

Okaloosa County, FL

Population - 187,700

Located in the Florida Panhandle, Okaloosa County stretches from the Gulf of Mexico to the Alabama/Florida border and is roughly divided in half by Interstate 10. While probably best known for tourism and its recreational opportunities – the 26 miles of white sand beaches and the waterfront communities of Destin and Fort Walton Beach – Okaloosa County is much, much more.

Among the County's more notable features is its significant military presence. Eglin Air Force Base reservation is the nation's largest military installation geographically and covers 464,000 acres. It spans three counties but approximately two thirds of it as well as the heart of its facilities lie in Okaloosa County. The population on the base itself is estimated to be a bit less than 10,000 and it is home to, among others, the 96th Test Wing, 46th Test Wing, 33rd Fighter Wing, the 58th and 60th Fighter Squadrons, 308th Armament Systems Wing, AFRL Munitions Directorate and Army 7th Special

Forces Group. Hurlburt Field lies within the reservation and hosts the Air Force Special Operations Command and School, 1st Special Operations Wing, and the Air Combat Command's 505th Command and Control Wing. The reservation's Wildlife Management Area is also home to over 100 rare plant and animal species, 63 of which are considered globally rare. These include the threatened Okaloosa darter, sea turtles that nest on its white-sand beaches and red-cockaded woodpeckers that thrive in its longleaf pine forests. The base is in fact at the center of one of the most bio diverse locations in North America.

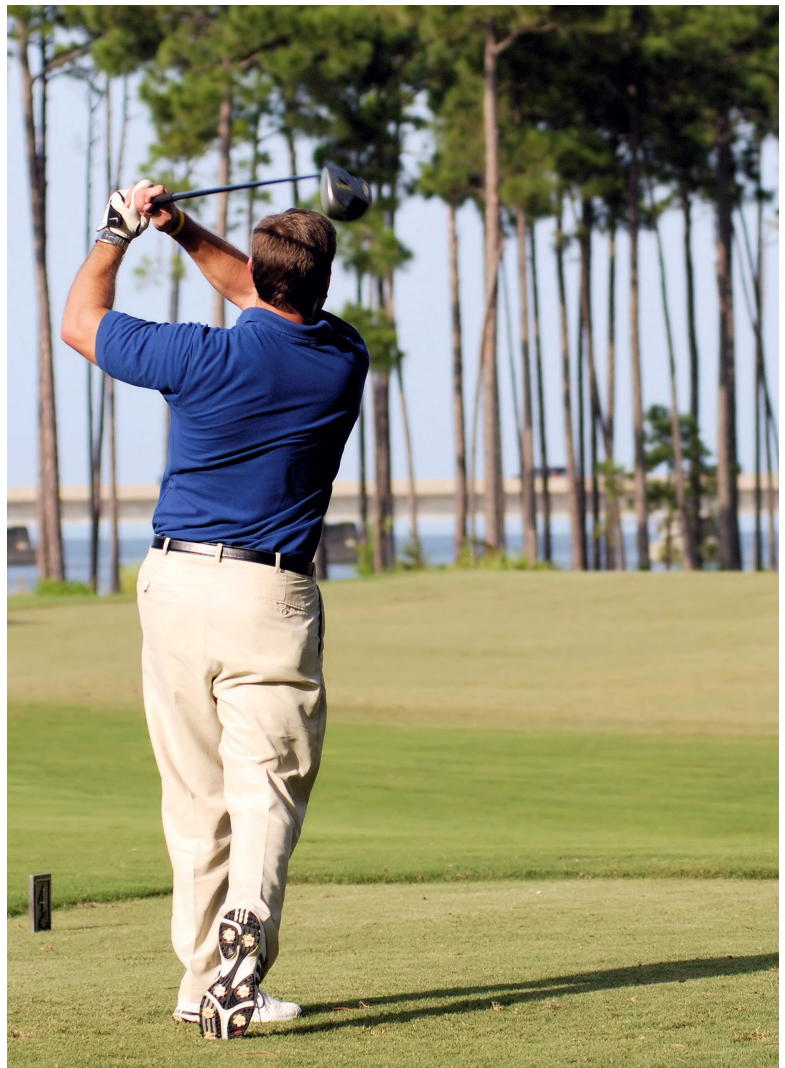
In some ways, Okaloosa County might be nicknamed the County of airports. Located in mid-county, Bob Sikes Airport also has a significant military presence with frequent military training by aircraft based at Eglin AFB, Duke Field, Hurlburt Field, NAS Pensacola, NAS Whiting Field and Fort Rucker. Additionally, it supports a mix of general aviation and aerospace

corporations performing modification work on military aircraft. Northwest Florida Regional Airport shares runways with Eglin and is the area's commercial airport with non-stop service to Atlanta, Charlotte, Dallas, and Washington DC/Reagan from Delta, American, United and U.S. Airways. The final county airport is Destin Airport and is located in South County. It is a general aviation airport and serves those with private and corporate aircraft.

