



TABLE 4.7 (Continued)
VERIFIED LIST OF IMPAIRED NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA WATERS
(AS APPROVED BY THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY)

Water-body Identification Number	Waterbody Segment	Waterbody Type	Parameter of Concern	Priority	Comments
3528Z	Lafayette Blue Springs	Stream	Nutrients (Algal Mats)	Medium	Placed on the verified list based on algal mats and elevated nitrate concentrations in the verified period.
1329C	Withlacoochee River	Stream	Mercury (in fish tissue)	High	Verified for impairment based on Florida Department of Health fish consumption advisory data.
1329R	Wilson Head Spring	Spring	Nutrients (Algal Mats)	Medium	This spring has been verified as impaired for nutrients based on "other information" that indicated an imbalance in flora or fauna. Nitrate+nitrite levels range from 0.56 - 0.8 milligrams/Liter during the verified period and is the likely cause of the impairment.
1337	Withlacoochee River	Stream	Mercury (in fish tissue)	High	Verified for impairment based on Florida Department of Health fish consumption advisory data.
1337A	Bypass Channel	Stream	Mercury (in fish tissue)	High	Verified for impairment based on Florida Department of Health fish consumption advisory data.
2688	Hatchet Creek	Stream	Fecal Coliform; Nutrients (Historic Chlorophyll-a)	Low; Medium	The median value of 127 total nitrogen/total phosphorus ratio is about ten, suggesting phosphorus and nitrogen co-limiting.
2695	Little Hatchet Creek	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen; Fecal Coliform	Medium; Low	Flows from Gum Root Swamp. Elevated nutrients may contribute.
2696	Possum Creek	Stream	Fecal Coliform	Low	Met the verification threshold and total nitrogen was identified as the causative pollutant.
2705A	Prairie Creek	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen	Medium	Met the verification threshold and total nitrogen and total phosphorus were identified as the causative pollutants.
2705B	Newnans Lake	Lake	Dissolved Oxygen	Medium	

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Water-body Identification Number	Waterbody Segment	Waterbody Type	Parameter of Concern	Priority	Comments
2709	Sunland Drain	Stream	Fecal Coliform	Low	This parameter is impaired for this waterbody based on the number of exceedances for the sample size.
2710	Unnamed Drain	Stream	Fecal Coliform	Low	This parameter is impaired for this waterbody based on the number of exceedances for a sample size less than 20.
2713	Little Orange Creek	Stream	Fecal Coliform	Low	
2717	Kanapaha Lake	Lake	Dissolved Oxygen (Nutrients and biochemical oxygen demand)	Medium	This parameter is impaired for this waterbody based on the number of exceedances for the sample size.
2718	Bivens Arm Outlet	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen; Nutrients (Chlorophyll-a)	Medium	Met the verification threshold and total nitrogen and total phosphorus were identified as the causative pollutants; This parameter is impaired for this waterbody because the annual average chlorophyll-a values exceeded the impaired waters rule threshold for streams of 20 micrograms/Liter.
2718B	Bivens Arm	Lake	Nutrients (trophic state index); Turbidity	Medium	Co-limited by nitrogen and phosphorus based on a median total nitrogen/total phosphorus ratio of 12.31 (65 values) in the verified period.
2719	Lake Alice Outlet	Stream	Fecal Coliform	Low	This parameter is impaired for this waterbody based on the number of exceedances for a sample size less than 20.
2720	Alachua Sink Outlet	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen; Fecal Coliform	Medium; Low	Met the verification threshold and total nitrogen was identified as the causative pollutant.
2720A	Alachua Sink	Lake	Fecal Coliform	Low	

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Water-body Identification Number	Waterbody Segment	Waterbody Type	Parameter of Concern	Priority	Comments
2733	Camps Canal Reach	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen	Medium	Met the verification threshold and total nitrogen was identified as the causative pollutant.
2738A	Lochloosa Lake	Lake	Nutrients (trophic state index)	Medium	Co-limited by nitrogen and phosphorus based on a median total nitrogen/total phosphorus ratio of 29.57 (135 values) in the verified period.
2749A	Orange Lake	Lake	Dissolved Oxygen	Medium	Met the verification threshold and total nitrogen and total phosphorus were identified as the causative pollutants.
2749B	Orange Lake Drain	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen (Nutrients)	Medium	This parameter is impaired for this waterbody based on the number of exceedances for the sample size.
2751	Lochloosa Slough	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen (Nutrients)	Medium	This parameter is impaired for this waterbody based on the number of exceedances for the sample size.
2754	Cross Creek	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen; Nutrients (Chlorophyll-a)	Medium	Met the verification threshold, but unable to determine the causative pollutants; The median value of 45 total nitrogen/total phosphorus ratio is about 14, suggesting phosphorus and nitrogen are co-limiting nutrients.
3573B	Steinhatchee River	Stream	Fecal Coliform	Low	
2211	Middle Prong St Marys River	Blackwater	Mercury (in fish tissue)	High	Verified for impairment based on Florida Department of Health fish consumption advisory data.
1326	Sheephead Creek	Estuary	Fecal Coliform (3)	Low	

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Water-body Identification Number	Waterbody Segment	Waterbody Type	Parameter of Concern	Priority	Comments
1328	Direct Runoff to Gulf	Estuary	Fecal Coliform (Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section Classification)	High	This parameter is impaired because the shellfish harvesting classification is not fully approved by the Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
1332	Direct Runoff to Gulf	Estuary	Fecal Coliform (Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section Classification)	High	This parameter is impaired because the shellfish harvesting classification is not fully approved by the Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
1333	Spring Run	Estuary	Fecal Coliform (Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section Classification)	High	This parameter is impaired because the shellfish harvesting classification is not fully approved by the Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
1335	Direct Runoff to Gulf	Estuary	Fecal Coliform (Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section Classification)	High	This parameter is impaired because the shellfish harvesting classification is not fully approved by the Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
3699	Waccasassa River	Stream	Fecal Coliform	Low	
3699B	Waccasassa River	Estuary	Fecal Coliform (3)	High	The waterbody includes at least one sampling location that has a median fecal coliform most probable number value that exceeds 14 counts per 100 milliliters for the verified period.



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Water-body Identification Number	Waterbody Segment	Waterbody Type	Parameter of Concern	Priority	Comments
3729A	Black Point Swamp	Estuary	Fecal Coliform (Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section Classification); Nutrients (Chlorophyll-a)	High; Medium	This parameter is impaired because the shellfish harvesting classification is not fully approved by the Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; This parameter is impaired for this waterbody because the annual average chlorophyll-a values exceeded the impaired waters rule threshold for estuaries of 1.1 micrograms/Liter in 2005.
3739	Direct Runoff to Gulf	Estuary	Fecal Coliform (Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section Classification)	High	This parameter is impaired because the shellfish harvesting classification is not fully approved by the Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
3740	Direct Runoff to Gulf	Estuary	Fecal Coliform (Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section Classification)	High	This parameter is impaired because the shellfish harvesting classification is not fully approved by the Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
3743	Direct Runoff to Gulf	Estuary	Fecal Coliform (Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section Classification)	High	This parameter is impaired because the shellfish harvesting classification is not fully approved by the Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
8037A	Cedar Key Park	Beach	Bacteria (Beach Advisories)	High	Beach advisories posted for a total 136 days in 2007.

