" was awarded to Stephen Efird for \$1,000 originally designed for in-person Dungeons and Dragons programming at the Bay County Public Library but transformed to online classes on RPG Tabletop Gaming and building terrain.
- > PLAN Innovation Project "Harrell Memorial Library Children's Discovery Zone" was awarded to Robin Shader for \$664, which helped enhance the children's area in the newly relocated and renovated Bristol Library.
- > PLAN Innovation Project "LEGO Club at Your Library" was awarded to Sandra Pierce for \$614 to provide LEGO programming at the Bay County Public Library. This summer included Facebook LEGO Challenges for school-age kids.





employee spotlight

LORI SPRADLIN

Senior Staff Assistant Lori Spradlin has been with Veterans Services since 2018. In her free time, Lori enjoys helping one of her grandchildren participate in beauty pageants, and she enjoys spending time with her family doing things like dining weekly, vacationing, playing cards, and just enjoying each other's company. Lori handles her duties in our office most efficiently, and she is a credit to Bay County and a great asset to this office.

Through the trying times over the past year, Bay County Veterans Services continues to support the veterans and families of our community with compassion, dedication, and professionalism second to none.



WHO WE ARE

Behind every Veterans' benefits claim is a veteran in need. The Bay County Veterans Services Office remains ready and willing to assist in obtaining those benefits. We provide dedicated service to all qualified veterans and their dependents, ensuring that they are provided fair and just treatment in accordance with the published laws and regulations governing the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our office assists veterans in applying for service-connected disabilities, obtaining non-service-connected pension benefits, healthcare eligibility, education benefits, life insurance, and VA home loan guaranty certificates of eligibility. Our office also helps veterans' family members with burial claims, widows' and widowers' benefits, and dependency claims.

Our office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. We average between 21 and 25 client visits daily. In between client visits, our staff will receive another 20 to 30 phone calls per day.

The Veterans Services staff consists of three counselors, one senior staff assistant, and one county veterans officer.

Our primary objective is customer service that may include: adding a spouse or a new baby to a veteran's award, requesting a veteran's eligibility to education, healthcare, or home loan, filing a service-connected disability claim, a pension claim, a widow's benefit claim, or even notifying the VA of a veteran's passing and burial. We assist veterans and their families from the cradle to the grave.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

While our employees were still handling the destruction of Hurricane Michael, along came a pandemic, causing a unique situation that we had never faced.

Many Veterans Service offices throughout the State of Florida and throughout the country have been closed throughout this time. The VA regional offices remain closed to the public. Throughout 2020, Bay County Veterans Services remained open to our veterans and families. Due to the large number of offices that have closed and as a service to all veterans and families, we assisted clients from all over Florida and the United States in this trying time.

Our office had in the past assisted the veterans and families of Bay County through face-to-face meetings. With the eventual shut down of the country, we began assisting our clients by telephone. This was accomplished the same way that we had performed over the past several years. Trying to accomplish the mission by telephone and printing every document then arranging for the client to sign the documents was, to say the least, extremely difficult and untimely. In May we were given the opportunity to change the way of doing business from printed materials to a totally digital system for filing claims. Our clients can now receive assistance by phone appointments and sign all documentation over their phones without leaving home and staying safe through social distancing.

Organizations and Events

- > We assisted the Bay County Board of County Commissioners and the Bay County Veterans Council with a Memorial Day Ceremony in May with the assistance from Bay County staff and Tyndall Air Force Base with a telecast over Youtube.
- > We represent the Bay County Board of County Commissioners at the monthly meeting of the Bay County Veterans Council on the second Thursday of each month.
- > We support the veterans at Sims Florida State Nursing Home through the 'Friends of Sims Nursing Home,' a nonprofit organization run by the County Veterans Service Officers of North West Florida. Funds are donated to this organization and distributed to the nursing home to purchase items that the State of Florida does not include in their budget.
- > We are on the general board of directors for Career Source Gulf Coast.
- > We sit on the Disadvantaged Transportation Board to assist veterans in the local area.
- > Our office has assisted during the VA Health Care Town Hall Meetings.
- > We assisted veterans at two employment events sponsored by Gulf Coast Career Source.
- > We supported and assisted the Annual Homeless Veterans Stand Down.

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information technology / geographic information systems

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)

WHO WE ARE

The Information Technology Division provides reliable and stable infrastructure for telecommunications and data management, maintaining all computers, video security systems, access control, mobile devices, and other electronic-related systems. IT assists with the technical aspects of our various websites and assists others with reports and technical matters. IT is also responsible for network connectivity, software deployment, database creation and management, email services, and overall information security.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

- > Relocated county assets after building repairs and moved staff back to offices damaged due to Hurricane Michael.
- > Updated the commission chambers to include 4k video and live close captioned meetings.
- > Provided COVID-19 response with work-from-home remote resources for county employees.
- > Outfitted Human Resources' new training room.
- > Supported county operations by providing a reliable and stable network with 99-percent uptime, making county services available to citizens without delays.
- > Implemented and maintained patch management, keeping the county's data safe and secure. In addition to scheduled enhanced vulnerability, scanning is an important component of the IT security program.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)

WHO WE ARE

Geographical Information Systems (GIS) provides mapping services and products to internal county departments, the public, and other agencies. The GIS Division functions as a service-focused central resource of geographic information. We provide customer assistance, mapping, spatial analysis, data integration, application development, and deployment of content-specific web-mapping solutions to provide access to geographic data.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

- > Continued to provide support and insights to aid county and city departments on Hurricane Michael recovery efforts.
- > Redeployed web-mapping infrastructure to the cloud, ensuring greater reliability and responsiveness.
- > Began collaboration with Emergency Services to facilitate a major GIS-centric upgrade to Next Generation 9-1-1.
- > Worked with Utilities Services to bring their asset management system online, tracking life cycle and location of more than 500 miles of pipe and more than 15,000 individual valves and components.
- > Aided local UF/IFAS Extension Sea Grant office in identifying hurricane-caused marine debris for removal from the bay system.



employee spotlight

SHANNON ACKERMAN

Shannon Ackerman worked for Bay County until December 2020, tirelessly supporting the county's Facilities, Parks, Public Works, and Utilities departments managing their assets and work orders. A former high school teacher, Shannon is dedicated to furthering the use of GIS in the community and taught a course on it at Gulf Coast State College. Joining the GIS Department shortly after Hurricane Michael, Shannon quickly made herself integral to deployment of Utilities Services asset management system. She worked constantly on data for reporting to state and federal agencies in the wake of Hurricane Michael and Hurricane Sally, helping county staff recover costs and secure grants to repair damaged infrastructure and assets. In her off time she loved taking her pitbull Duckie for runs in Pine Log State Forest where she once worked as a Forest Ranger.

CONTACT US:

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employee spotlight

WENDI NATION

Wendi Nation was the department's Purchasing director and retired in December 2020. Wendi moved to Bay County in 2012 specifically for the position with Bay County. She is a member of NIGP, the Institute for Public Procurement, and served on their board of directors. Wendi enjoys the beach locally as well as traveling abroad with her family, although the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic slowed down the travel quite a bit. It did allow her and her husband more time to finish rebuilding their home that was destroyed by Hurricane Michael. She and her family moved back "home" in April 2020 after six months in a camper and a year in a rental house.



WHO WE ARE

The Purchasing Department is staffed with four full-time employees charged with abiding by, upholding, and adhering to the county's Procurement Code and Procurement Manual to guard against the misuse or misinterpretation of those rules and regulations. Our staff is proficient in federal procurement requirements in order to comply with FEMA regulations to help the county recover from the devastation caused by Hurricane Michael and to comply with requirements for reimbursement for expenses related to COVID-19 and other grant-related programs.

