

Okaloosa County News Release

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Kathy Newby, 850.651.7515, knewby@co.okaloosa.fl.us

Attachments: Sea plankton photo; Skate Eggs photo and information sheet; phone numbers

Okaloosa County Sea Life Found on Beaches *Urges Proper Reporting*

Since yesterday, small, basically clear and somewhat “pointy” sea plankton are washing up along our Gulf front shoreline beaches. They are naturally occurring and blew in with the Portuguese Man-O-War and By the Wind Sailors. Plankton are fairly sharp and may prick your finger/hand when picked up or your foot when stepped on. Other than that, they pose no threat to people. The Plankton have been microscopically examined and identified by Dr. Murrell, with the EPA in Pensacola Beach as sea butterfly exoskeletons.

Additionally, **skate eggs are appearing on Destin beaches**. Bottlenose Skates are cartilaginous fish belonging to the family of “rays,” scientifically, Rajidae in the superorder of Batoidea of rays. These sea creatures are harmless and somewhat endangered.

These sea creatures are not, in any fashion, attributable to the Deepwater Horizon incident. Okaloosa County encourages all citizens to follow the appropriate reporting methods of anything unusual so it can be investigated properly and the right information released. Again, FDEP and EPA are taking sand, water and air samples in the area periodically for environmental monitoring purposes.

Feel free to call the 311 Citizens Information Line (CIL), selecting 8 for a recording or 0 for an operator at any time. Additionally, you can email the CIL online at www.okaloosaf1.com. Feel free to use the oil reporting hotline (866-448-5816) set up by BP. For wildlife questions, contact the Emerald Coast Wildlife Refuge at 850-650-1880, located at 406 Mountain Drive in Destin.

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