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Water-body Identification Number	Waterbody Segment	Waterbody Type	Parameter of Concern	Priority	Comments
8037B	Gulf of Mexico (Levy County)	Coastal	Fecal Coliform (Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section Classification); Nutrients (Chlorophyll-a)	High; Medium	This parameter is impaired because the shellfish harvesting classification is not fully approved by the Shellfish Environmental Assessment Section of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; Based on the median total nitrogen/total phosphorus ratio of 14.58, total nitrogen and total phosphorus are co-limiting nutrients.
8037C	Cedar Key	Coastal	Nutrients (Chlorophyll-a)	Medium	Based on the median total nitrogen/total phosphorus ratio of 13.63, total nitrogen and total phosphorus are co-limiting nutrients.
8038	Waccasassa River Gulf 2	Coastal	Bacteria (in Shellfish)	Low	Listed due to downgrade in shellfish harvesting classification.
3315Z	Blue Spring (Madison County)	Spring	Nutrients (Algal Mats)	Medium	This parameter is impaired for this waterbody based on "other information" indicating an imbalance in flora.
3321	Lake Ochachatchee Outlet	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen	Medium	Met verification threshold of impaired waters rule, and biochemical oxygen demand was identified as a causative pollutant.
3366	Lake Francis Outlet	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen	Medium	Met verification threshold of impaired waters rule, and biochemical oxygen demand was identified as a causative pollutant.
3366A	Lake Francis	Lake	Nutrients (trophic state index)	Medium	This parameter is impaired for this waterbody because the annual average trophic state index values exceeded the impaired waters rule threshold for clear lakes of 40 trophic state index units.
3364	Hunter Creek	Stream	Fecal Coliform	Low	This parameter is impaired for this waterbody based on the number of exceedances for the sample size.

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Water-body Identification Number	Waterbody Segment	Waterbody Type	Parameter of Concern	Priority	Comments
3368	Little Creek	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen	Medium	This is a blackwater stream. Met verification threshold of impaired waters rule, and total phosphorus was identified as a causative pollutant.
3368	Little Creek	Stream	Fecal Coliform	Low	This is a blackwater stream.
3375	Swift Creek	Stream	Fecal Coliform	Low	This is a blackwater stream.
3388	Deep Creek	Stream	Fecal Coliform	Low	This parameter is impaired for this waterbody based on the number of exceedances for the sample size and is being added to the 303(d) list.
3389	Sugar Creek	Stream	Fecal Coliform	Low	Total maximum daily load established by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 3/31/2004.
3401	Camp Branch	Stream	Fecal Coliform	Low	This is a blackwater stream. Met verification threshold of impaired waters rule, and total phosphorus and biochemical oxygen demand were identified as causative pollutants.
3449	Rocky Creek near Wellborn	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen	Medium	This parameter is impaired for this waterbody based on the number of exceedances for a sample size less than 20.
3477	Falling Creek	Stream	Fecal Coliform	Medium	

Sources:

Water Quality Assessment Report: Suwannee, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, September 2014, and Total Managed Daily Loads in Florida, <http://www.epa.gov/region4/water/tmdl/florida/#econ>.



c. Fresh Water Wetlands

Wetlands play a vital role in controlling flood waters, tempering the impacts of hurricanes, and providing habitat to native Florida animal species. Vast amounts of Florida, including north central Florida, were originally wetlands. Over time, wetlands have been filled and drained for development, mosquito control, agricultural production, timber harvesting, and mining. Despite a lengthy history of drain and fill practices, the region still contains substantial wetland acreage.

Wetlands identified by the regional plan as Natural Resources of Regional Significance consist of Bee Haven Bay, California Swamp, Dixie County Coastal Fresh Water Wetlands, Fowlers Prairie, Gum Root Swamp, Hixtown Swamp, Lake Alto Swamp, Mallory Swamp, Osceola National Forest/Pinhook Swamp, Paynes Prairie, San Pedro Bay, Santa Fe Swamp, Spring Warrior Swamp, Taylor County Coastal Fresh Water Wetlands, Tide Swamp, and Waccasassa Flats.

i. Coastal Fresh Water Wetlands

The coastal fresh water wetlands are located adjacent to and landward of the Big Bend Salt Marsh and west of U.S. Highways 19 and 98. Coastal fresh water wetlands moderate the flow of surface water runoff to the Gulf by releasing water during dry periods and storing water during wet periods. The flow of fresh water to the gulf is vital to maintaining the brackish salt marsh environment. As coastal communities grow, it becomes increasingly important to minimize the alteration of coastal fresh water wetlands in order to maintain a healthy salt marsh and to minimize coastal flooding. Growth within coastal communities should not significantly alter the coastal wetland sediment deposition process.

Regionally significant coastal fresh water wetlands comprise 207,373 acres. The Dixie County Coastal Fresh Water Wetlands comprise 155,642 acres while the Taylor County Coastal Fresh Water Wetlands comprise 51,731 acres. Located within the fresh water coastal wetlands are three areas that, in their own right, qualify as Natural Resources of Regional Significance: California Swamp, Spring Warrior Swamp, and Tide Swamp. These areas are described below.

California Swamp

California Swamp is located in southwest Dixie County between Cross City and the Gulf of Mexico. It is adjacent to the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge and the Big Bend Salt Marsh. California Swamp is a coastal fresh water wetland. The variety of its habitat, wildlife, and its undeveloped nature make California Swamp a Natural Resource of Regional Significance in its own right. The major feature of California Swamp is an extensive cypress-hardwood swamp. However, a wide range of habitat types ranging from tidal marsh near the coast to upland hammocks and pine forest are found within California Swamp.

California Swamp occupies approximately 21,786 acres. It extends from Station Lake to the Big Bend Salt Marsh along Sanders Creek. Its width varies from five miles near California Lake to two miles farther south along Sanders Creek where the forest grades into salt marsh. California Swamp is generally flat, having a relief of approximately two to five feet and a gentle slope to the south. Drainage is poorly developed. In the area from Station Lake southward some flow is channelized through Fishbone and California Creeks into California Lake. From there water moves through Sanders Creek for the remaining five miles to the Gulf.

Although numerous logging roads were established, portions of the lower regions of the swamp are still inaccessible. Dirt roads are passable to California Lake and to a few private hunting camps located in the swamp.

