Okaloosa County's Shoal River Ranch Gigasite recognized with prestigious 'Select Site' distinction by CSX Railroad

Okaloosa County, Fla. (February 20, 2024) – Okaloosa County's Shoal River Ranch Gigasite has joined an elite group of locations across the country as a "Select Site" at the Bronze Level by CSX Railroad, the leading supplier of freight transportation in North America. Shoal River Ranch is one of 19 sites nationwide that received "Select Site" status which positions the County to attract significant economic development.

"We are excited to receive this distinction and are proud of the work One Okaloosa EDC has done to achieve this national recognition," said Okaloosa County Board Chairman Paul Mixon. "This accomplishment acknowledges Shoal River Ranch's potential and will help companies realize the opportunities for economic development and job creation in Okaloosa County."

One Okaloosa EDC applied for CSX Railroad's "Select Site" industrial site certification designation for the Shoal River Ranch Gigasite in early 2023. While Shoal River Ranch is now located on the Florida Gulf & Atlantic Railroad, CSX is the mainline railroad that connects with FGA at both ends of the line.

CSX expanded the existing "Select Site" program in 2023 which recognizes strategic locations with a certification that requires rigorous site due diligence and essential factors needed to accommodate rail access. Since the program's inception in 2012, Select Sites have attracted dozens of manufacturers, with capital investments projected to reach $14 billion and create nearly 11,000 jobs.

"With a sizable footprint of industrial-zoned land located on I-10, U.S. Highway 90, and the Florida Gulf & Atlantic rail line, the Shoal River Ranch Gigasite is poised to accommodate leading employers who value multi-modal transportation connectivity. The CSX Select Site bronze certification provides an industry-recognized validation of our ability to support these businesses," said Nathan Sparks, Executive Director of One Okaloosa EDC.

The program expansion allowed for a strategic partnership with Global Location Strategies (GLS), a renowned industrial site location advisory firm. As a result, sites certified through the program will be

included in a searchable inventory, called Zoom Prospector. Users will be able to access the inventory at csx.com/selectsite. The platform provides data-driven analytics that empower CSX and its economic development partners to optimize the marketability of these rail-served sites and identify areas of improvement. Based on the properties' Site Shepherd score, CSX designates top-performing sites as Platinum, Gold, Silver or Bronze. All sites will receive valuable feedback regarding potential areas of improvement and are encouraged to engage with CSX on how to continually improve their score.

Aubrey Brown, Senior Business Development Manager for CSX, Steve Laird, Assistant Vice President Sales & Marketing of Florida Gulf & Atlantic Railroad, and Cassie Dull, Chief Commercial Officer of Gulf & Atlantic Railroad, presented a plaque acknowledging the achievement to the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners and One Okaloosa EDC during the February 20 Board of County Commissioners meeting.

About One Okaloosa EDC
Founded in 1989 as the Economic Development Council of Okaloosa County, One Okaloosa EDC ("One Okaloosa") is a 501(c)(6) non-profit, public-private partnership serving Okaloosa County, Florida and its nine municipalities (Cinco Bayou, Crestview, Destin, Fort Walton Beach, Laurel Hill, Mary Esther, Niceville, Shalimar and Valparaiso). As the community's lead economic development organization, One Okaloosa is committed to fostering economic diversification through comprehensive strategies and initiatives.   In addition to its public partners, One Okaloosa enjoys broad support from more than 100 leading private sector businesses representing a wide range of industry sectors.

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