

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Board of County Commissioners

May 13, 2024

DESTIN
FORT
WALTON
BEACH
FLORIDA



More than 275 Artificial Reefs Recently Deployed off of Destin-Fort Walton Beach

Destin-Fort Walton Beach, Florida – Marine life in the Gulf of Mexico now has hundreds of additional underwater habitats thanks to a \$1.26 million artificial reef project funded by the Natural Resource Damage Assessment Fund.

The project included 133 different reef sites and the deployment of 279 total reef structures ranging from 6-25 feet. The project was managed by the Coastal Resources team of Destin-Fort Walton Beach in Okaloosa County's Tourism Development Department. The reefs include some of the deepest modules ever deployed by Destin-Fort Walton Beach with depths ranging from 65-292 feet.

"This is an impressive effort to enhance the habitats for marine life in the Gulf of Mexico waters," said Okaloosa County Board Chairman Paul Mixon. "This is a great example of how we continue to work to be good stewards of the environment that we depend on for our fishing and tourism industries."

This project also included 3D-printed modules that were deployed in late February and are the first of its kind in the Gulf of Mexico. Overall, the project involved six total deployment days spanning from February to early May and involved contractors Walter Marine and 1Print who performed the construction and deployment work.

The project was 100% grant-funded from the Natural Resource Damage Assessment Fund which is administered by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

"I am extremely proud of the work that was done to complete this extensive project," said Destin-Fort Walton Beach Coastal Resources Manager Alex Fogg. "Our area of the Gulf of Mexico is lacking in natural reef structures for marine life to thrive which is something we are working to change. Not only do artificial reefs create essential habitat for native species here in the Gulf, but they also provide ideal locations for fishermen and divers to visit."

Coordinates for these and other reefs off of Destin-Fort Walton Beach can be found at <https://www.destinfb.com/explore/eco-tourism/artificial-reefs/maps/>

About Destin-Fort Walton Beach, Florida

www.destinfb.com

Captivating sugar-white sand beaches and emerald-green waters await in Destin-Fort Walton Beach. Located in Northwest Florida, the destination is not only an ideal place to unwind and experience total relaxation along a 20-mile stretch of beach, but to uncover the adventurous side within. The family-friendly locale offers an environment of discovery to play and explore, inviting kids to get on the water and give their adventurous side room to grow. Visitors enjoy pristine beaches, Gulf-to-Table seafood, abundant watersport activities, championship golf, lively nightlife, and numerous attractions, festivals and events designed to thrill all ages.

###

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER NICK TOMECEK AT 850.651.7321

NTOMECEK@MYOKALOOSA.COM