

PANAMA CITY
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WEEKEND

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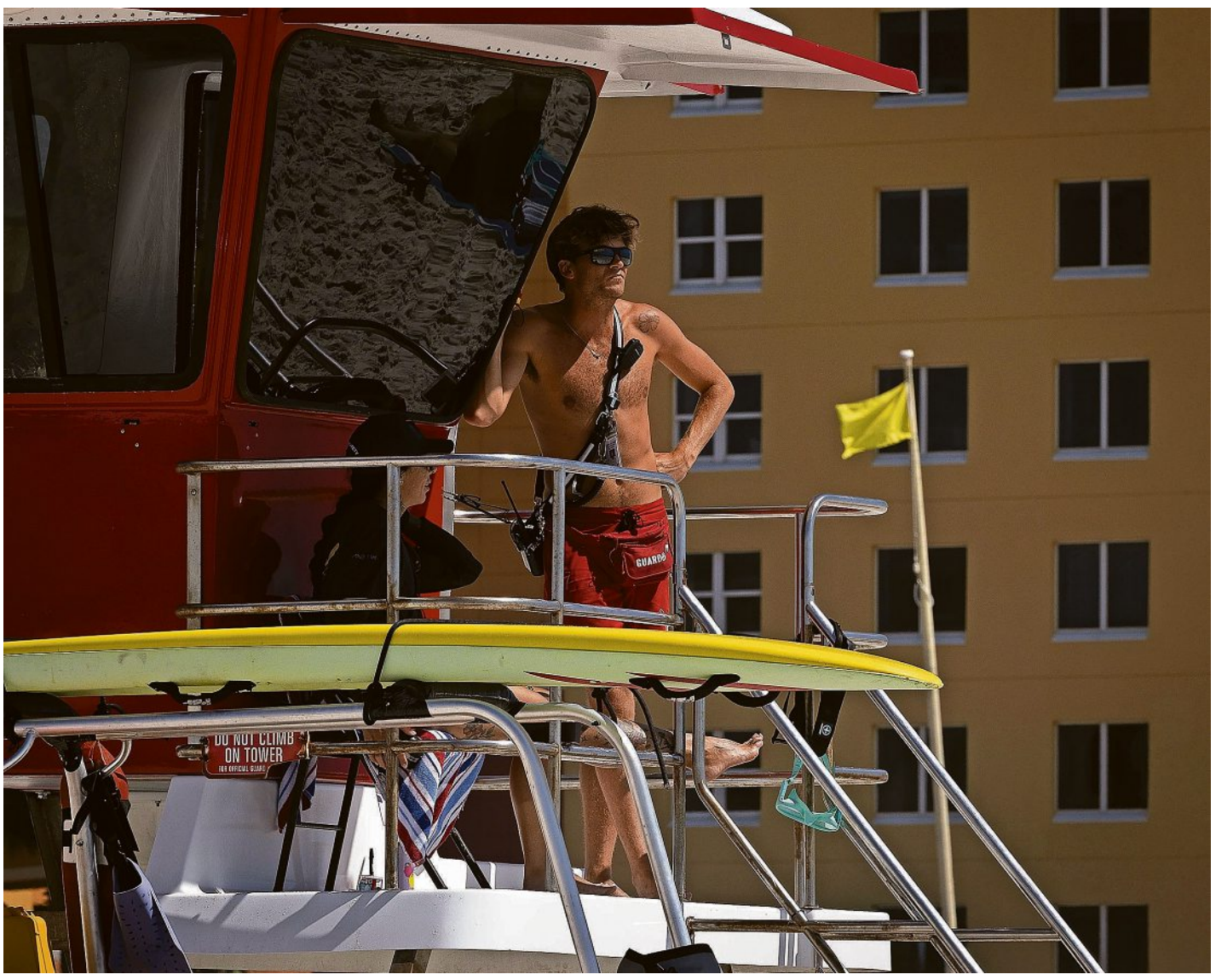
Eyes on the horizon



Panama City Beach beach safety officials say the area had a successful 2026 season. TYLER ORSBURN/PANAMA CITY NEWS HERALD

Successful season has Panama City Beach lifeguards looking ahead

Nathan Cobb
Panama City News Herald
USA TODAY NETWORK

PANAMA CITY BEACH – In the wake of a successful 2026 season, Beach lifeguards are already preparing for 2027.

As of Nov. 6, Daryl Paul, beach safety director for Panama City Beach Fire Rescue, said there were only about three weeks left in the 2026 lifeguard season, which runs from March 1 to Dec. 1. Here's what we know about how the season went:

How many rescues, assists, preventative actions?

As of Nov. 6, Panama City Beach lifeguards had performed 1,495,810 preventative actions, 553 public assists and 29 rescues. This compares with about 281,000 preventative actions, 181 public assists and 23 rescues in 2025.

"(This) was the first year that we were fully staffed, so we had more lifeguards to make it to more places and do more," Paul said. "I (also) contribute (the success) to our lifeguards being proactive. ... In 2025, we struggled with our staffing immensely. We had some hard times."

Preventative actions are when lifeguards educate beachgoers to prevent them from needing assistance. Public assists are when lifeguards enter the water to prevent rescues. Rescues occur when lifeguards pull someone from the water who likely would have drowned without intervention.

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NWF BEACHES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Director receives statewide recognition

Nathan Cobb
Panama City News Herald
USA TODAY NETWORK

PANAMA CITY — A local leader has received statewide recognition for his efforts in boosting the local economy.

According to a Nov. 13 news release, Parker McClellan, executive director of the Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP) was included in Florida Trend magazine's Florida 500 list, which recognizes the state's 500 most influential business leaders.

The release notes these are leaders "whose contributions go beyond their day-to-day work to drive Florida's economic success."

"It's a tremendous honor to be recognized alongside so many incredible leaders throughout Florida," McClellan said in the release. "My career at ECP has always been rooted in economic development and elevating the passenger experience to ensure a safe, enjoyable and convenient journey.

"As our industry continues to see changes in so many aspects of transportation and logistics, it's very rewarding to play a role in the momentum we're building in Northwest Florida."

Parker has been executive director of the facility since 2013, and since then, he has helped guide the airport through a time of "unprecedented growth," the release states.

ECP recorded the its busiest year in 2025. The facility serviced 1,937,244 passengers, an increase of more than 3%, or 58,296 passengers, over 2024, which previously held the record. Airport officials have said the airport is on pace for another record-setting year in 2026.

"This well-deserved recognition in a testament to the leadership and un-

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190-year-old obelisk honoring pioneer returns to Panama City

Dylan Gentile
Panama City News Herald
USA TODAY NETWORK

A 190-year-old, long-missing obelisk has returned to Bay County, in replica form.

Former Georgia Gov. John Clark was the first recorded permanent European settler at what became St. Andrews.

Clark was born in 1766 and fought in the Revolutionary War at age 14. He continued his military service and was promoted to major general by 1796. In 1801, Clark kicked off his political career in the Georgia House of Representatives, later being elected governor of Georgia in 1819.

He got into some political hot water in Georgia and was offered a job by President Andrew Jackson as the keeper of public forests, taking him to St. Andrews in 1827. He died from what historians presume was yellow fever in 1832.

His two surviving children would place a 10-foot-tall obelisk on his grave. Over time, St. Andrews grew, and the obelisk ended up overlooking what is now Beach Drive. In 1923, the Daughters of the American Revolution decided that the marker was not being looked after, unfit for a governor, and moved it to the National Cemetery in Marietta, Georgia.

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