But one cannot ignore the beautiful white sandy beaches, emerald green waters, and Destin's harbor, all of which help make the County a recreational paradise. The 100 Fathom curve draws closer to the County than any other spot in Florida and, as a result, deep-sea bottom fishing is a local specialty. Red snapper, grouper, triggerfish, scamp, and amberjack are plentiful. In addition, charter boats also troll near the coast, finding cobia, black fin tuna, king mackerel, bluefish, barracuda, and Spanish mackerel. Far offshore, trollers can find white and blue marlin, wahoo, and sailfish. More than one hundred charter and party boats call the county home, and range in size from six passengers to those that carry more than 100 anglers.

Other water activities include snorkeling and diving, parasailing and relaxing aboard a sunset cruise on a glass bottom boat or a high-speed racer. Dolphins can be watched swimming in the wake of a sightseeing excursion.

Inland opportunities are also impressive. Popular activities include: excellent deer, turkey and feral hog hunting; mobility impaired and youth Special Opportunity Hunts; primitive camping; canoeing scenic waters; mountain biking in the Timberlake Recreation Area; and hiking the Florida National Scenic Trail. For the less adventuresome, ample opportunities exist for fine dining and shopping. Further, the County has been widely recognized for its golf courses.



Residents are friendly, help one another and have a sense of community. The culture is in many ways that of a small town. Okaloosa County is also very fiscally and politically conservative. It has the lowest mileage rate of any county in Florida and is proud of it. Most of the residents would like it to continue that way. Further, in the last three presidential elections, the Republican nominee garnered an average of 75% of the vote. The area's schools are first rate, crime is relatively low and local medical facilities are excellent.

History

The area's known history dates back to the early seventh century A.D. when the first American Indians settled in the area. Spanish explorers began to arrive in the late 1530s. At the time, the Florida Panhandle was home to the Apalachee tribe. The first Europeans visited the area in the 1600s. For the most part, though, the area remained an untamed wilderness until after the Civil War when it became home to a handful of hardy homesteaders. They made their way south on foot, ox carts, boats, and mule wagons to establish small sustenance farms. These resourceful settlers made ends meet by fishing, hunting, and trading. Small outposts sprang up and served as gathering places for these isolated pioneers. Okaloosa pioneers gathered often to exchange ideas, goods and news. Soon, these trading posts became small towns, which in turn, grew into the cities and towns we recognize today.

Two industries, naval stores and lumbering, brought economic growth to the area during the pioneer period. Starting in the 1870s, turpentine stills dotted the piney woods and hundreds of workers slashed pine trees for raw materials for such things as paint, chemicals, and medicines. Lumbering also flourished in the densely forested region as saw mills cut the huge trees for lumber for building in the United States and abroad.

Although fishing has always been an important local business, it was primarily a family operation. Agriculture was limited to home gardens and experiments in blueberry culture, Tung nut trees, sugar cane, and citrus.

In 1915 the State Legislature passed a bill creating Okaloosa County from the existing counties of Santa Rosa and Walton. The County derived its name from a Choctaw Indian word meaning black water. A temporary county seat was established in Milligan until a special election was held in 1917 and Crestview was

chosen as the new permanent seat.

For the next 20 years, Okaloosa County retained a remote, primitive pioneer character which depended on small farming and fishing communities. Change began in 1934 when a local businessman and airplane enthusiast, James E. Plew, saw the advantages of bringing the military to a county suffering from the depression. He proposed to donate 1,460 adjoining acres to the U.S. government for a bombing and gunnery range. This proposal was accepted and what was to become Eglin Air Force Base was born.

With the arrival of the military and, later tourism, came modern conveniences such as paved roads, telephones and electricity. Serious development began in the 1950's and the population growth followed as can be seen from Table I.

Table I: County Population Growth

Year	Population
1920	9,360
1930	9,897
1940	12,900
1950	27,533
1960	61,175
1970	88,187
1980	109,920
1990	143,776
2000	170,498
2010	180,822

Source: U.S. Census

Table II: Climate data for Okaloosa County

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Normal High °F	61	65	71	78	84	90	91	91	88	80	72	64	77.9
Normal Low °F	37	40	46	51	60	68	71	71	66	54	46	39	54.1
Precipitation in Inches	5.80	5.39	6.52	4.26	4.32	6.08	9.40	6.91	6.72	4.53	4.70	4.57	69.20

Source: The Weather Channel

Demographics

The County population in 2012 is estimated to be 187,700, primarily due to the unit move of the Army 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) from Fort Bragg, N.C. to Eglin AFB with their families in 2011. 22% of the county population is under 18 years of age and 14% are over 65. Otherwise, the population is spread relatively evenly. Approximately 30% of the population is military veterans. A little over 44,000 (24%) over the age of three are enrolled in school. Of those approximately 12,400 are enrolled in college or graduate school. Of those over 25 years of age, 28% have a high school degree, another 26% have at least some college but no degree, 11% have an Associate's degree, 17% have a Bachelor's degree and 10% have a graduate or professional degree. 83% of the population is White, 10% Black, 3% Asian and the remainder is some other race or two or more races. Hispanics (all races) make up just over 7% of the population.