The Purchasing Department is responsible for coordinating the county's central procurement system, promoting efficiency, economy, and fair and open competition in an effort to reduce the appearance and opportunity for favoritism or impropriety. We strive to inspire public confidence that purchase orders and contracts are awarded equitably and economically. It is essential for effective and ethical procurement that there be a consistent system of procedures that establishes basic guidelines to regulate procurement activities, contract management, and the resulting distribution of funds.

In Fiscal Year 2020, the Purchasing Department:

- > Provided management oversight of the county purchasing card program with a purchase volume of more than \$2.4 million and realized an annual rebate of more than \$33,000.
- > Provided sales and customer support to county staff through ordering goods and services valued at more than \$32.6 million during Fiscal Year 2020 through 754 purchase orders.
- > Bay County uses online auction services and on-site surplus sales to dispose of obsolete equipment in order to maximize the county's investment. During Fiscal Year 2020, Purchasing conducted two auctions resulting in a return of more than \$75,000.

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WHO WE ARE

The Engineering Division is staffed with professional engineers, a licensed professional surveyor, surveying parties, engineering technicians, FDOT-certified inspectors, and administrative staff dedicated to providing quality surveying, transportation and stormwater engineering, and construction management for the citizens of Bay County.

Engineering aims to provide the citizens of Bay County with quality best-value engineering services in support of the construction, maintenance, and repair of Bay County's roads and stormwater management systems and capital improvement projects.

The Engineering Division is responsible for providing program management, design, permitting, inspection, and construction management services necessary to implement Public Works' transportation and stormwater programs. Additional responsibilities include improving the safety and efficiency of the county's transportation and stormwater systems; assisting Roads and Bridges in road maintenance; handling citizen inquiries; managing the Participating Paving Program (PPP); and managing the Adopt-a-Highway Program.

Engineering's priorities include:

- > Assisting the Roads and Bridges Division as needed.
- > Facilitating the Half-Cent Surtax Capital Improvement Program.
- > Completing design of projects generated by Roads and Bridges work requests.
- > Assisting other county departments.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

in 2020, Engineering:

- > Continued the recovery effort in the wake of Hurricane Michael, repairing stormwater facilities and stormwater piping systems.
- > Implemented and coordinated a pavement condition inspection for 530 miles of paved roadways to quantify damages from the storm.
- > Began the process of implementing a 3-year program to repair paved roadways identified by the study.
- > Provided assistance to other departments in surveying, evaluating, repairing or demolishing many county facilities, including lighting at Harders Park, asbestos surveys for proposed building demolitions, preliminary site plans, finish floor elevations, and temporary fire stations.

Engineering has been working on many grant opportunities evolving from Hurricane Michael, such as dirt road paving, timber bridge replacements, stormwater improvement projects, and new shelter facilities.

Engineering also implemented the following Capital Improvement Plan projects:

- > Veal Road Dirt Paving
- > FY 19 Pavement Preservation
- > FY 20 Pavement Preservation
- > FY 20 Local Road Resurfacing
- > CR 388 Resurfacing
- > FY 19 Collector Road Resurfacing
- > County Road 2297 Bridge Replacement
- > Thomas Drive Resurfacing
- > Jenks Ave Widening



employee spotlight

ROBERT ZIERDEN

Bay County Surveyor Robert Zierden began working with the county in 1980 after graduating from Gulf Coast and the University of Florida. Rob chose surveying because he enjoys math and working outdoors; one of his first surveying and mapping efforts was surveying and hydrographic work on the rivers of Northwest Florida. A highlight of his career, he says, was apprenticing under Buell Harper, one of Florida's finest surveyors.

Rob loves spending time with his daughters, Ashley and Emily, and enjoys living on the water, surfing, fishing, and boating. He also enjoys cave and cavern diving.



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capital improvements



WHO WE ARE

Bay County Capital Projects provides construction management services on Bay County vertical construction projects (buildings). Capital projects are typically \$150,000 and greater. We work with the Purchasing Department to advertise for invitations for bids and requests for proposals. We also work with architects and engineers in the design phase and manage the project during construction until completion.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

In 2020, we managed approximately \$10 million in vertical construction projects, including Hurricane Michael damages, renovations, new roof construction, and the design and construction of new buildings.

Projects include:

- > Library Hurricane repairs and new roof
- > Courthouse new roof and hurricane repairs
- > Old Junior Deputies building to new Emergency Management building
- > Sheriff's Office hurricane repairs
- > Portable fire stations at Southport and Hiland Park
- > General Services Administration Office
- > Michigan Avenue Fire Station
- > Majette Complex hurricane repairs
- > Old Juvenile Justice Courthouse new roof
- > Demolition of old Courthouse Annex

CONTACT US:

(850) 248-8120 | facilities@baycountyfl.gov
www.baycountyfl.gov

WHO WE ARE

The Mosquito Control Division's priority is the prevention of mosquito-borne viruses. We are staffed by professional technicians certified in Public Health Pest Control, licensed through the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, to provide professional mosquito control services that protect the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Bay County. We have three main areas to our operation: identification, larvaciding, and adultciding. Our main areas of operation are: mosquito sample collection and identification; arbovirus surveillance; and testing, larvaciding, adultciding, and source reduction throughout the county.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

In FY2020, we began two projects with Eva Buckner, Ph. D., who is an assistant professor at Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory in Vero Beach, FL. The first project involves the collection of mosquito eggs from Ovi cup traps. The samples are then shipped to Dr. Buckner where she raises mosquitoes from the eggs collected and tests them for pesticide resistance. This helps us monitor the efficacy of the larvacide and adulticide products from our current applications. For precautionary measures, we are currently working on rotating in new adulticide products for our spray trucks to help lessen the likelihood of chemical resistance. We are also collecting mosquito samples for Dr. Buckner to track the northern movement of an invasive and potentially dangerous species of mosquitoes that is being transported unintentionally in man-made containers from South Florida. In light of this occurrence the identification team responsible for deploying surveillance traps has increased their collection sites from 13 to 31. This boosted our surveillance efforts by 58 percent, compared to the previous year. Our team uses CDC, B&G Sentinel and Ovi traps for a more comprehensive identification of the types of mosquitoes breeding in our county. Furthermore, we added a triple-panel test of mosquito borne arbovirus. This test allows monitoring for West Nile Virus, Eastern Equine Encephalitis and St. Louis Encephalitis.

Our adultciding team responsible for the nightly spray application of products were impacted by frequent rain throughout the summer season, particularly in light of Hurricane Sally's impacts. Despite these setbacks, our highly trained and experienced team was able to efficiently treat all 25 districts.

Our larvaciding crew aided in the decrease of mosquito breeding after Hurricane Sally, and this crew pretreated known problem areas of the county in anticipation of the approaching hurricane.