Approximately 94.0 percent of the swamp watershed is forested land. The principal tree species include slash and loblolly pines, black gum, ash, oak, red maple, and cypress. Much of the land adjacent to the swamp has been extensively harvested and is planted pine forests. The swamp has a good population of deer, turkey, and squirrel. Other wildlife species include alligator, bear, raccoon, opossum, mink, and otter. The wetlands near the coast have many varieties of shore birds such as terns, plovers, and sandpipers. Wading birds living within the swamp include large populations of common and cattle egret, white ibis, and limpkin.

In 1973, California Swamp area was added to the Steinhatchee Wildlife Management Area. The now defunct Florida Bureau of Coastal Zone Planning generally outlined the entire Gulf Coastal marsh at the mouth of Sanders Creek and the hardwood swamp inland along the creek as an area deserving preservation status. The remaining areas of the California Lake watershed were also designated as deserving conservation status in the Bureau's management and development plans.

Spring Warrior Swamp

Spring Warrior Swamp is located in Taylor County approximately five miles south of the City of Perry and west of U.S. Highway 19. It comprises approximately 16,039 acres and includes floodplain forest with good stands of cypress and diverse hardwoods. The swamp is an important source of fresh water to the gulf coastal marsh. Drainage is provided from the swamp to the gulf via Spring Warrior Creek. The upland areas of the swamp include live oak, magnolia, cabbage palm, elm, maple, hickory, sweet gum, and others. This habitat is heavily used by spring and fall migratory passerine birds. Both upland and floodplain hardwoods in this area constitute a prime wildlife habitat and a source of raw materials for the timber industry.

Tide Swamp

Tide Swamp is located in southwest Taylor County on the Gulf side of State Road 361 just north of the Steinhatchee River. Tide Swamp comprises 15,236 acres. The swamp was purchased in 1986 by the State of Florida as part of the Big Bend Coastal Tracts acquisition. Tide Swamp is heavily vegetated and includes a variety of softwood and hardwood timber species along with an abundance of mixed grasses and reeds. Its diverse vegetation makes the area appealing to many wildlife species common to north central Florida including game and non-game migratory birds.

Portions of the swamp were previously cleared for forestry products in the 1930s. Proctor and Gamble, the former owners, managed the area for sustained yield timber production, hunting, and recreation in cooperation with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The state's management of Tide Swamp now focuses less on timber production and more on wildlife management through controlled burning, food plot maintenance, and some timber harvesting.

Wildlife found in Tide Swamp include whitetail deer, wild turkey, feral hogs, and squirrels. Additionally, numerous wading birds can be seen throughout the year all along the coastline. Migratory ducks and geese can be seen from September through April. Bald eagles and ospreys also frequent Tide Swamp.



Facilities at Tide Swamp are consistent with outdoor recreational uses. The state operates a public beach site at Hagen's Cove and maintains picnic tables and a boat ramp at Dallus Creek. In recognition of the growing popularity of bird watching, the state has constructed an observation tower near Hagen's Cove.

ii. Inland Wetlands

Inland wetlands consist of wetlands located north and east of U.S. highways 19 and 98. They comprise large areas of north central Florida and perform many valuable functions. Inland wetlands provide habitat for native species and moderate the flow of surface and spring waters to prevent flooding. They are thought to provide the base flow for the region's rivers and springs. Almost every inland fresh water wetland identified as a Natural Resource of Regional Significance consists of a combination of wetlands and uplands. Within the wetland areas proper, virtually every wetland is either seasonal or semi-permanent in nature. Their degree of wetness is dependent upon the amount and timing of annual rainfall. The regional plan recognizes nine inland wetlands as Natural Resources of Regional Significance, eight of which are described below.

Bee Haven Bay

Bee Haven Bay is located north of County Road 6 and Occidental Chemical's phosphate mining area and approximately four miles east of the City of Jasper in Hamilton County. As the name implies, Bee Haven Bay is a bayhead swamp consisting of bay trees, dahoon lolly, cypress, red maple, and other mixed hardwoods. The bay is prime habitat for black bear and other mammals. Drainage of the bay is by Rock Creek to the Suwannee River. The bay contains several species of bay pitcher plants listed as threatened species by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Bee Haven Bay comprises 7,125 acres. Occidental has donated the mineral rights to Beehaven Bay to the Suwannee River Water Management District.

Gum Root Swamp

Gum Root Swamp is a natural hardwood swamp covering 1,448 acres on the north side of Newnans Lake in eastern Alachua County. The swamp owes its environmental value to its function as a natural filter and purifier for runoff waters for a large watershed.

At its position at the base of the Hatchett Creek watershed, all the waters from the creek as well as overland flow from a wide area pass through the swamp before entering Newnans Lake. These waters are very high in nutrients due to the large amount of surrounding agricultural land and the number of homes in the vicinity. Biological processes occurring in the swamp convert nutrients in the water to cellulose and plant life, leaving the water in a more purified form as it flows into Newnan's Lake. Currently, the large nutrient production in the watershed exceeds the capacity of Gum Root Swamp to assimilate these nutrients and has contributed to the eutrophication of the lake.

A wide, often wet, and heavily vegetated fringe area has helped restrict access and development of the swamp. In this fringe area the dominant forest vegetation includes live oak, laurel oak, and red maple. The predominant understory species include gallberry, palmetto, wax myrtle, red bay, blackberry, and American holly.

Cypress and gum trees predominate the swamp while red maple and bay trees are also abundant. The numbers of sweet gum, wax myrtle, and gallberry increase in density toward the edge of the swamp. Many ferns, mosses, and lichen are evident as undergrowth vegetation. Selective cutting of hardwood occurred

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approximately 50 years ago. Abandoned, overgrown tramways as well as debris left over from earlier cuttings have been found among the thick vegetation. The swamp appears to have regained its natural state and no evidence of recent harvesting is apparent. Mixed hardwoods of commercial value exist in the swamp.

Gum Root Swamp is considered to have one of the largest varieties of wildlife species of any area in Alachua County. There are at least two rare or endangered species living in this swamp including a small colony of wood storks and a small number of bald eagles. Other birds which frequent the area include egrets, herons, bitterns, and white ibis. Also identified in the area are anhinga, osprey, loon, cormorant, black and turkey vulture, and turkey. Deer and otter also inhabit the swamp and its marginal areas.

Hixtown Swamp

Hixtown Swamp is located between the cities of Madison and Greenville in central Madison County. It is roughly confined on the north by U.S. Highway 90 and on the south by Interstate 10. Hixtown Swamp comprises approximately 10,289 acres.

The swamp is a wide expanse of wetlands interspersed with islands, peninsulas, and cypress stands. It is surrounded by higher rolling country. The highlands surrounding the swamp often reach elevations approximately 50 feet higher than the swamp. It is the most extensive, undisturbed cypress swamp still found in northern Florida. Many of the islands of pond and bald cypress which were cut around 1900 have returned to sizeable trees of 12 to 18 inches in diameter. The luxuriant undergrowth includes many species commonly found in more northern areas and is almost totally different from the semitropical cypress swamps of south Florida.

