

# **Board of County Commissioners**

## **Agenda Request**

Date of Meeting: June 21, 2010

Date Submitted: June 4, 2010

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Benjamin H. Pingree, County Administrator  
Jennifer Langston, Special Projects Coordinator on behalf of  
Panacea Waterfronts Partnership

Subject: Board Approval of a Resolution in Support of the Oyster Relay Program

---

### **Statement of Issue:**

This agenda item requests Board Approval of a Resolution in Support of the Oyster Relay Program (Attachment #1).

### **Background:**

On March 1, 2010 the Board approved a resolution in support of Wakulla County's Seafood Industry Workers, due to the Board's previous concern for the Wakulla County Seafood Industry Workers facing economic hardship due to above-normal levels of rainfall and freezing conditions. In addition, Senator Lawson had requested the adoption of a formal resolution in support of seafood industry workers residing in Wakulla County be sent to the legislative delegation.

Apalachicola Bay is an oyster harvesting area of significant regional concern. Many oystermen who harvest in Apalachicola Bay reside in Wakulla County, and have been substantially impacted as a result of the closure of the Bay to harvesting. Apalachicola Bay was closed for significant periods of time from December 2009 through January 2010 by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS), Division of Aquaculture, to protect public health.

### **Oyster Relay Program**

The Wakulla Fishermen's Association has applied for and received a \$50,000.00 grant to participate in re-seeding programs in our local bays. This program is operated by the Division of Aquaculture in the DACS and is locally referred to as the "Oyster Relay Program". This program consists of re-seeding oysters by relocating juvenile and adult oysters onto depleted public oyster reefs and suitable bay environments in order to mitigate resource losses, enhance oyster productivity, and contribute to the economic well-being of the oyster industry. The re-seeding program is to take place in waters open to shellfish harvesting extending from Ochlockonee Bay to St. Marks; specific restoration sites will be identified before the project begins. It is anticipated that the program will commence between

June and December 2010 but may be contingent upon the Deepwater Horizon Oil Emergency impacts. The process allows for local oystermen to move live oysters, be counted, and then receive payment for bushels relocated, based on the price determined by the State. The goal is to employ fisherman to restore oyster resources which can then be harvested to provide additional income.

On, June 8, 2010, the Panacea Waterfronts Partnership voted to submit a resolution of support of the Oyster Relay program for the Board of County Commissioner's consideration (Attachment #1).

Should the Board approve the resolution; a copy will be forwarded to the State (DACS, and FWCC ) to serve as official notification of County support for the Oyster Relay program. In addition, the approval of the resolution will make the state aware that Wakulla County desires the State's assistance in implementing the program to maximize the success of the program in the most efficient manner possible. Longer term success of the program is dependent upon participants recognizing the potential to create a sustainable environment by relaying live oysters from the closed areas to open areas for seasonal harvest. This is seen as a proactive planning tool to aid the seafood industry in our local community.

**Options:**

1. Approve the Resolution in Support of the Oyster Relay Program
2. Do Not Approve the Resolution in Support of the Oyster Relay Program
3. Board Direction

**Recommendation:**

Option #1.

**Attachment(s):**

1. Resolution in Support of the Oyster Relay Program