Identification Operations:

- > Deployed, set and retrieved traps 1,864 times
- > Counted and identified 23,870 mosquitoes

Larvaciding Operations:

- > Answered 339 service requests
- > Inspected 5,742 mosquito breeding sites
- > Treated 1,865 sites
- > Stocked 384 pools with minnows
- > Manually back-pack sprayed 75 sites for a total coverage of 4.16 acres
- > Removed 1,209 abandoned waste tires
- > Performed 214 neighborhood sweeps

Identification Operations:

- > Traveled 12,650 miles
- > Sprayed 4,354 miles
- > Treated 460,033 Acres

CONTACT US:

(850) 248-8720 | mosquito@baycountyfl.gov
www.baycountyfl.gov

**employee spotlight****ERIC COPE**

Bay County Mosquito Control Manager Eric Cope worked more than nine years at the John A. Mulrennan Public Health Research and Education Center (PHEREC) where he first learned about entomology, mosquitoes, and why they are so important to public health. In that position, Eric conducted research focused on mosquitoes, mosquito-borne disease surveillance, and control, including but not limited to: identification, ecology, repellent testing, trapping systems, integrated pest management, biological control testing, and efficacy assessments. In 2011, he began working for Bay County as a field technician, then moved into the laboratory to trap, identify, and test mosquitoes for diseases. He eventually earned an advanced accreditation in his field and worked his way up to a supervisory role, with a long-term goal of becoming the manager of the division. He reached that goal in 2020 with the retirement of Fred Wakefield.

"I love my job, and I love this county I grew up in," Cope said. "I am honored to be the new director of Bay County Mosquito Control."

Eric loves the outdoors, and when he's not at work, he's generally outside on the water fishing, gardening, re-building old Jeeps, or building rustic furniture. Eric loves spending time with family and friends.

"Sometimes I just enjoy sitting on the couch and playing the guitar for my captive audience, consisting of my beautiful wife Sonja, our two puppies, Cash and June, and Taco, the Chihuahua," he said.



employee spotlight

TIM FREDERICKSON & TODD VALDEZ

In Fall 2019, the Roads and Bridges family received devastating news when two of its members, mechanic Tim Frederickson and construction Foreman Todd Valdez, were diagnosed with Squamous Cell Carcinoma only days apart. Squamous Cell Carcinoma is the second most common form of skin cancer and generally curable if diagnosed early enough. The Roads and Bridges family, along with several other divisions, came together collecting donations and care packages to assist with the upcoming journey. We are relieved that both have been declared cancer free.

Besides being a mechanic at the Roads and Bridges shop, Tim enjoys building race cars and spending time with his wife, Terri and his two daughters, Paige and Gracie Lynn. Todd enjoys racing different types of vehicles as well as spending time with his wife Stephanie and his two sons, Tristan and Tyler.

This past year has been difficult; however, they stuck together and on their one year cancer screening, both received a clean bill of health with no cancer detected.



WHO WE ARE

The Roads and Bridges Division is staffed by licensed construction operators and truck drivers, skilled craftsman, maintenance workers, customer service representatives, resource accountants, and program managers. Our mission is to provide efficient and high-quality operations and maintenance of county roads, bridges, and stormwater facilities.

The Roads and Bridges Division is responsible for the maintenance and repair work necessary to sustain the county transportation and stormwater infrastructure at an acceptable level of service. When possible, system improvements are made to enhance capacity, improve service, and protect the environment. Work is identified through route maintenance schedules, routine and special inspections, customer service work requests, state inspections, and regulatory requirements.

The division answers customer inquiries regarding the location and ownership of transportation right-of-ways and stormwater drainage easements, and it also responds to commissioner inquiries and assists other governmental agencies when possible. The division manages the county residential driveway permit program which regulates the connection of residential properties to county roadways. The program provides the direction required providing for safe access connections to the county transportation network while maintaining roadside drainage systems.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

In the beginning of Fiscal Year 2020, the Bay County Roads and Bridges Division was still responding to the devastation of Hurricane Michael while also conducting daily maintenance duties. During this time we:

- > Continued outfall and roadside ditch cleaning from Hurricane Michael and aided in the demolition and removal of damaged county-owned facilities while also aiding in the construction of the new Highland Park and Southport fire stations.
- > Roads and Bridges received more than 20,000 requests for service, a substantial increase from the 11,000 requests in FY2019 and the 2,643 requests received in FY2018.
- > Maintained approximately 190 miles of county-owned dirt roadways, with an 85-percent success rate of routine grading within a 21-day cycle.
- > Inspected and repaired more than 12,000 linear feet of stormwater pipe and 3,679 inlet boxes.
- > Maintained/repaired the Public Works equipment fleet. In FY 2020, Roads and Bridges service technicians completed more than 1,000 repairs with a value of approximately \$430,000.



CONTACT US:

(850) 248-8810 | roads@baycountyfl.gov
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WHO WE ARE

The Traffic Engineering Division is staffed by experienced transportation professionals, consisting of engineering, technical, and administrative staff with special expertise in the planning, design, construction, integration, operation, maintenance, project management, and overall support of transportation technology system deployment projects. Such projects include the countywide advanced traffic signal system, the associated intelligent transportation system, and the regional Traffic Management Center (TMC) facility that is located in the Government Center building.

The Traffic Engineering Division is responsible for the design, fabrication, installation, and maintenance of all road signs and pavement markings located on roadways within unincorporated Bay County. The division additionally maintains all traffic signals, school zone installations, and other traffic control devices within Bay County, including those located in the local municipalities. As part of this effort, engineering and technical staff remain responsible for the development, implementation, and fine-tuning of coordinated traffic signal timings throughout the region.

The Traffic Engineering Division also operates and maintains the regional Intelligent Transportation System (ITS), which not only encompasses the network of 180-plus traffic signals but also a diversified array of additional roadside devices that are used to manage the overall transportation network from the remote TMC facility. A primary component of the regional ITS is the administration of all ownership issues associated with 100-plus miles of underground fiber optic cable, including design and implementation of modifications, provision of underground location services required in response to nearly 10,000 locate tickets issued under the Florida Sunshine One Call Program, as well as emergency repairs to the underground cable/conduit facility and network switching equipment whenever necessary. Other components of the regional ITS deployment include 100-plus pan/tilt/zoom traffic monitoring cameras, over two dozen travel-time sensor devices, five dynamic messaging signs, several trailer-mounted portable variable message signs, as well as many other transportation-related roadside devices that are connected to the ITS network.

The Traffic Engineering Division designs, fabricates, installs, and maintains all road signs and pavement markings located on roadways within unincorporated Bay County – amounting to more than 20,000.

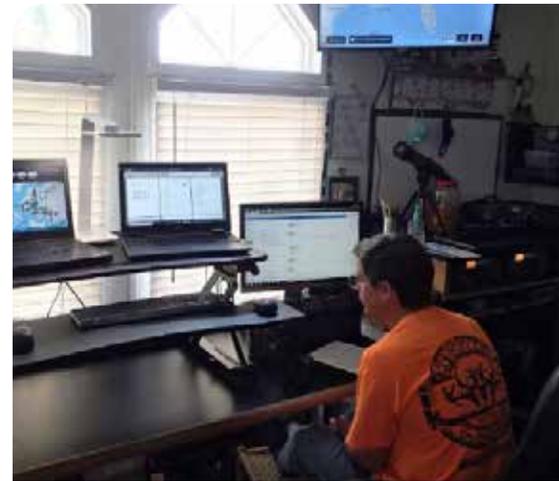
The Traffic Engineering Division administers many transportation-related grant programs financed by state and federal dollars. This includes identifying grant opportunities, drafting grant applications, managing projects financed by grants, and administration of reimbursement procedures within applicable program constraints.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

Traffic Engineering Division staff are all considered essential employees, and technicians that address sign and signal issues must remain available 24/7 in order to respond to emergencies that may unfold – such duties and responsibilities are mandatory without regard to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Sign and signal technicians were able to identify the means to address the necessary maintenance and repair activities while employing techniques that resulted in a safe work environment consistent with Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines.

Traffic Engineering Division staff continued restoration efforts that were first initiated after Hurricane Michael to address lingering issues related to the storm damage.