A rich diversity of wildlife occurs in the swamp. The area contains one of north Florida's heaviest concentrations of wildlife. In addition to alligator, other large species include otter, raccoon, wildcat, deer, fox, and black bear. Wading birds are abundant, including white ibis, American egret, sandhill crane, great blue heron, Louisiana heron, little green heron, little blue heron, least bittern, common bittern, limpkin, many duck species, black and turkey vulture, osprey, bald eagle and the wood stork.³³

The highlands surrounding the swamp are largely devoted to farming and cattle grazing. A small amount of pulp cutting and some cypress timbering occurs in the fringe areas. However, there appears to be no large-scale tree harvesting at present. Domestic cattle use pastures abutting the swamp when dry. The adjacent waters of the swamp often provide a source of drinking water to these animals.

Cypress and bottomland hardwoods predominate the isolated hammock islands and in low areas bordering the swamp. Plant species occurring in the fringe area include spruce, slash, loblolly and longleaf pines, bottomland gums, and many varieties of oak, magnolia, and willow. The dense understory consists of way myrtle, sea myrtle, elderberry, green briar, sumac, and wild plum.

The swamp is one of the most productive wetlands in north central Florida. The dominant aquatic vegetation in the swamp is maidencane. Associated species are abundant and consist of frogbit, floating hear, wampee, pickerel weed, cow tongue, golden club, dotted smartweed, watershield, water lily, and a variety of aquatic grasses.

³³Significant Natural Areas, pg. 54.



Drainage in the marsh is generally in a southeasterly direction with one small stream, Sundown Creek, carrying a majority of the outflow for the area. Several other culverts running beneath I-10 transmit water to southern portions of the swamp.

Lochloosa Conservation Area

The Lochloosa Wildlife Conservation Area is located in southeastern Alachua County and comprises 10,352 acres, including 1,200 acres of Orange Lake. Approximately 62.0 percent of the land area is composed of commercial pine plantation. The remainder is in natural condition and the biological communities are in good health. Lochloosa Forest forms the habitat for several listed species.³⁴ Approximately 16 active bald eagle nests are in the area.³⁵ The River Styx rookery, located within the forest, contains one of the two most important wood stork colonies in northern Florida. Between 100 and 125 nesting pairs of wood stork, recognized as an endangered species, nest in the large cypress trees of the rookery.³⁶ It is one of the few stable and constantly productive rookeries in the state. The few colonies of wood storks in Florida and one colony in Georgia, are all that exist in North America. In addition, the rookery is used as a nesting site by many ospreys and herons.³⁷

The River Styx flows through the conservation area into the northern tip of Orange Lake. The river environment is defined by a broad expanse of swamp forest and hammock for two and one-half miles from Camps Canal on the north to Orange Lake on the south. The river's sluggish trace southward is obscured within a 3,500 acre area of swamp, forest, and hardwood hammock. The dense, undisturbed vegetation system gives way to a shallow marsh area at its junction with Orange Lake. The inaccessibility of the area creates a large rookery for colonies of wading birds otherwise sensitive to human encroachment.

Mallory Swamp and San Pedro Bay

Totalling 515,774 acres, Mallory Swamp and San Pedro Bay comprise the largest inland wetland system in the region. They form a nearly continuous band of wetlands through Dixie, Lafayette, and Taylor counties north of U.S. Highway 19. These large wetlands form the headwaters of the streams that comprise the coastal rivers basin, including the Econfina, Fenholloway, and Steinhatchee rivers. Most of the area consists of large tracts owned by timber companies. Between the 1930s and the 1970s, canals were dug to drain the wetlands for pine production but, due to the wetness of the area, were only partially successful. As a result, the area is currently a mixture of pine plantation and wetlands.

³⁴Listed species means an animal species designated as Endangered, Threatened, or Species of Special Concern in Chapter 68A-27.003-68A-27.005, Florida Administrative Code; a plant species designated as Endangered, Threatened, or Commercially Exploited as designated in Chapter 5B-40, Florida Administrative Code, or an animal or plant species designated as Endangered or Threatened in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 17.

³⁵Annual Report of the Conservation and Recreation Lands Section Committee, Division of State Lands, Tallahassee, Florida, 1985, pg. 211.

³⁶Robert M. Brantley, Executive Director of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, correspondence of March 6, 1984 to Mr. John Bethea, Director, Division of Forestry, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Tallahassee, Florida.

³⁷Significant Natural Areas, pg. 82.



Mallory Swamp and San Pedro Bay are of regional significance due to their role in maintaining the hydrologic balance of the coastal rivers and their estuaries. In a natural state, these wetlands serve as a wide, shallow reservoir of both ground and surface waters. They provide the base flow for the coastal rivers through surface runoff and seepage from surficial aquifers. The past drainage efforts have altered the hydrologic balance by releasing too much storm water too quickly, resulting in disruptions to sensitive estuarine ecosystems. Because estuaries are uniquely adapted to, and dependent on, cyclical changes of fresh water inflow, changes to that balance can have significant adverse impacts to the estuary.

The Suwannee River Water Management District in the late 1980s examined the issue at the request of the Steinhatchee River Association, whose members were concerned about declining fisheries in the Steinhatchee River estuary. The District's study determined there was too much water draining too quickly into the river and estuary after storm events, but the hydrologic alterations upstream alone could not be the sole cause for the declining fishery.

The Steinhatchee River study confirmed that the past drainage attempts created significant hydrologic changes in the watershed. The study identified six major canal systems totaling 76 miles. Dug by timber companies, the canals were designed to speed drainage for improved pine tree growth and improved access for logging trucks. The canals caused surface water runoff within the basin to move much faster to the Gulf after heavy rains. Research studies in other Florida waters have shown the runoff interferes with fish using estuaries.

The area timber companies voluntarily agreed to change practices to allow the land to retain more water after rains. Those changes include installing flashboard culverts, allowing canals to become overgrown with vegetation and reducing road elevations to allow water to overflow from roadside canals into adjacent wetlands. The results to date have been noticeable downstream with less freshwater flooding after rains. The District has purchased 31,321 acres of Mallory Swamp in southern Lafayette County to help alleviate the concern.

Osceola National Forest/Pinhook Swamp

Lying 15 miles northeast of Lake City and extending through much of Columbia County to the Georgia border, the Osceola National Forest/ Pinhook Swamp area is essentially one continuous wetland system from the Okefenokee Swamp to Interstate Highway 10. The swamp extends eastward from U.S. Highway 441 into Baker County and the Northeast Florida Regional Planning District. Covering 184,350 acres within north central Florida, the swamp is the largest continuous wilderness area in the region.