The estimated per capita income is \$54,140 and approximately 12% of the population is below the poverty level.

Geography

Okaloosa County covers 1,082 square miles (936 are land) and is located in Florida's Panhandle. The County's southern boundary is the Gulf of Mexico and it stretches north to the Florida / Alabama border. Santa Rosa County

lies to the west and Walton County to the east. Tallahassee is 150 miles east and Mobile, AL, is 100 miles to the west. The County's most prominent features are probably the Eglin Air Force Base Wildlife Area and the Choctawhatchee Bay.

Climate

Okaloosa County has a warm humid subtropical climate and, unlike much of Florida, experiences four distinct seasons. The summers are hot and humid and generally last from late May to mid-September. Spring and autumn are generally warm. Winters are mild and last from December to late February. Overall, the area is wet, averaging almost 70 inches of rain annually. Due to the weather, the area's primary tourist season is spring through late summer.

Table III: Okaloosa County Principal Employers

Rank	Employer	Employees
1	Eglin Air Force Base	17,095
2	Hurlburt Field	11,171
3	Okaloosa County School District	3,388
4	Okaloosa County	1,383
5	Lockheed Martin Corporation	932
6	DRS Training and Control Systems	837
7	Fort Walton Beach Medical Center	812
8	InDyne Inc.	738
9	Jacobs Technology	700
10	Northwest Florida State College	680

Source: Fort Walton Beach 2011 CAFR



Commerce

Historically the County's economy has been driven by tourism, development and the military. As can be seen from Table III on page 4, the Eglin Air Force Base is a primary source of employment, both in terms of the Federal government itself and associated contractors. The County is also home to the largest fishing fleet in Florida.

The Government

The County government is a general law county operating under Section 125 of the Florida Statutes. It is governed by an elected five-member Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and has the usual complement of other constitutional officers – Clerk of the Circuit Court, Property Appraiser, Sheriff, Supervisor of Elections, and Tax Collector. Each Commissioner serves a four-year term and the terms are staggered with elections in November of even numbered years. Two of the five current Commissioners are serving their second term while the other three are in their first term. Of the current Commission Members, one has been serving since 2004; one since 2008, one since 2010 and two became Commissioners in 2012. Commissioners are not term limited. Overall, although the Commissioners do not agree on everything, they are collegial, treat each other with respect and do not allow issues to become personal. All are very fiscally conservative. They also have been very supportive of and have a high regard for the current county staff and its leadership.

The Board appoints a County Administrator who is responsible for the day-to-day operations of county government. 817 of the County's full and part time employees work under the direction of the Board of County Commissioners. The remaining are

distributed to departments under the following: Sheriff, Clerk of Circuit Court, Property Appraiser, Tax Collector, and Supervisor of Elections. The staff is motivated and responsive.

The general fund budget for the Okaloosa County Government for FY 2012-13 is \$34,858,008 and the total budget is \$257,241,796. The County also provides basic services for residents: economic development, public safety (including EMS, 911 communications, emergency management, beach safety, and jail operations), code enforcement, growth management (including planning, building and zoning), roads, lighting, environmental services, parks, mosquito control, storm water, solid waste, airport operations (for its three airports), utilities (water and sewer), library cooperative; and tourist development.

The County's millage rate has dropped from 4.25 (from 2002 to 2006) to the current rate of 3.2899. The unincorporated county is also defined as a municipal service taxing unit (MSTU) and allows the County to render a separate millage (currently 0.18) for unincorporated parks. As previously mentioned, the County has the lowest millage in the state but it also does not have any impact fees, franchise fees or local option sales tax. Its gas tax is also 5 cents below the maximum allowed.

Overall, the County government is very lean and takes pride in its ability to provide a high quality of service at a relatively low cost. Since its peak employment in 2008, the County has shed approximately 130 employees. None of the County's employees are unionized.