TMC personnel and traffic signal technicians made incremental adjustments to traffic signals throughout the year in order to respond to the ever-changing fluctuations in traffic volumes related to COVID-19 pandemic associated with mandatory and elective quarantine measures.

**employee spotlight****BOB EDMUNDS**

Bob Edmunds is the Bay County Traffic Management Center (TMC) manager. Bob was raised in Merritt Island, near the Kennedy Space Center, where his father worked as an engineer for NASA. As a result of his father's influence, since early childhood Bob had always been interested in science, space, and technological advances. Bob's continuing interest in technology evolved over many years of radio, electronics, and computers. He has been an amateur radio enthusiast (also known as ham radio) for many years.

Bob attended college initially at the University of Central Florida-Cocoa campus, later continuing his studies in Jacksonville. Early in his career, Bob became affiliated with a consulting firm and taught classes in AutoCAD and MicroStation. The consulting firm transferred him to the Panama City area to help establish a new office, where he became quite fond of the local area.

In 2009, Bob became an employee of Bay County – this was the approximate timeframe in which the Government Center Complex, with its new Traffic Management Center (TMC), was constructed. Bob started his career as a TMC technician, was promoted to a traffic signal Timing specialist, and more recently was promoted to the position of TMC manager.

During the initial months of the quarantine associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, Bob was able to successfully and seamlessly fulfill his role in managing the TMC virtually.

CONTACT US:

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www.baycountyfl.gov

PUBLIC WORKS

infrastructure surtax

Bay County has completed the following projects with funding from the surtax:

RESURFACING:

- > North Lagoon Road with multi-use path
- > Silver Lake Road
- > Center Drive
- > Camelia Street
- > County Road 2302
- > High Point Road
- > Indian Bluff Road
- > County Road 2300
- > County Road 2302
- > East Avenue (State 77 to County 390)
- > Laird Street
- > Allison Avenue
- > Harvard Boulevard
- > Edwards Road
- > County Road 388
- > Frankford Avenue

BRIDGE REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT PROJECTS:

- > Deer Point Dam repair/rehabilitation
- > East Avenue bridge replacement
- > County Road 2297

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION NOTICE OF VIOLATION PROJECTS:

- > Webber Road
- > Sorrel's Drive
- > Old Allentown Road

ROADWAY SAFETY PROJECTS:

- > Laird Street sidewalks
- > Frankford Avenue sidewalks
- > Front Beach Road (Twin Lakes to E. Lakeshore Drive)
- > Front Beach Road (Kelly Street to Twin Lakes)
- > Merritt Brown Road sidewalk

In FY2020, Bay County continued working on the following projects with funding from the surtax:

RESURFACING:

- > Thomas Drive
- > East Avenue (County 390 to Baldwin)
- > Wildwood Road
- > Cherokee Heights Road

CAPACITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS:

- > Jenks Avenue widening
- > County Road 2321 to State Road 390 connector road
- > Loop Road Phase 2



ABOUT THE INFRASTRUCTURE SURTAX

Voters approved the Bay County Half-Cent Infrastructure Surtax in 2016 by a margin of greater than 10 percent, with the funding aimed at improving area roadways and infrastructure. Collection of the sales tax began in early 2017. The county collects approximately \$12.5 million annually and works to leverage that funding for grants and partnerships that often double the county's annual surtax revenues each year.

The tax is for use exclusively in Bay County to repair local roads, increase neighborhood safety through pedestrian paths and sidewalks to schools, reduce neighborhood flooding, and reduce traffic congestion. The sales tax is estimated to generate roughly \$21 million annually, to be split between the county and its cities by a formula based on population. For Bay County, that means about \$12.5 million in revenue each year that must be spent on the estimated overall \$127 million in needed roadway and infrastructure improvements, as mandated by the ballot language. As an added layer of protection to ensure the money is spent wisely, a citizens' oversight committee was empaneled and meets regularly to check the county's progress.

The passage of the tax allowed the Bay County Commission to make good on a promise they made to cut the millage rate in 2017 to offset deductions from the general fund that were being used to supplement road paving, bridge upkeep, and road maintenance. That reduction continued in 2018, 2019 and again in 2020.

And meanwhile, the increased revenues have allowed the county to begin to address a \$57.4 million backlog in needed road resurfacing as well embark on other infrastructure improvements, including bridge replacements, intersection improvement projects, dirt road stabilization, capacity and stormwater improvements, roadway safety, and more. The dollars raised by the sales tax must be spent inside Bay County on local projects. Tallahassee and Washington, D.C. have no say on how or where the money is spent; however, the availability of funding may make grant applications that require matching funds more competitive.

The sales tax is levied on eligible goods with a value of up to the first \$5,000 of value - the tax is capped at \$25 per item.

CONTACT US:

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www.bayhalfcent.com



WHO WE ARE

The mission of Risk Management is to do everything we can to ensure the safety and well being of Bay County employees, its properties, and the citizens of Bay County. We do this through a dedication to see that we have a safe work environment for employees, safe facilities for the citizens of Bay County, and proper training for county employees. It is the responsibility of this department to produce and implement safety programs, such as defensive driving and CPR classes, in order to accomplish this goal.

Risk also works to administer the Americans with Disabilities Act program for the county. Under this same umbrella, this department oversees a very successful and long-standing Self-Insured Workers Compensation Program, with more than 1,000 employees, including three of the five constitutional offices in the program. Included in the Workers Compensation Program is a requirement that the county be a drug-free workplace and have an active safety program, both of which are approved by the State of Florida. Additionally, Risk manages the county's property and liability programs, handles incidents, accidents, and processes claims. Another significant responsibility for the Risk team is the annual filing of the State Tier II report, which requires reporting on the storage, use, and release of hazardous substances. Risk Management is dedicated to providing the best products, safest environment, and diligent service to the employees and citizens of Bay County.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

Between the continuing recovery process of Hurricane Michael and the multi-level crisis the COVID-19 pandemic created, the Risk Management team continued to process claims, training, reports, and programs for the county.

Listed below is a sampling of tasks from this past year:

- > Worked closely with Emergency Services with tracking of potential COVID-19 exposures within EMS.
- > Heavily involved in the communication of COVID-19 CDC guidelines for testing and return-to-work criteria for employees with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, fielding hundreds of calls.
- > To date, Risk Management has received more than \$40 million in insurance proceeds for property damage caused by Hurricane Michael.
- > Bay County Risk Management is now an Authorized Temporary Traffic Control (TTC) Provider. Authorized instructor, Joey Farrill, conducts training for all levels of TTC, including basic, intermediate, and advanced courses.
- > The Risk Management staff works with all departments to provide quality training to county employees including classes regarding forklifts, bucket trucks, CPR, fire extinguishers, and defensive driving.
- > Risk recovered more than \$23,000 in third-party claims.
- > The county's HealthiestYou 24/7 Program experienced over 85 percent utilization by county employees this past year. The circumstances of COVID-19 certainly played a role in the increased usage and appreciation of this very successful program.
- > Met the state-regulated Tier-II completion deadline for the 10th year in a row.

CONTACT US:

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www.baycountyfl.gov



employee spotlight

HANNAH CERAVOLO

Hannah Ceravolo, the newest addition to our Risk Management team, has lived in Bay County since 2001. Hannah has a strong background in early education and customer service. She taught Pre-K for two years at a private preschool and worked in preschool administration for over eight years. After 12 years in education, she stepped out seeking a new and challenging career, and found her new home at Risk Management with Bay County. She is dedicated to helping Bay County citizens and employees identify and reduce or eliminate risk within their day-to-day lives.