The northern portion of the area is dominated by Pinhook Swamp, which is predominantly a cypress, gum, and loblolly bay swamp. It is a vast open area which is almost continually flooded, interspersed with dotted pine, cypress, and shrubs in open areas. The swamp is not as aesthetically pleasing as other Natural Resources of Regional Significance within the region but has a unique character due to the bleak wilderness quality of the expansive tree dotted prairie and thick fetter bush and titi-based vegetation around its fringe.

The swamp is very wet with many peat bogs and generally has a very rich humus soil. Pine forests are found in higher areas around the swamp and the southern half of Osceola National Forest. Slash pines are, in many cases, planted in fringe areas, but harvesting has apparently not been on a large scale due to the wetness of the ground. These fringe areas are typical pine flatwoods which give way near the swamp to cypress, slash and long-leaf pine, magnolia, and sweet bay.



The area is a valuable wildlife habitat. Rare, endangered, or protected species included in this habitat are the Black Bear, the Florida sandhill crane, and the bald eagle. It has one-third of Florida's entire bear population. The swamp has a good population of deer and turkey, squirrel, rabbit, otter, beaver, and many varieties of snakes and other reptiles, including alligators. Common birds reported in this area include the anhinga, many species of egrets, heron, and ibis, as well as many duck species, including wood duck. Canadian geese now frequent the area as winter residents.

Drainage of the swamp is very poor. Timber companies have dug a few canals to drain portions of the swamp by channeling runoff water into fringe areas and off of access roads. However, no large scale drainage works have been undertaken. Surface runoff generally flows westerly to the Suwannee River principally through Little Creek with some runoff flowing easterly to St. Mary's River in Baker County.

Santa Fe Swamp

Santa Fe Swamp is located north of Little Santa Fe Lake in northeastern Alachua County and southeastern Bradford County. The swamp in its natural capacity performs valuable services to the region as part of the headwaters of Santa Fe River, contributing to aquifer recharge and serving as an excellent and remote wildlife habitat. Santa Fe Swamp was donated by the Georgia-Pacific Corporation to the Suwannee River Water Management District in 1984.

Santa Fe Swamp encompasses 7,403 acres. The major feature of this area is its extensive hardwood swamp. A 300-acre sandhill community dominated by longleaf pine, turkey oak, and wire grass is found along the eastern side of the swamp. The remainder of the property consists primarily of inaccessible wetlands. The swamp community consists of a mosaic of vegetation types including pine flatwoods, cypress swamps, bayheads, wet prairies, and marshes, portions of which resemble Okefenokee Swamp. The dominant swamp vegetation includes cypress, gum, and bay trees.

Water quality is largely unknown but is probably good based upon limited available records and visual inspection of the Santa Fe River near the swamp. A considerable number of wading birds have been observed in the feeding ponds and prairies, and the area provides habitat for waterfowl and game species. In addition, nesting pairs of bald eagles have been observed in the swamp along with black bear and wood stork.

Animal species inhabiting the area around the Santa Fe River likely reside in the swamp. There are no roads or access to it of any kind. Appearing completely undisturbed and of high aesthetic value, the area is expected to be the habitat of a diverse and abundant wildlife population.

Waccasassa Flats

Occupying approximately 61,653 acres, Waccasassa Flats runs down the center of Gilchrist County. The flats are part of a larger wetland system which runs into Levy County. During the rainy season, waters in the aquifer build up sufficient pressure to spill out of the many sinkholes and ponds scattered throughout the flats to inundate the area.

The area is predominantly comprised of commercial pine plantation. Pine stands are interspersed among numerous cypress ponds, depression marshes, hydric hammock, and other wetland communities. Several lakes (the largest of which is 150 acres), small areas of upland hardwood forest, sandhill, and other minor natural communities contribute to the diversity of the flats.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018

d. Lakes

Lakes identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance include those of relatively large size, those with shorelines under the control of two or more local governments, and those which are environmentally sensitive. Several of the lakes are recognized by the state as Outstanding Florida Waters while others are included in the Suwannee River Water Management District's Surface Water Improvement Management program. Regionally significant lakes are Orange Lake, Santa Fe Lake, Little Santa Fe Lake, Newnans Lake, Lake Lochloosa, Watermelon Pond, Lake Sampson, Lake Butler, Lake Geneva and Alligator Lake.³⁸ Two lakes are highlighted below.

i. Alligator Lake

Alligator Lake is 968 acres of lake, wetlands, and flood plain located in central Columbia County. The lake proper consists of two interconnected waterbodies. The northern lake, locally known as "Big Lake" is located within the City of Lake City. The smaller waterbody, known as "Small Lake" is located in unincorporated Columbia County. Alligator Lake owes its regional significance to several plugged sinkholes which are located within the lake. The sinkholes have direct connection to the Floridan Aquifer. Approximately once every five to seven years, one or more of the sinkholes become unplugged, draining the contents of the lake into the Floridan Aquifer. Approximately one-half of the lake was diked and drained by private property owners during the 1950s and 1960s. A Florida State Supreme Court decision (*Hill vs. McDuffie*) ruled, among other things that the diked area was land, not lake, and that the dike could remain.

The lake is located in an area of low elevation and receives considerable surface water runoff from the city of Lake City. Most of Lake City was developed before enactment of surface water management regulations. As a result, surface waters entering the lake receive little treatment. Alligator Lake was recognized as one of the 50 poorest lakes in the state in terms of water quality by the Florida Department of Environmental Regulation in 1983. The ranking was primarily due to high nutrient levels, chronic algal blooms, and fish kills.³⁹ In 1988, the Suwannee River Water Management District classified Alligator Lake as a "priority water" in their Surface Water Improvement Management program. It is the only waterbody listed as a "restoration" waterbody on the District's Surface Water Improvement Management program priority list. In 1995, Columbia County applied for and received funding from Florida Communities Trust to purchase the diked portion of Alligator Lake and to restore the lake to its original condition.

ii. Newnans Lake

Located just east of the city of Gainesville in Alachua County, Newnans Lake is a perched surface waterbody with an area of 6,007 acres and a mean depth of six feet.⁴⁰ The lake obtains regional significance for several reasons. The northern lake shoreline is the boundary of Gum Root Swamp, a Natural Resource of

³⁸Surface area information was generally obtained from Edward A. Fernald and Donald J. Patton, *Water Resources in Florida*, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida, 1984, pg. 285. The surface area of Alligator Lake, is estimated by the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council, September, 1994.

³⁹Myers, V.B. and Edmiston, *Florida Lake Classification and Prioritization*, Final Report. Project #S004388. Florida Department of Environmental Regulation Technical Report, Tallahassee, Florida, 1983.

⁴⁰Ad Hoc Committee for Newnan's Lake Environmental Concerns, Report: 1983 Alachua County, Gainesville, Florida, 1983, pg. 13.