The Issues and Opportunities

The County faces two significant short term issues. The first is financial. With the return to pre-boom property values but with post-boom millage rates, the County has limited resources. While the County and its staff have done an excellent job of managing resources, identifying efficiencies and being creative, more will need to be done or additional dollars found. The County's vehicle and equipment (including computers) are aging and many are in need of replacement. The

staff has not had a raise since 2008. The Constitutional Officers are also feeling stretched and the Sheriff is now discussing the possibility of putting resource officers in every school. On top of that, the State continues to place unfunded mandates on the County.

The second issue is one of perception. Some County agencies and previous elected and appointed officials have been involved in well publicized scandals over the past few years. While these individuals are no longer public servants and corrective actions have been taken, some feel the County has run amuck. Regaining the public trust will be a challenge.

The longer term issue is economic development. Presently the County's economy depends primarily on tourism and the military and related activities. As one Commissioner described it, we are a two legged stool and we need to develop the third leg. What that leg will be and how it will be developed is the challenge.

Other, more typical challenges involve balancing the needs of five different commissioners, and negotiating with the other constitutional officers over resources. Internal issues revolve around replacing three key directors who will be retiring in the next three years and space needs.

The Ideal Candidate

First and foremost, the County is looking for a leader, not just a manager. The ideal candidate will think strategically and understand the present is important but it must be balanced with what is best for the County in the long term. The Administrator will be a partner to the elected officials and work with them to develop a vision for the County's future. The individual will then lead the staff in implementing that vision. He/she will be able to convince others to pursue a course of action and plan even in cases where their first reaction would be to do otherwise.

The ideal candidate will be a people person with strong communications skills. She/he will be equally comfortable speaking with CEOs and with the day laborers. The Administrator will hire good people and then mentor



them. He/she will set high expectations for the staff and follow up to ensure work is completed on time and within budget. By the same token, the individual will remember where he/she came from and be there to help when needed. At times, the Administrator will have to roll up his/her sleeves and pitch in. Outstanding customer service will be very important and something the ideal candidate believes in strongly. Okaloosa County is a family oriented county and those values are important to the organization and to the community. In fact, the County is looking for someone to make a long term commitment to it and should not view this position as a stepping stone but rather as a destination.

The next Administrator will need to be very strong financially. In addition to the fact that resources are tight, the County does not have a budget office and consequently the Administrator has traditionally been more involved in the budget preparation and execution than is common in other places. Consequently, strong analytical skills will be needed and the individual will always be looking for ways to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of County operations. Economic development is another area where applicants will need to have a demonstrated track record of success. The County is a diamond in the rough with many attributes that should be attractive to business. It needs someone who is creative, who knows how to bring more focus to its efforts and who knows how to get a deal done.

Strength in intergovernmental relations will be critical to the next Administrator's success. The County has an excellent relationship with the military and with the nine cities within its boundaries. Further cooperation among these entities may be a way to optimize the use of resources. Experience with tourism, particularly in a waterfront community/county is a plus.

Finally, while many of the recent scandals have little or nothing to do with the Board of County Commissioners, the public does not always understand the finer points of governmental organizational lines. Consequently, the County is looking for someone whose integrity is above reproach, who is comfortable being extremely open with the public and press and who will help restore the public's trust in the County. It will not be enough for a candidate to say, "Yes, I can do these things." Rather, individuals interested in this position should have a track record demonstrating these characteristics.

A Bachelor's degree in public administration or closely related field is required and a Master's degree preferred. The successful candidate will have at least ten years of progressively more responsible managerial experience and ideally at least five years' experience as a city or county manager or assistant manager. Experience in a Florida local government is highly desirable.

The Current Administrator

The current Administrator is retiring after 35 years with the County and seven as the County Administrator. He has dedicated his professional life to the County and is willing to provide any assistance that may be helpful in making the next Administrator a success. It should also be noted that the County has only had two Administrators since the position was initiated in 1993.

Compensation

The starting salary range is from \$120,000 to \$150,000. The County hopes to pay in the lower half of the range but realizes that high quality management does not always come cheaply. The retiring Administrator's salary is slightly above the top of this range. Benefits are very good.

Residency

The Administrator is required by state law to live within the County's boundaries.

Confidentiality

Under Florida's public records act, once an application is submitted, it is deemed a public record. As a practical matter, we are generally not asked to divulge applicant names until after the closing date. We do not expect any significant media coverage of the search progresses.

How to Apply

E-mail your resume to RecruitTwo@cb-asso.com by February 8, 2013. Faxed and mailed resumes will not be considered. Questions should be directed to Colin Baenziger at (561) 707-3537.

The Process

Applications will be screened between February 9th and March 18th. Interviews will be held on March 28th and 29th with a selection shortly thereafter.

Other Important Information

Okaloosa County is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages minorities and women to apply. The County values its conservative values, its sense of community and the military presence. A veteran's preference will be awarded if applicable under Florida law.

COLIN BAENZIGER  ASSOCIATES
EXECUTIVE RECRUITING