Outside the office, Hannah is committed to her family. She has four-year-old fraternal twin boys who keep her on the go. Originally from Georgia, she and her boys travel there quite often. They delight in being outdoors, doing anything on the water, and going on new adventures. If they are not out-of-town visiting family, you can usually catch up with them in one of the parks at Disney World. In her spare time, Hannah delights in day trips, which may include browsing through the little shops in Apalachicola, finding a good antique store, or visiting historical sites. Often referred to as "Trash to Treasures," one of her hobbies is repurposing relics she collects. Other hobbies include making clothes for her boys, niece and nephews, and cooking for her large family. Her specialty is banana pudding. We are so thankful to have Hannah as part of our Bay County family!



employee spotlight

SHELIA WILLIAMS

On Aug. 28, 1990, Shelia Williams began her career in state government with The Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services at Florida State Hospital in Chattahoochee, FL. She was hired as a cashier for Financial Services in the Resident Trust Section. Her primary responsibilities included coding and balancing receipts for resident deposits, cost-of-care payments and cash earned at the resident canteen, clothing store, and staff cafeteria. This introduction to counting large sums of money, coding receipts, and reconciling accounts was a catalyst for her future in accounting.

For the next 20 years, Ms. Williams stayed in the same department but held several positions. She worked her way up the ranks from cashier to Accounting Services supervisor, eventually moving back to Bay County to assist her elderly parents. She began her career at Bay County Utility Services as a Contract Coordinator/Accounting Specialist and has worked her way up to Utility Services finance manager. With the blessing and encouragement of her director, she decided to go back to school to obtain her accounting degree to complement the marketing degree that she already had. After 30 years of service in state/county government, Ms. Williams has recently joined the Drop Program and looks forward to completing her last few years until retirement.



WHO WE ARE

For more than 50 years, Bay County Utility Services has provided our community with reliable, economical, and high-quality water and wastewater services. We employ highly trained people and use state-of-the-art equipment while continuing to set industry standards as they relate to procedures, methods, and customer service. Bay County Utility Services is committed to high-level customer satisfaction and is always looking for ways to streamline processes to reduce redundancy and expense. Our customers receive the most cost-effective service to reduce water losses while conserving one of the world's most precious resources.

The Utility Services Department employs more than 80 employees who make up the Water, Wastewater, and Utility Permitting divisions, along with laboratory and administrative staff dedicated to providing quality water and wastewater services. The Water Division treats and distributes drinking water to the local municipalities, Tyndall Air Force Base, and the county's retail customers in the unincorporated area. The Water Division also provides untreated raw water for local industry use in their cooling processes. Utility Services owns and operates a 60 million gallons-per-day capacity water treatment plant, two raw water pumping stations, six water booster stations, 391 miles of retail infrastructure and 194 miles of wholesale infrastructure.

The Wastewater Division provides wastewater treatment services to unincorporated Bay County and the cities of Callaway, Parker, Springfield, Mexico Beach, and Tyndall Air Force Base. Utility Services operates two wastewater treatment plants strategically located throughout the county to provide sewer services to residents. The Wastewater Division also manages the Bay County Environmental Laboratory, which provides short hold-time analysis for the department.

The Permitting Division facilitates the review and processing of plans and permits for the Utility Services Department, which includes water and wastewater construction contract assistance and bid preparation. The Permitting Division performs construction site inspections and project management and performs water and wastewater utility locates for public and private development and construction.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

In Fiscal Year 2020:

- > Operating and maintaining Bay County's water and wastewater systems is a round-the-clock operation. During the pandemic, Utilities maintained a full staff of onsite water and wastewater operators, maintenance technicians, instrument and electrical technicians, customer service personnel, water distribution and wastewater collection technicians to ensure that utility services were maintained. Additional precautions were made and continue to be implemented to ensure the safety of our employees.

CONTACT US:

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water and wastewater

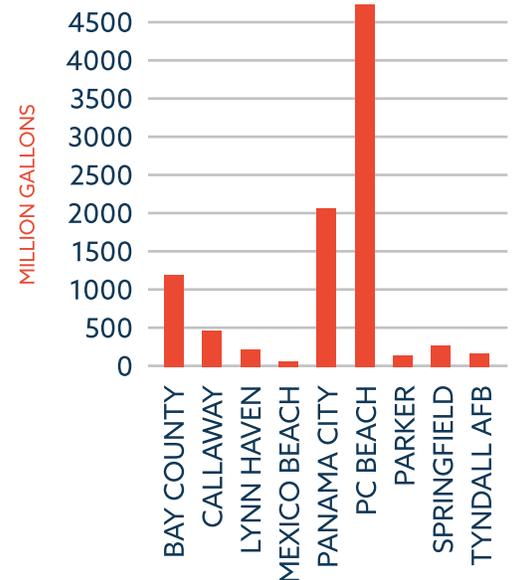


- > Bay County Utility Services transitioned to a new billing platform during the pandemic. The new system will allow customers to enroll in auto pay and to view their bills online which will include a yearly consumption graph. With the new improved system, the customer is able to obtain the current and past due amounts over the phone.
- > With the recommendation from the county manager, Bay County Utilities suspended disconnects and late fees from March 2020 - September 2020 to ensure that families were able to focus monetary resources on their health and family.
- > Bay County Utility Services lab assisted St. Andrew Bay Watch with water monitoring efforts by performing fecal coliform testing to assess the water quality and monitor for sources of pollution. St. Andrew Bay Watch aims to inspire the citizens of Bay County to protect and improve the water quality and ecological integrity of the St. Andrew Bay Watershed and foster the next generation of environmental stewards.

Since Hurricane Michael, Bay County Utilities has worked non-stop in repairing the extensive damage to multiple buildings onsite. Some of the projects completed are listed below:

- > **Site lighting replacement** - All of the existing light poles were damaged during Hurricane Michael. BCUS requested proposals for a new lighting design to meet the needs of facilities, improve reliability of the fixtures during high winds, reduce energy consumption, and maximize lighting. The new fixtures installed on the basin walkways are telescopic and can be lowered in preparation for hurricanes. The light assemblies used for the site lighting are direct bury round poles.
- > **Post-storm fencing repair project** - This project consisted of the replacement of security fencing at the Water Treatment Plant and all remote sites. Approximately 50,000 linear feet of 6-inch galvanized, black vinyl coated, chain link fencing with three strands of barbed wire and more than 25 gates was installed.
- > Many of the buildings within Utility Services required new roofs and structure hardening after the storm. This project hardens and re-roofs all structures to the High Velocity Hurricane Zone (HVHZ) requirements, as described in the 2017 Florida Building Code. This exterior package focused on the roofs, windows, and doors of all the facilities. It included the Water Treatment Plant, operations building, electrical/maintenance building, generator building, sludge press building, filter building, pole barn/sludge drying, maintenance building, and collections building. It also included the remote sites at the Williams Bayou pump station and the Southeast and Gainer booster stations.

2020 DRINKING WATER CONSUMPTION



	FY2019	FY2020
PANAMA CITY	1,989	2,118
PANAMA CITY BEACH	4,693	4,951
SPRINGFIELD	348	293
PARKER	120	118
CALLAWAY	460	466
LYNN HAVEN	155	195
MEXICO BEACH	99	77
TAFB	160	160
BAY COUNTY	1,076	1,112
TOTAL	9,100	9,490



employee spotlight

VANESSA PHILLIPS

Vanessa Phillips has been a valuable asset to the Transit team over the last year. She has been a county employee for 14 years and transferred to the Transit Division two years ago. A mother to two young children, she is a master of multitasking and her performance at work is no different. She puts forth her best effort every day and strives to anticipate needs and meet them before ever being asked. Even while working remotely and providing care to her children, she never wavered in her commitment or compromised the quality of her work.