Regional Significance. Prairie Creek, the lake's only surface outflow, flows directly to Paynes Prairie State Preserve. A natural edge of cypress and gum trees in a relatively undisturbed state surrounds the entire lake. Due to a wet shoreline, very little residential development exists next to the lake.

e. River Corridors

Regionally significant river corridors consist of the Alapaha, Aucilla, Econfinia, Ichetucknee, Santa Fe, Steinhatchee, Suwannee and Withlacoochee rivers. In addition, three small streams located in southeastern Alachua County, the River Styx, Prairie Creek, and Cross Creek, are also recognized by the regional plan as Natural Resources of Regional Significance. River corridors consist of the stream channel and the 100-year floodplain.

i. Alapaha River Corridor

The Alapaha River travels 125 miles from its headwaters in southwestern Georgia to the Suwannee River in Hamilton County. The Alapaha drainage basin contains 1,840 square miles. Only a small portion of the river, approximately 40 miles, flows through north central Florida. Similarly, only 140 square miles of its 1,840 square mile drainage basin is located in the region. The river flow averages 1,346 cubic feet per second.⁴¹

The Alapaha is similar to the upper Suwannee with high and steep banks winding through undeveloped forest lands. Unlike the Suwannee, the Alapaha is divided into two distinct segments by a group of sinks. The river flows continuously year-round in the northern segment. The northern segment flows into the sinks, channeling a significant portion of the river flow underground. The southern segment flows intermittently. The sinks absorb all of the northern segment waters during periods of low flow. Water flows the entire length of the Alapaha about 60 percent of the time. The river's waters travel through underground limestone channels for 19 miles to re-emerge at Alapaha Rise and possibly Holton Spring.

ii. Aucilla River Corridor

The Aucilla River begins near the Georgia community of Boston and meanders 69 miles through Florida to the Gulf of Mexico. The river drains approximately 805 square miles and has an average discharge of 436 cubic feet per second.⁴²

Forming the boundary between Jefferson, Madison, and Taylor counties, the Aucilla River flows through the Aucilla Wildlife Management Area in northern Taylor County to the St. Marks Wildlife Management Area on the gulf. The Aucilla River provides some of Florida's most unspoiled river vistas available to canoeists and hikers. The river has been designated an Outstanding Florida Water. The state recently purchased property adjacent to the river to protect a unique sink area known as the Aucilla River Sinks, a Natural Resource of Regional Significance in its own right. The river traverses upland forests of longleaf pine and turkey oak, old growth mesic and hydric hardwood forests, cypress and gum swamps, beech-magnolia groves, live oak hammocks, and finally the salt marsh of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge.

⁴¹Water Resources Division, United States Geological Survey, Water Resource Data for Florida, Vol. 4, Northwest Florida, Tallahassee, Florida, 1984.

⁴²Water Resource Data for Florida, Vol. 4, Northwest Florida.

Bald eagles, osprey, otters, and turkeys are seen, as are smaller animals such as fox squirrels and raccoons. Many species of birds either nest or migrate through the coastal marsh segment of the river. Indian mounds dating back more than 2,000 years are scattered along it. Much of the river floodplain is owned and managed by timber companies effectively restricting residential development. The two wildlife management areas provide habitat for many plant and wildlife species.

iii. Econfina River Corridor

Located approximately midway between the Aucilla River and the City of Perry, the Econfina River has a length of approximately 32 miles and a drainage area of 198 square miles. The river has an average discharge of 138 cubic feet per second.⁴³ Its principal attraction is the relatively natural condition of its banks and estuary. Virtually no residential development has taken place along its entire length. Hardwood forest lines the banks of the river while numerous adjacent lands are in managed pine forest. The river is much wider at the Gulf and forms an important estuary.

Water quality of the river and adjoining salt marsh is very good. The adjoining forests contribute to the quality of the salt marsh by filtering water before it reaches the coast and by acting as a buffer between the salt marsh and the forest industry land to the north. The river corridor is primarily a mixture of hydric and mesic communities. The major ecosystems found on the river include salt marsh, mixed-pine-hardwood community, pine-oak-palm community, and river swamp.

iv. Ichetucknee River Corridor

Ichetucknee Springs forms the headwaters of this five-mile long river which forms the border between southern Columbia and Suwannee counties. Its clear waters make the river a very popular location for canoeing, rafting, and tubing. The Ichetucknee River is designated by the State of Florida as an Outstanding Florida Water.

The river runs past high limestone banks, river swamp, and marsh shoreline where dominant plant types are ribbon grass, spatterdock, coastal willow, and buttonbush. The swamp area has several beaver lodges. Animals common to the park include turkey, limpkin, apple snail, Suwannee bass, gulf pipe fish, and river otter. Recently, manatees have been sighted in the river.

The river floodplain is mainly composed of sandhills and mesic hammock vegetation. A sandhill community is located in the highest elevations. Common plants include turkey oaks, sand post oak, longleaf pine, bracken fern, and wiregrass. The corridor contains a small area of river swamp which is poorly drained, frequently flooded, and has a dense canopy. Dominant trees include red maple, sweetgum, American elm, Florida ash, and bald cypress.

v. Santa Fe River Corridor

The Santa Fe River is the largest tributary of the Suwannee, flowing 75 miles from its headwaters at Santa Fe Lake in northeast Alachua County to its confluence with the Suwannee River in northwest Gilchrist County. The river drains a watershed of 1,440 square miles. The Santa Fe has four major tributaries of its own: the Ichetucknee River, New River, Sampson River, and Olustee Creek. Both the Santa Fe River and Olustee Creek are designated as Outstanding Florida Waters. With average recorded flows of more than

⁴³Water Resource Data for Florida, Vol. 4, Northwest Florida.

1,500 cubic feet per second, the large volume of surface waters flowing through the river make the Santa Fe a Natural Resource of Regional Significance independent of the Suwannee.⁴⁴

The forest areas which surround the river consist of swamp forest and hammock forest. The swamp forest has an abundant diversity of tree species including sweet gum, tupelo gum, pumpkin ash, Carolina ash, laurel oak, Florida elm, red maple, bald cypress, water hickory and water locust. The intermittently flooded areas of the river swamp show a preponderance for live oak trees. The overcup oak and river birch species reach the southern limit of their range along the Santa Fe River.

