



Northwest Florida's Gulf Coast
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SOUTHWEST AIRLINES TO SERVE NORTHWEST FLORIDA

Coastal Vision 3000 Chairman Says: "It's a game-changer for all Northwest Florida!"

THE Beach, Florida – (October 21, 2009) – Coastal Vision 3000 Chairman Buddy Runnels applauded Southwest Airlines' announcement of its intent to serve Northwest Florida beginning in May 2010 when the new Northwest Florida – Panama City International Airport opens.

"This is a great day for our entire region," said Runnels. "We are so humbled by Southwest Airlines' vote of confidence in our region. The Northwest Florida business community, from Perdido Key/Pensacola to Carrabelle, has a lot to be proud of today. We did this together, and our entire region will benefit. It's a real game-changer for tourism and economic development in Northwest Florida."

Community delegations from Pensacola to Panama City have advocated for Southwest service for many years. These efforts have included the development of a range of community-based incentive packages, commitments of marketing support and a pledge to serve as a true regional partner for the nation's leading low-fare airline.

Each of the airports in the region sought service from Southwest, while the business community focused on winning service from the low-cost carrier, regardless of which airport was chosen.

"Coastal Vision's focus has been on bringing low-cost service and more competitive airfares to Northwest Florida," said Runnels. "Southwest Airlines said they were interested in Northwest Florida as a regional destination. It is now our responsibility to come together as a region and maximize this opportunity for everyone and begin looking to the future instead of the past."

Moving forward, Coastal Vision 3000 will concentrate on supporting low-cost service through promotion of the regional brand, "THE Beach." Coastal Vision 3000 created THE Beach as a halo brand for Northwest Florida – and as a way to increase tourism across the entire region.

"THE Beach is a celebration of our amazing white sand beaches, our sweet tea hospitality and our wonderful way of life," said Runnels. "Together, we can promote Northwest Florida, expand our tourism industry and grow our economy. We can make THE Beach the place everyone wants to go."

In the weeks ahead Coastal Vision 3000 will be reaching out to businesses, the military, organizations and community groups to discuss the ways we can support and grow low-cost service.

"This has been a multi-year team effort, and it has required a serious investment of time and commitment from a lot of people," said Runnels. "But today it all paid off - and the entire region will benefit as a result of our collective effort to work together with integrity to help each other succeed as a region."

About Coastal Vision 3000

Coastal Vision 3000 is a membership organization of regional stewards representing tourism and economic development interests in Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Gulf and Franklin counties. Business and community leaders established the organization to create a consistent, branded identity for the seven-county region to increase national and international awareness, support local tourism and economic development professionals, and grow this market. For more information, visit www.thebeachfla.com.

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