It was when the Transit Division was able to move into our newly renovated building that we really found Vanessa's hidden talent. Many of her coworkers were unable to attend work in person during the move, so she packed and unpacked their offices for them in record time. She then went a step further and made an effort to create spaces in their offices with their personal items displayed so that they would feel at home upon their return. Her care and compassion for her colleagues is evident in all that she does and we are proud to have Vanessa as part of our team!



WHO WE ARE

The Transit Division oversees Bay County's only public transportation provider. The Bay County Public Transit System is made up of a fixed-route system as well as a demand-response system. The fixed-route system, called Bay Town Trolley, is made up of larger buses that are utilized to operate on a predetermined route according to a predetermined schedule. The fixed-route system has posted timetables and designated stops where riders are picked up and dropped off.

The demand-response system, Bay Area Transportation, is made up of smaller buses that are utilized to provide transportation to eligible individuals who are transportation disadvantaged, 65 years of age or older, have a disability, or are unable to use the fixed-route system. Just as its name implies, the demand-response system utilizes a reservation system to schedule individuals to be picked up and dropped off at designated locations and times in accordance with their needs.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

As an essential service, public transportation continued to operate throughout the pandemic, providing service to those citizens needing transportation to and from essential services. As each day presented new challenges, transit employees had to be flexible and adapt quickly to the ever-changing requirements of the pandemic. Ridership decreased with so many people staying home and not working or doing their normal travel routines. In response to safety protocols, social distancing was implemented, and enhanced cleaning measures were put in place on buses and at all transit facilities.

All staff and riders are required to wear masks while working and riding. Social distancing signs and hand sanitizer stations on buses have become permanent fixtures. Although COVID-19 has changed so much of our world, The Bay County Public Transit System remains unwavering in our mission to serve the community with vital transportation now and into the future.

New Fixed Route Buses

This year the Bay County Public Transit System was able to purchase four new Eldorado EZ Rider II buses for the fixed-route system. The four buses had a combined cost of more than \$1.4 million, and these purchases were made possible using state and federal grant funds.

New Bus Shelters

With the help of federal funding and a generous donation from the Chapman Family Foundation, eight new bus shelters, benches, trash receptacles, and bicycle bollards were purchased and installed. These provided much-needed updates and improved comfort measures for our riders.

Newly Renovated Transit Facilities

After Hurricane Michael, the Bay County Public Transit System was left with two partially destroyed buildings in need of complete renovation. In late 2019 construction began on both the operations and maintenance facility along with the administration and meeting facility located at the Massalina Drive Fuel Yard. Buildings were ready for occupancy in late 2020. The cost of the project was more than \$3.5 million dollars, made possible by federal grant funding and insurance proceeds.

FIXED ROUTE SYSTEM



TOTAL RIDERSHIP	# OF BUSES IN FLEET	# OF BUS ROUTES
325,847	15	9

DEMAND RESPONSE SYSTEM



TOTAL RIDERSHIP	# OF BUSES IN FLEET
42,444	19

CONTACT US:

Bay Town Trolley | (850) 769-0557 | info@baytowntrolley.org
 Bay Area Transportation | (850) 785-0808
 Transit 8161 Administration | (850) 248-8161
www.baycountyfl.gov



WHO WE ARE

The Bay County Economic Development Alliance (BayEDA) is Bay County's economic development entity. Publicly and privately funded, BayEDA serves Bay County in supporting existing businesses and recruiting new businesses. BayEDA supports the existing pillars of the economy and is dedicated to growing and diversifying the Bay County economy. BayEDA presents the positive points of Bay County to businesses, industry, and professional leaders in their decision-making process for capital investment and job creation. Whether someone is looking to start, expand, or relocate their business, BayEDA has the tools, resources, and support available to make an informed and smart decision to ensure success in Bay County.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

Last year, Clark and Son, Inc. located their distribution and final assembly headquarters operation to Panama City, creating 50 new jobs.

In March 2020, Bay EDA and its partners announced that Suzuki Motor of America, Inc. planned to establish their new Suzuki Marine Technical Center USA in Bay County, investing approximately \$25 million and hiring some 25 researchers and technicians. This location decision further solidifies our community as the premier location for marine-based research centers, as Suzuki joins Mercury Marine, which has a large facility located in Bay County as well.

At the beginning of 2020, there was an overall optimism that the year could bring about record-setting business expansions and new company recruitments. However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted that sentiment in Bay County and throughout the world. At the start of the pandemic, Bay EDA temporarily refocused its role and worked as a source of information for our business community. From local, state, and federal resources and programs, Bay EDA was able to provide businesses a streamlined database of information regarding available programs to help businesses of all sizes throughout Bay County.

While navigating COVID-19, the Bay EDA has been able to continue pushing economic development projects and initiatives forward. In the fall of 2020, in partnership with Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport, the Bay EDA was able to secure approximately \$4.8 million in grant funds to support Project Gator through the Triumph Gulf Coast Board of Directors. Additionally, working with multiple community partners, the Bay County Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME) Chapter was established to support our existing industry. This nationally recognized apprenticeship program develops global entry-level, multi-craft maintenance technicians. As the year 2020 comes to an end, we are proud of our local economy's resilience and the wins that our community continues to see amid a pandemic. We look forward to the year ahead.



CONTACT US:

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www.bayeda.com

panama city community development council



WHO WE ARE

Nestled along beautiful St. Andrews Bay in Northwest Florida, Panama City offers an exciting balance of culinary experiences, outdoor activities, and cultural encounters, while radiating a laid-back feel. It's this unique combination that makes Panama City an irresistible destination for individuals, couples, and families. With multiple historic neighborhoods and its own oyster trail, there's always something to see or do in Panama City. As the largest city in Bay County, Panama City serves as the county seat. While other areas of the county have had tourist development taxing districts for many decades, the Panama City tourist development taxing district was established in 2014 with collections beginning in January of 2015. Destination Panama City (Panama City Community Development Council, Inc.) is the official tourism agency for the City of Panama City, Florida and is funded by the 5-percent tourist development tax applied to short-term, overnight accommodation rentals in Panama City. From 2015-2018, the tourist development tax revenue generated from this district was about \$1.5 million per year. The economic impact of tourism for this district during the same period was more than \$90 million annually. Two years post hurricane, about 85 percent of the short-term rental units are back online. The economic impact of the hurricane caused about a 20-percent decline in funds generated by the tourist development tax. The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic in fiscal year 2020 created challenges for industries around the world, specifically the tourism and travel industries. Panama City, due to its diversified draw of ecotourism, history, culinary, and culture is uniquely positioned to rebound faster than many other destinations.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

As the City of Panama City continues to rebuild from Hurricane Michael (2018), the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 created a whole new set of challenges. With domestic and international travel restrictions, nationwide lockdowns, and the temporary suspension of large-scale events, the Destination Panama City team worked hard on major projects that would serve to keep Panama City in position to bounce back once it was safe and people again felt comfortable to travel.

Destination Panama City Digital Visitors Guide – a brand new visitor's guide was designed and made available to the public digitally. With four major amenities (Panama City Marina, St. Andrews Marina, Marina Civic Center, and the Martin Theatre) still being rebuilt from damages caused by Hurricane Michael, the new visitors guide focused on our small businesses. We created a "Let our Locals be your Guide" style visitor's guide. It told the stories of our people, exemplified their endearing character, and highlighted the resiliency of the community.