Most wildlife species found in north central Florida can also be found along the Santa Fe River. Bobcats and an occasional black bear may still be found. Wide-ranging species such as deer, grey squirrel, turkey, and otter are also present. Alligators are abundant, particularly in the eastern portion of the river. The bird population is extensive and includes the common egret and heron, pileated woodpecker, limpkin, kingfisher, red shouldered hawk, barn owl, several species of warbler, and the rare Mississippi kite.⁴⁵

The Santa Fe River is in a nearly natural state and receives almost no domestic or industrial pollution. The most notable attribute of the upper Santa Fe River is the Santa Fe Swamp, which is owned by the Suwannee River Water Management District. The lower Santa Fe is noted for its many springs. The area between O'leno State Park and the Suwannee River confluence is the center of the range of the Suwannee Bass, a species of very restricted distribution, which is also an excellent game fish. The lower Santa Fe harbors an estimated 80 to 90 percent of the total population of this unique species. The area between the Ichetucknee River and Poe Springs is an important fossil site. Many springs are found along the river, including Poe Spring, Lily Spring, Ginnie Springs, Devil's Eye Spring, Dogwood Spring, July Spring, Blue Spring, Naked Spring, and Rum Island Spring.

vi. Steinhatchee River Corridor

The Steinhatchee River Corridor forms the border between Dixie and Taylor counties. The Steinhatchee River is approximately 30 miles long and has an average flow of 325 cubic feet per second.⁴⁶ The river is formed out of many small tributaries whose headwaters are found in San Pedro Bay, which is in northern Taylor and southern Lafayette counties. Approximately four miles downstream of Steinhatchee Springs, the river disappears underground for a distance of approximately ½ mile. From its resurgence it is possible to canoe the entire distance to the Gulf without portage. Downstream, the river forms a large estuary at the Gulf coast. The town of Steinhatchee, a small fishing village, is located at the river's mouth.

The outstanding feature of the Steinhatchee is its undeveloped nature. Virtually the entire length of the river from Steinhatchee Springs to the town of Steinhatchee is in a relatively natural state. Many hardwood trees line its banks. Another distinctive feature of the river are the extensive tidal flats at its mouth. The river has a relatively large coastal drainage basin of approximately 375,000 acres, most of which is wet forests and titi-based swamps.

⁴⁴Water Resource Data for Florida, Vol. 4, Northwest Florida.

⁴⁵Significant Natural Areas, Gainesville, Florida, 1977, pg. 60.

⁴⁶Water Resource Data for Florida, Vol. 4, Northwest Florida.



vii. Suwannee River Corridor

The Suwannee River Corridor consists of the 100-year floodplain of the Suwannee River. The Suwannee River Corridor serves an important role in the region by linking inland wetlands to Gulf coastal marshes. The river also plays an important role in the control of fresh water flooding. No flood control structures are found along the river within the State of Florida. Instead, the Suwannee relies upon its large floodplain to control flood waters. The Suwannee River is the setting of many natural features including an abundance of fresh water springs, sinks, and underwater caves. The river is widely used as a recreational resource for camping, boating, canoeing, scuba diving, and fishing.

The Suwannee River is the second largest Florida river in terms of water flow and is one of the most important water resources in the region. The river is 235 miles in length, of which 207 miles traverse north central Florida. From its headwaters in the Okefenokee Swamp in southern Georgia, the river flows south across the Northern Highlands and into the Gulf Coastal Lowlands, eventually draining 9,950 square miles into its estuary at the Gulf of Mexico. The Suwannee forms the borders of seven north central Florida counties and drains all, or portions of, ten eleven counties within the region.⁴⁷ The Suwannee River estuary is a complex system of diverse natural communities and is a major nursery for commercial fish and shellfish.

The Suwannee has a flow of approximately one billion gallons per day at its entrance to the State of Florida and empties seven billion gallons per day into the Gulf of Mexico.⁴⁸ Unlike many rivers, the Suwannee's water quality is generally better downstream than up. The headwaters of the Suwannee, the Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia, produce a dark-colored water flow high in tannic and humic acids from the decay of lush swamp vegetation. Downstream springs provide the Suwannee with a high quality water source. The Suwannee is fed by more than 50 springs. During periods of drought the springs are a major source of the Suwannee's water.

The Suwannee has relatively few tributaries compared with most rivers due to the basin's well-draining sands and underlying limestone channels. Instead of having many tributaries as sources of water, the great number of sinks and lakes in the region collect rain and local runoff before it can reach the Suwannee. Thus the soils and sinkholes contribute to water pressure deep inside the aquifer, helping to promote the flow of high quality spring water to the Suwannee.

The Suwannee River flows across sediments formed over a time span of 40 million years. Many of these sediments, deposited in large deltas, estuaries, and shallow ocean environments, are composed of limestone, dolostone, and other sandy materials. The dissolution of underlying limestone produces scenic rock outcroppings, sinkholes, and the many springs along the river. This diversification of geologic features greatly contributes to its scenic and recreational value.

The vegetation along the river adds to its scenic beauty. Its forested banks are unique in that they traverse every major terrestrial habitat in Florida. Fresh water marsh and swamp forests occur at its headwaters while salt marsh can be found at the river's mouth. The variety, size, and geographic location of its plant communities are noteworthy.

⁴⁷Except Taylor County.

⁴⁸Water Resource Data for Florida, Vol. 4, Northwest Florida.



The river and its heavily forested floodplains provide excellent habitat for many fish and animal species, most notably the Suwannee black bass, Okefenokee pigmy sunfish, West Indian manatee and Atlantic sturgeon. The sturgeon have historically been a mainstay of fishermen all along the Gulf coast. However, due to over-fishing, dam construction, and river pollution, their numbers have declined to the point where it is considered an endangered species on the Mississippi River. The Suwannee River is the only river in the eastern Gulf of Mexico which supports a normally functioning population of Atlantic sturgeon. In the spring, adult sturgeons migrate upstream from their wintering grounds over the continental shelf to spawning areas in shallow portions of the upper Suwannee. Adults return to the Gulf of Mexico in the fall. Juveniles may remain in fresh or brackish water for three to five years before entering the open ocean.⁴⁹ West Indian manatees occur in the lower Suwannee River during the warmer months of the year. During the winter months, they concentrate at Manatee Springs, one of six natural warm water refuges within the state for this endangered species.⁵⁰

Thirty-nine species of amphibians, 73 species and subspecies of reptiles, 232 species and subspecies of birds, and 42 species and subspecies of mammals are present within the Suwannee River Corridor.⁵¹ The large number of species may be attributable to the river's diverse and undeveloped habitat. The river forms an important dividing line that abruptly terminates the range of a number of species. Some animal species such as the alligator snapping turtle, wood thrush and marsh hawk reach the southern and eastern limits of their range on the northeast bank of the Suwannee. Other species reach their westerly and northerly limits at the river, such as the Florida crow and the Florida black bass.⁵² Forested areas along the river support white-tailed deer and wild turkey. Black bear can be found in small numbers.

Small game species occurring in the watershed include bobwhite quail, mourning dove, grey squirrel, woodcock and common snipe. The Suwannee River estuary has abundant habitat for waterfowl. Many duck species use the river including mallard, pintail, red-breasted merganser, black duck, and gadwall.

The Suwannee has not been significantly degraded due to human use. The river's water quality is high and its banks are relatively free of streamside development. Recreational use of the Suwannee River and its tributaries (Alapaha, Ichetucknee, Santa Fe, and Withlacoochee rivers) is increasing as the region's population grows and people from around the state become increasingly aware of its recreational resources. Potential for conflicts and resource degradation (e.g., bank and shoreline erosion, water pollution, manatee collisions, etc.) increases in direct proportion to increased use of the river system.

