



The Abrams Agenda



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Record-breaking Tourism Dollars Expected for 2015

As many of you know, tourism is one of Palm Beach County's leading industries, providing local residents with thousands of jobs. With record-breaking snowfall and frigid temperatures throughout the country, it's not surprising that tourism officials are reporting high occupancy rates at local hotels this year. Just last year, over 6.24 million tourists visited the county, spending \$7 billion and generating over \$35 million in bed taxes, which was a 12 percent increase from 2013. Officials are expecting even higher numbers in tourism revenue for 2015.

The bed tax, which is paid by the consumer, is currently 6 percent per dollar on hotel stays and other short term rentals. The revenue is primarily used for marketing and advertising initiatives by the Tourist Development Council (TDC). Just recently, the bed tax was recently

increased by one percent which will be used primarily for combating ongoing beach erosion problems.

Additionally, the TDC provides funding to numerous agencies such as Discover the Palm Beaches, Florida (formerly Palm Beach County Convention and Visitors' Bureau), the Film and Television Commission and the Cultural Council. Each of these private not-for-profit organizations is contracted by the county and plays a vital role in support of the county's tourism industry.

As the winter season in Palm Beach County draws to a close, and the number of part-time residents and tourists dwindle, we can't help but feel lucky to live in such a beautiful place all year around. Many of our amenities are made possible by the injection of visitors' dollars into our economy during "season."

Protecting Our Shoreline

Part of the allure for many tourists is the county's pristine shoreline. In addition to so many activities our coastline offers, Palm Beach County is considered a top destination for snorkelers and divers for its exquisite reefs. As the acting chairman of the Southeast Florida Coastal Ocean Task Force, I remain dedicated to protecting habitats along our coast with ongoing initiatives such as the artificial reef program. These man-made habitats provide food, shelter, protection and spawning areas for hundred of fish species and other marine and estuarine organisms. They also provide relief for the natural reefs, which have shown decline of many marine organisms over the years due to user pressure, hurricanes and coastal development.

Over the years, the county deployed over 45 vessels, 82,000 tons of concrete, and 130,000 tons of limestone boulders in near- and offshore waters to create artificial reefs, which mimic natural reef systems. For more information, on the county's artificial reef program, visit <http://www.pbcgov.com/erm/coastal/reef/>.



(left) Sea Emperor - portion of ship located off of Boca Raton at the south

(right) Bow United Caribbean located off of Boca Raton at the south county line



(left) Boynton Step Reef off the Boynton Beach Inlet

All the above pictures courtesy of Linton Creel.