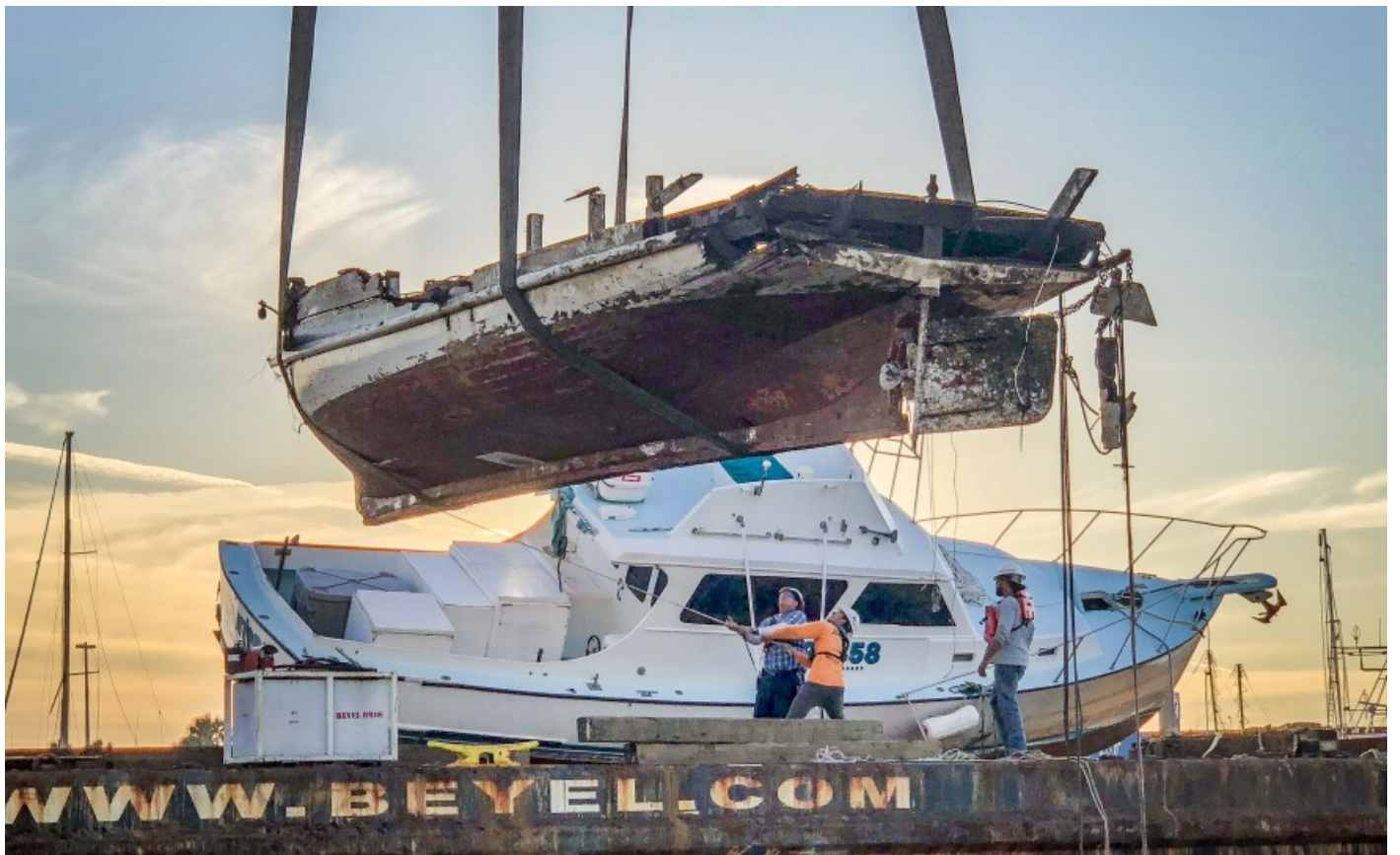


# Recovering The History Lost From Hurricane Michael

**WUWF** | By **Jennie McKeon**

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The Governor Stone is hauled from the water after being capsized from Hurricane Michael last year.

*Brad Stephens*



A new exhibit from the Florida Public Archaeology Network aims to remind viewers of the impact Hurricane Michael left on the Panama City area, especially its history.

“Hurricane Michael: Reshaping Florida’s Past” is a temporary exhibit that highlights the damage the Category 5 storm had on historic sites, and the efforts to save them.

“People tend to forget about storms over time,” said Mike Thomin, museum manager and research associate for FPAN. “And one thing that doesn’t get a lot of coverage is the impact on historical sites and cemeteries.”

It’s been one year since Hurricane Michael made landfall. The storm caused more than \$5.5 billion in damage, and left thousands of residents homeless. It also tore through the community’s relics such as the Governor Stone, an 1877 wooden schooner named for the first elected post-Civil War Governor of Mississippi, John Marshall Stone. The vessel is the only one left of its kind, and one of few National Landmarks in north Florida.

“Hurricane Michael capsized the vessel,” said Thomin. “It took a month just to get it out of the water and it’s going to take a significant amount of money and volunteer time to get it in working order.”

In Blountstown, the Panhandle Pioneer Settlement suffered a significant loss with 90% of its historical buildings damaged from the hurricane. The Callaway Schoolhouse, built in 1911, was deemed a total loss.

And it wasn’t just coastal areas that were hit. Historical sites 60 miles inland were affected.

While adequate housing for residents and jobs are top priorities, historical sites shouldn’t be forgotten, Thomin said.

“In terms of long-term recovery, a community’s history is tied to their identity,” he added.

Not to mention, heritage tourism is important to local economies.

“Tourism is the No. 1 driver in this state,” Thomin said. “And heritage tourism brings \$4 billion to Florida’s economy.”

Hurricane Michael won't be the last storm to wash away history. Which is why FPAN enlists the help of volunteers with the Heritage Monitoring Scouts program. Volunteers go to historical sites before and after disaster events to record history before it's gone.

"It takes money, it takes time (to rebuild)," said Thomin. "There's a lot of history still there. And there's a lot we can do to be resilient."

"Hurricane Michael: Reshaping Florida's Past" will be on display through January 2020 the Destination Archaeology Resource Center, located at 207 E. Main St., Pensacola. Hours of operation are Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

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## Jennie McKeon

Jennie joined WUWF in 2018 as digital content producer and reporter.

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