

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

*Board of County Commissioners*

June 29, 2026



## **Multi-County Collaboration to add 224-foot Vessel to Artificial Reef System**

**Okaloosa County, Florida** – The Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners approved an agreement between the County and the Panama City Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) on Tuesday, June 16, 2026, to expand the Gulf’s artificial reef system with the deployment of the 224-foot “Henry Alex” vessel to create the “Sposit” Reef, the newest addition to a growing network of large-vessel artificial reefs in the region.

The partnership builds on a successful history of collaboration between Okaloosa County’s tourism department, Destin-Fort Walton Beach, and the Panama City Beach CVB, including the deployment of the 239-foot Deep Stim III in 2023.

“The marine life that benefits from these artificial reefs does not see borders,” said Okaloosa County Board Chairman Trey Goodwin. “We are pleased to be working again with our neighbors in Panama City Beach on this effort as a showing of how the power of partnerships can create something worthy for our residents, visitors and the environment.

The \$450,000 cost to purchase, prepare and transport the vessel will be shared equally between Okaloosa County and the Panama City Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau, with each organization contributing \$225,000.

“This project is another example of how strong partnerships can create lasting benefits for our Gulf,” said Erin Graham, Coastal Resources Manager for the Panama City Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau. “By working alongside Okaloosa County and CCA Florida, we are expanding critical habitat for marine life while creating new opportunities for anglers and divers to experience the incredible resources our waters have to offer.”

The Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) Florida, a longtime partner in marine conservation and artificial reef development, will provide an additional \$60,000 to cover towing and deployment expenses. Beyond supporting numerous artificial reef deployments, CCA has partnered with the County on invasive lionfish removal efforts, habitat restoration projects, redfish release initiatives and the ongoing SS UNITED STATES artificial reef project. All funding for this project is provided through tourism development tax revenue and partner contributions. The Sposit Reef was named by CCA in memory of the late Rebecca Sposit, the Human Resources Director at the CCA National office.

“Rebecca Sposit did so much for marine conservation through her role at CCA, in ways the public could never see,” said Pat Murray, CCA’s National President and CEO. “She was a beloved part of CCA and this reef is a lasting testament to her impact on the organization and the marine environment.”

“Rebecca was a valued colleague and dear friend to many throughout the CCA family, and she is missed dearly,” said CCA Florida Executive Director Brian Gorski. “The Sposit Reef deployment serves as a lasting tribute to Rebecca’s life and legacy while reflecting our ongoing commitment to the conservation and enhancement of Florida’s marine resources and coastal ecosystems. We are grateful for the

opportunity to work alongside our partners on initiatives that strengthen marine biodiversity, expand critical habitat for fish and other marine species, and support economically important local industries, including recreational fishing and diving.”

The proposed deployment site is 30° 05.831'N, -86° 17.749'W, at approximately 120 feet of depth, situated 22 nautical miles from the Destin East Pass and 28 nautical miles from the Panama City Pass. The official reef name will be the “Sposit” Reef. It is expected to be deployed in the fall of 2026.

Okaloosa County has 48 large vessels in the Gulf that have been deployed since the 1970s, which are a part of nearly 600 existing artificial reefs in the Gulf. Explore 3D imaging of the existing large-vessel reefs at <https://www.destinfb.com/explore/eco-tourism/artificial-reefs/3d-models/>

**About CCA Florida** -The Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) was founded in 1977 after drastic commercial overfishing along the Texas coast decimated redfish and speckled trout populations. One of 19 state chapters, CCA Florida became the fifth state chapter in 1985. A 501(c)3 non-profit, the purpose of CCA is to advise and educate the public on the conservation of marine resources. Through habitat restoration projects, water quality initiatives and fisheries advocacy, CCA Florida works with its over 18,000 members including recreational anglers and outdoor enthusiasts to conserve and enhance marine resources and coastal environments. Join the conversation on Facebook or learn more at [ccaflorida.org](http://ccaflorida.org).

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