DestinationPanamaCity.com – a brand new, Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant website was launched that included a new Bay Cam, a much cleaner aesthetic, and enhanced content.

Future Visitors Center and Inshore Artificial Reef Project – The original Visitors Center, located at the historic St. Andrews Bank, was heavily damaged during the storm. Staff worked remotely and in temporary locations until a 20-year land lease at a new location on Beach Drive was secured with the City of Panama City. The groundbreaking for the new multi-use facility occurred in September 2020 with anticipated completion by May 2021. To further enhance the kayak launch parcel, applications for an inshore artificial reef project were also initiated.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Awarded a VISIT FLORIDA Silver Flagler Award in the Direct Marketing category for the Post-cards from Panama City campaign.



CONTACT US:

(850) 215-1700 | 1000 Beck Avenue, Panama City, Florida 32401
www.destinationpanamacity.com

panama city beach tourist development council

WHO WE ARE

The Bay County Tourist Development Council (TDC) and Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) are responsible for marketing Panama City Beach as a year-round tourist destination, funded through a 5-percent tourist development tax applied to short-term, overnight accommodation rentals in Panama City Beach, which equals about 18 million visitor days/nights each year. The tax also pays for beach renourishment, cleaning, and maintenance efforts. For more information on Bay County Tourism, visit www.VisitPanamaCityBeach.com.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

The TDC's sole purpose is to bring visitors and their families to the Real. FUN. Beach. In 2020, COVID-19 presented a challenge. In March 2020, The United States declared a national emergency due to COVID-19, and the Centers for Disease Control advised no gatherings of 50 or more people. The Bay County TDC took immediate action despite the uncertainty, focusing on building advocacy among locals and past visitors and leveraging the role of the brand in a meaningful way during this time. The TDC paused paid media and used owned platforms for messaging and delivery and created a phased approach for the marketing and media plan to respond to the evolution of the COVID-19 situation in Bay County.

Marketing & Media 2019

The TDC launched a phased media and marketing approach in 2020 due to the evolution of the COVID-19 situation in the Bay County area.

March through April – Phase 1 Prevention

- > The “Stay PCB Current” campaign was launched to provide informational updates on the evolution of the COVID-19 situation in the Bay County area.
- > “PCB Foodie on the Go” was launched to support area restaurants.

April through May – Phase 2 Inspiration, FUN, and Familiarity

- > The second phase was all about sharing memories (inspiration), re-creating a PCB experience at home (fun), and experiencing the beach through the eyes of locals (familiarity).
- > This is #MyPCB – Visitors shared their favorite memories for a chance to win some PCB swag.
- > Real. FUN. Beach at Home – Encouraged visitors to re-create their favorite PCB memory from home.
- > PCB Through Our Eyes – Encouraged locals to share their beach experiences with visitors to keep Panama City Beach top of mind.

May 19 – Phase 3 Reunited with Visitors

- > “The Beach Always Brings Us Back” campaign welcomed visitors back to Panama City Beach.
- > The media plan strategically targeted key geographic markets to pause and evaluate community response to be prepared to turn off media if there were spikes in outbreaks.

July – September

- > The Bay County TDC relaunched the destination's marketing campaign “Make It Yours,” while remaining nimble and flexible with the destination's digital media plan.

2020 INITIATIVES

Stay It Forward - Launched “Stay it Forward,” a “voluntourism” program aimed at aiding Mexico Beach in recovery efforts from Hurricane Michael's impact. **Panama City Beach Sports Complex** - Panama City Beach's new 160-acre Sports Complex officially opened in October 2019. **Chasin' the Sun Fishing Show on Discovery Channel** - January through July 2020 - In 2020, Visit Panama City Beach announced the fifth season of the award-winning “Chasin' the Sun” fishing show on Discovery Channel's new outdoor programming. **Hosted the first Pirates of the High Seas Virtual Festival** - Visit Panama City Beach hosted a fun and interactive online experience for visitors to enjoy from the comfort of their own homes.

CONTACT US:

(850) 233-5070 | info@visitpanamacitybeach.com
www.visitpanamacitybeach.com



2020 stats

- > 852K Facebook Likes
- > 69.4k Instagram Followers
- > 44.1k Twitter Followers
- > 1.4 million YouTube Views
- > 5.7 million website visits
- > 359,107 unique listeners stream The Real Fun Beach Pandora Station
- > 11 Tradeshows attended (Due to COVID-19)



mexico beach community development council



WHO WE ARE

As Bay County's smallest city, Mexico Beach is less than five miles long; however, there is an abundance of activity in our little corner of Bay County. An unconventional beach destination, Mexico Beach provides unique adventures tailored toward an easy-going vibe for visitors and residents year round.

The Mexico Beach Community Development Council (MBCDC) is distinctly purposed to promote and advertise the Mexico Beach area, its attractions, and accommodations in a manner that will draw tourists. Funding comes directly from the five-percent tourist development tax applied to short-term, overnight lodging in Mexico Beach. The MBCDC is able to continuously mature its marketing operations as well as assist in beach nourishment, canal, and park enhancements and community event support.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

Mexico Beach continues to move forward since the massive destruction left by Hurricane Michael in 2018, as businesses reopen and visitors support our community. Though 2020 began with great strides, the hurdles that COVID-19 created for Mexico Beach left our prime visitation months empty, with vacation rentals being halted by order of the governor. The MBCDC continued to communicate with partners and visitors by following all state orders and relaying messaging on all platforms. Once vacation rentals resumed, the MBCDC updated all social media platforms and our website to ensure that accurate messaging was relayed.

The MBCDC continues to promote our open beaches as well as a handful of eateries and shops. The MBCDC launched the "Love My Beach" marketing campaign, thanks to a Visit Florida marketing grant, that aims to amplify a sense of pride and love for Mexico Beach. The campaign launched into markets in Fall 2020 and will run into the spring of 2021.

The City of Mexico Beach broke ground on the new Welcome Center, expected to open in Summer 2021.

A beach restoration project that will restore the critically eroded area as well as the entire beach began in 2020, and the MBCDC is working with various entities, including the Bay County Tourist Development Council, to fund this project. The MBCDC continues to host students from Bay County schools in the "Stay it Forward" campaign, created by the Panama City Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau. Collectively, students have planted more than 5,000 sea oats and other beach vegetation along the dunes in Mexico Beach. This project has been graciously received and will continue to be implemented in 2021.



CONTACT US:

850-648-8196 | 102 Canal Parkway, Mexico Beach, FL 32456
www.mexicobeach.com

WHO WE ARE

In July 2012, the federal RESTORE Act (Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act) established a trust fund from administrative and civil penalties related to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Five “pots” of funds were set up in the federal trust fund.

A portion of funds from Pot 1 and Pot 3 are reserved for Bay County. Settlement payments will be made into the trust fund over a number of years, and will gradually be available to the county. The county’s share of Pot 1 will be approximately \$42 million over 15 years.

Pot 2 will provide about \$11 million. The county will also pursue matching funds. The money can be used to restore and protect the natural resources and economy of the Gulf Coast region.

The Bay County Board of County Commissioners decides which eligible projects to fund. Based on recommendations from a citizens advisory committee, the board selected projects for the first funds available from Pot 1, the Direct Component, and for all funds that will be available from Pot 3, the Spill Impact Component. A grant application must be submitted to the U.S. Department of the Treasury for each project.

