



PRESS RELEASE

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HICKORY POINT BEACH EARNS AN INTERNATIONAL DESIGNATION FROM WORLD PARAVOLLEY!

The World ParaVolley Board unanimously approved Hickory Point Beach Sand Volleyball Complex as the first official Beach Development Center in the world.

Eustis, FL – October 28, 2021 – The Florida Region of USA Volleyball is proud to announce that Hickory Point Beach, located in Tavares, FL has been approved to become the first Beach ParaVolley (BPV) Development Center in the world, after a designation by World ParaVolley. This is an exciting development for the progress of beach ParaVolley which is planning to be included in the LA 2028 Paralympic Games as it will serve as a Center for upcoming competitions, events, clinics, camps and training/education opportunities for athletes, coaches and officials.

“History has been created with the World ParaVolley Hickory Point Beach Development Centre being approved by the Board. This is the first beach paravolley development centre and will serve as a focus for training and development and events in the future as we strive to promote beach paravolley as an important discipline of World ParaVolley” says **Dr. Stephen Giugni OAM**, WPV Assistant Sport Director (Beach).

Chair of the WPV Beach Commission, **Chris Seilkop** said, “I am very pleased that the Centre has been approved and I look forward to the many benefits that will flow for the athletes as we work towards ensuring that beach paravolley will be on the sport program for LA2028.”

Joe Campbell, President for ParaVolley Pan America stated, “I am thrilled that the Hickory Point Beach Sand Volleyball Complex has been approved as the 1st World ParaVolley (WPV) Beach ParaVolley development center. When I visited this magnificent venue in July 2019, I knew it provided the amenities to be a WPV development center. Now this vision is a reality, and I know it will play a vital role in catapulting our athletes forward in making Beach ParaVolley a discipline for the LA2028 Paralympic Games. This center will help in both athlete development, as well as competitions for Team USA, the Pan America Zone and world-wide international events. My hat’s off to the USA Volleyball Florida Region as well as all that helped and continue to help in the development and operations of this facility.”

Hickory Point Beach was first opened in July 2014 with 21 professional grade courts and lights through a unique public-private partnership with Lake County, FL through their Tourism Development Tax program. In 2019, the county added a 4,000sf Athletic Center to support the numerous regional, national, and international events that take place at the complex each year. This year the county is adding a grand entrance along with wheelchair grade sidewalks to accommodate the BPV athletes. Since opening, the complex has welcomed guests and competitors from over 100 cities in Florida, 25 states in the US, and 15 countries in the world.

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The Executive Director for Lake County's Economic Growth Office, **Brandon Matulka**, commented, "This designation showcases Hickory Point Beach's commitment to accessibility and inclusivity, and we could not be prouder to have this state-of-the-art facility right here in Lake County. We are excited for the many opportunities the Centre will create for adaptive athletes and the beach ParaVolley community."

Steve Bishop, the Executive Director/President of the Florida Region of USA Volleyball added, "On behalf of our members, staff and board of directors, we are honored to receive this designation from World ParaVolley for Hickory Point Beach. When we set out on this journey to build a large-scale sand volleyball complex back in 2004, there were very few in existence and many questioned why we would want such a complex in the middle of a state surrounded by beaches. It seemed like the right thing to do for our sport at the time and after 10 years of planning and another 7 years of hosting events it has proven to be a good hunch. The venue is reported to have generated \$11M in economic impact for the area." Steve further commented, "We could not have gotten to this point without the support of many others. Lake County believed in our vision and provided the financial support. Our board of directors allowed us to tackle an endeavor never before attempted by a USAV region and the Norelli Family Foundation has been the wind in our sails lately by funding a \$100K BPV grant to help move this vision forward. All of these, along with the WPV designation puts us on course to helping make BPV a reality at the LA2028 Paralympics. That will be the payoff for everyone involved!"

About Florida Region of USA Volleyball:

The Florida Region of USA Volleyball is a 501c3 non-profit that began operations in the 1960's and was officially incorporated in 1982 to promote the sport of volleyball and to create competitive playing opportunities for volleyball enthusiasts of all ages throughout the State of Florida. The Florida Region is one of the 40 regional volleyball associations under the umbrella of USA Volleyball and currently serves 14,500 members. Indoor and outdoor programming is available for adults, juniors, coaches and officials. The Florida Region of USA Volleyball is headquartered in Eustis, FL and manages the 21-court Hickory Point Beach Sand Volleyball Complex in Tavares, FL. Additional information on the Florida Region can be found at: www.FloridaVolleyball.org.

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