

# Sheriff



**Larry Ashley, Okaloosa County Sheriff**

1250 Eglin Parkway • Shalimar, Florida 32579-1234  
Phone: (850) 651-7410 • Email: [sheriff@sheriff-okaloosa.org](mailto:sheriff@sheriff-okaloosa.org)

June 30, 2015

## **JOINT EFFORT LEADS TO RIVER RESCUE**



**(Coast Guard Rescue Swimmer and Helicopter)**

Around midnight the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office was advised of six to eight individuals long overdue from a tubing trip down the Blackwater River. There was little information to follow-up on as members of the group did not adequately plan and/or provide information as to where they were putting in on the river or where and approximately when they would be out of the water. The afternoon float trip turned into a 25 hour ordeal in the Blackwater Forest. A few of the group turned back last night and went home, while the others continued down the river.

Early this morning members of the OCSO, Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, EMS, Beach Safety, and the Forestry Service continued to search for eight missing persons who had continued down the river last night. The U.S. Coast Guard was contacted and provided a helicopter and crew from their base in New Orleans to search the remote area in the northern end of Okaloosa County. The helicopter crew located two groups of individuals approximately 2-3 miles apart. A Coast Guard Rescue Swimmer was lowered near the larger group and remained with them while the helicopter went to refuel. During this time, the group of two was recovered by a member of the Sheriff's



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Office and EMS. The Rescue Swimmer led the other group of six from the riverbank to a nearby fire break road where they were met by members of the FWC.

The Rescue Swimmer was transported to the airstrip on Vinson Ray Rd. where he was picked up by his crew for the return flight to New Orleans. We would like to thank the rescue crew of Lt. Snider, Lt. Conrad, AMT1 DeGeorge, and AST3 Markle of the USCG for their service to our country and for their assistance in the successful search and recovery of these lost individuals.

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