Projects funded from Pot 1 include:

- Replace the dilapidated dock at the AMlkids/Panama City Marine Institute. The dock is used as a launching site for restoration projects for the St. Andrew Bay system. Natural resource agencies also use the dock.
- Update the county’s stormwater master plan, last updated in the 1990s. Bay County Public Works contracted a firm to revise the plan, which will be used to prioritize stormwater management and treatment for the bay system.
- Evaluate the potential environmental impacts of reopening Old Pass/East Pass, supervised by Public Works.
- Improve access to St. Andrew Bay and the gulf by a City of Lynn Haven project at Porter Park and improvements to Carl Gray Park by the City of Panama City.

Pot 3 funds now support and enhance water quality monitoring and reporting by St. Andrew Bay Watch. The information from this effort will help guide water quality improvement projects.

With funding provided by The Nature Conservancy, Bay County and Florida State University are launching the St. Andrew/St. Joseph Bays Estuary Program [<https://pc.fsu.edu/estuaryprogram>], hosted by FSU Panama City. The county also added a Pot 1 project to provide funding. An Estuary Program is a locally-driven, non-regulatory effort to identify and solve issues facing a bay and watershed, based on objective, scientific information. The first major collaborative effort will be to prepare a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for the bays’ watershed. Water quality demonstration projects are also planned for the near future.

Visit the Bay County RESTORE Act projects storyboard at <https://tinyurl.com/BayRESTORE-projectstory> to learn more about the projects.

To receive occasional updates on Bay County RESTORE Act and Gulf restoration activities, send an email to jmuller@baycountyfl.gov with “subscribe” in the subject line.

The county is also engaged in the Triumph Gulf Coast [<https://www.myfloridatriumph.com>] process, a nonprofit corporation organized to oversee the expenditure of 75 percent of all funds recovered by the Florida attorney general for economic damages to the state that resulted from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. The Board of County Commissioners reviews all proposed projects within the county and provides letters of support for projects the board believes would be beneficial to the county.

More information on these efforts is available on the County’s RESTORE Act web page at [bay-countyfl.gov: https://www.baycountyfl.gov/227/RESTORE-Act](https://www.baycountyfl.gov/227/RESTORE-Act)



CONTACT US:

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employee spotlight

PAMELA DONAR

We'd like to highlight Pamela Donar. Pamela came to Panama City right after Hurricane Michael on sabbatical from JP Morgan to assist her mother in her recovery efforts. She started volunteering with Rebuild Bay to help occupy her time not spent on recovery for her mother. She jumped in to lead a strategic planning session with the board of directors, which helped to put the organization on a solid path for 2020. After several months, Pamela decided to join the team full time and has been a key player in the organization's accomplishments to date. Pamela continues to help her mother while making strides with the organization and managing her two small, very active dogs.



WHO WE ARE

Rebuild Bay is Bay County's Long Term Recovery Organization/Group (LTRO/G) providing critical resources for the Bay County community. We were established to assist residents in their recovery following Hurricane Michael. We have expanded our operations to include residents impacted by COVID-19 and Hurricane Sally and are posturing for future declared emergencies.

WHAT HAPPENED IN 2020?

Hurricane Michael

- > Established the Unmet Needs Committee to review resident cases and allocate resources:
 - > 180 households served
 - > \$350,000 in repair projects
 - > \$130,000 in furniture and donated materials
 - > \$20,000 in volunteer hours

COVID-19 Response

- > Partnered with the City of Panama City on weekly food distribution out of the Glenwood Community Center for senior citizens.
- > Partnered with the Bay County Board of County Commissioners on a 40,000-pound mobile food pantry, servicing nearly 1,000 households.
- > Provided food for more than 2,500 households through weekly and pop-up mobile food pantries.
- > Distributed more than 130,000 lbs of food.
- > Distributed more than 10,000 masks, COVID-19 monitoring and personal protective equipment (PPE) kits.
- > Partnered with the LEAD Coalition on the Resilient American Communities initiative and led an Outreach Workgroup.

Hurricane Sally

- > Assisted with activation and demobilization on a secondary shelter at Haney Technical School.
- > Provided guidance to residents on available resources.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Rebuild Bay has been awarded more than \$366,000 in grants this year.



CONTACT US:

(850) 320-3211 | director@rebuildbaycounty.org
www.rebuildbaycounty.org
[Facebook.com/RebuildBayCountyInc](https://www.facebook.com/RebuildBayCountyInc)
Text-2-Donate : REBUILDBAY (to 41444)

BAY COUNTY COMMISSION

DEPARTMENT	PHONE NUMBER
ADMINISTRATION	248-8140
ADDRESSING	248-8374
ANIMAL CONTROL	767-3333
BUDGET OFFICE	248-8240
BUILDERS SERVICES	248-8350
CAFE	248-8196
CODE ENFORCEMENT	248-8290
COMMUNICATIONS	248-8170
CO-OP EXTENSION	784-6105
COUNTY ATTORNEY	248-8175
EMERGENCY SERVICES	784-4000
EMS	248-6040
ENGINEERING	248-8301
FACILITIES	248-8120
FIRE SERVICES	248-6040
GENERAL SERVICES	248-8732
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS	248-8071
HUMAN RESOURCES	248-8201
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	248-8004
LIBRARY	522-2100
MEDICAL EXAMINER	747-5740
MOSQUITO CONTROL	248-8720
PARKS & RECREATION	248-8730
PLANNING	248-8250
PUBLIC WORKS	248-8302
PURCHASING	248-8270
RECORDS MANAGEMENT	248-8278
RISK MANAGEMENT	248-8230
ROADS	248-8810
SECURITY	248-8195
SOLID WASTE	236-2212
TRANSIT	248-8161
TRAFFIC ENGINEERING	248-8740
UTILITY SERVICES	248-5010
VETERANS SERVICES	248-8280

CONSTITUTIONAL

DEPARTMENT	PHONE NUMBER
CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT	747-5100
CLERK FINANCE	747-5219
PROPERTY APPRAISER	248-8401
SHERIFF	747-4700
SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS	784-6100
TAX COLLECTOR	248-8501

MUNICIPAL

DEPARTMENT	PHONE NUMBER
CALLAWAY	871-6000
LYNN HAVEN	265-2121
MEXICO BEACH	648-5700
PANAMA CITY BEACH	233-5100
PANAMA CITY	872-3010
PARKER	871-4104
SPRINGFIELD	872-7570

OTHER

DEPARTMENT	PHONE NUMBER
TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL	233-5070
FLORIDA STATE INFO CENTER	1-866- 693-6748
ONLINE	http://411.myflorida.com
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE	215-9965

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

DEPARTMENT	PHONE NUMBER
FIRE / POLICE / AMBULANCE	9-1-1
BAY COUNTY DISPATCH	784-4000
ANIMAL CONTROL DISPATCH	248-6034
POISON INFORMATION	1-800-222-1222

#BEAHERO

for our **healthcare workers**
for your **neighbors**
for **Bay County**

After Hurricane Michael, our community showed great courage. We were an example to others. Let's show our courage once again.

Together, we can slow the spread of **COVID-19**.



Stay Home if
You Are Sick



Avoid Crowds or
Closed Spaces



Wash Your
Hands



Wear a Face
Covering



Stay 6 Feet
Away



**BAYCOUNTY,
FLORIDA**

Text "BAYHEALTH" to 888777 for Important Updates
[BAYHEALTHCOVID19.ORG](https://www.bayhealthco19.org)



***more than you
imagined.***

LAYOUT & DESIGN BY:
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at the Bay County website: www.baycountyfl.gov



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