⁴⁹Angelo D. Becasso, Nick Fotheringham, Alice E. Redfield, Ronald L. Frew, William M. Levitan, Joel E. Smith, and Jarrett O. Woodrow, Jr., *Gulf Coast Ecological Inventory: User's Guide and Information Base*, Dames and Moore, Bethesda, Maryland, 1982, pg. 132.

⁵⁰ *Gulf Coast Ecological Inventory: User's Guide and Information Base.*, pg. 130.

⁵¹ *Gulf Coast Ecological Inventory: User's Guide and Information Base*, pg. 132.

⁵²S. David Webb, "A Short Report on the Ecology of the Suwannee River Drainage", Florida State Museum, Gainesville, Florida, 1970, pg. 4-7.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has the primary responsibility for establishing boating safety zones. Local governments have limited responsibility for establishing boating safety zones, which in turn are enforced by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Florida Marine Patrol, and local law enforcement agencies. There are no consistent, enforceable boating traffic controls currently in effect on the Suwannee or its tributaries. An opportunity exists for state agencies and local governments to coordinate in the development of a comprehensive boating safety and resource protection strategy for the Suwannee River system.

viii. Withlacoochee River Corridor

The Withlacoochee River begins its 108-mile journey to the Suwannee near Tifton, Georgia. Flowing southeasterly, it joins the Suwannee near Ellaville at Suwannee River State Park. Some 28 miles of the river lies within Florida, forming the border between Madison and Hamilton counties. The river flows through some of the state's most picturesque wetlands, with its varying river channel exhibiting such features as sandy beaches and impressive limestone outcroppings. Several springs feed the Withlacoochee and add to its scenic qualities, including Withlacoochee Blue Spring, Suwanacoochee Spring, and Morgan Springs. Approximately 2,120 square miles are contained within the Withlacoochee drainage basin in Georgia and Florida. The river itself has a recorded discharge at the Suwannee ranging from 93 to 2,060 cubic feet per second with an average flow of approximately 1,000 cubic feet per second.⁵³

The river is accessible by small boats and canoes. Shoals and shallow areas severely limit powerboat access. Only one public boat launch is on the Withlacoochee, with canoes and other small boats primarily launched at road crossings. The Withlacoochee River Canoe Trail was the first river canoe trail established in Florida. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection maintains the trail in cooperation with the Coastal Plain Area Tourism Council of Valdosta, Georgia. The trail begins north of Valdosta and ends 56 miles downstream at its confluence with the Suwannee River.

The ecology of the Withlacoochee River is similar to the Suwannee. Forest types vary considerably. Longleaf and slash pine forest located in the sandhills give way to bottomland forest near the river. Oak and pine form the predominant tree types. The forests along the river's bank are harvested primarily for pulpwood. There are very few areas with residential development along the river, and these are located near the river's mouth at its junction with the Suwannee. The remainder of the river corridor is in a relatively natural condition.

Wildlife species occurring within the river corridor include a year-round population of wood duck. Beaver, once trapped out of the river for their fur, are active and contributing to tree damage. Deer, gray and red fox, and a variety of bird species including the kingfisher and many species of swallow are abundant. A fish survey of the river by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission identified 31 species including Suwannee bass, warmouth, blue gill, shellcracker, red breast sunfish, spotted sucker, several species of shiner, and shad in the river.

Agricultural runoff and industrial pollution affect the river's water quality. The latter results from the discharge of approximately 11.7 million gallons per day of paperboard mill wastewater into the Withlacoochee River near Clyattville, Georgia. Nutrient overloads and low levels of dissolved oxygen in the river are caused, at least in part, by these effluents. Runoff from adjacent agricultural lands is the likely source of high levels of coliform bacteria and phosphate found in the river.

⁵³Water Resource Data for Florida, Vol. 4, Northwest Florida.

Despite the pollution concerns regarding small segments of the river, it remains essentially an undeveloped natural river affording excellent recreation potential. The varied character of the river itself, besides the profuse natural vegetation and absence of development, creates a very impressive aesthetic appearance offering a pleasing, and perhaps primitive, river experience.

ix. Cross Creek, Prairie Creek and River Styx Corridors

Cross Creek, Prairie Creek, and the River Styx are small perennial streams in southeastern Alachua County. Cross Creek is the smallest of the three at approximately one mile in length. It is designated an Outstanding Florida Water and connects two regionally significant lakes, Orange Lake and Lake Lochloosa, both of which are also designated as Outstanding Florida Waters. At six miles in length, the River Styx is the longest of the three streams. The River Styx is also designated as an Outstanding Florida Water and connects Paynes Prairie State Preserve to Orange Lake. Prairie Creek is approximately two miles in length and connects Newnans Lake, a Natural Resource of Regional Significance, to Paynes Prairie State Preserve.

f. Springs

More than 100 springs exist in the region, most of which are found along the Suwannee and Santa Fe rivers. Most of the springs issue under artesian pressure from the Floridan Aquifer with an average water temperature of 70 degrees Fahrenheit.⁵⁴ Regionally significant springs are identified in Table 4.1. Most regionally significant springs flow into the Suwannee River system. These springs provide significant volume to the flow of the river and affect the river's water quality. During periods of low water tables, the springs occasionally act as sinkholes; whereby, the Suwannee discharges its flow to the Floridan Aquifer. The springs are a primary source of recreation, providing locations for camping, canoeing, swimming, and snorkeling. In addition, north central Florida springs are internationally famous among cave divers.

Groundwater that maintains the region's springs is susceptible to contamination from activities occurring within spring capture zones. Spring capture zones are similar to water wellhead capture zones. They represent a geographic area near the spring where, if groundwater is contaminated, it will be disgorged by the spring at the earth's surface. Similar to wellhead capture zones, spring capture zones can be delineated by treating springs as pumping wells and using the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Wellhead Protection Area computer model to determine the size and shape of the capture zones. Spring capture zones have not been delineated for north central Florida springs. Delineation is important in order to protect the water quality of north central Florida springs and the surface waters supplied by springs. Three of the region's springs are highlighted below.

⁵⁴Jack C. Rosenau, et. al., Springs of Florida, Florida Bureau of Geology, Tallahassee, Florida, 1977, pg. 4. Spring classes are based upon their rate of discharge. The Bureau identifies eight classes, or magnitudes, of springs. First magnitude springs discharge an average of 100 cubic feet or more of water per second. Second magnitude springs discharge between ten and 100 cubic feet per second. Third magnitude springs discharge between one to 10 cubic feet per second. By way of comparison, eighth magnitude springs discharge less than one pint per minute. The regional plan recognizes all first and second magnitude springs and their runs, a total of 105 springs, as Natural Resources of Regional Significance.



i. Ginnie Spring

Located on the Santa Fe River in northeast Gilchrist County and northwest Alachua County, Ginnie Spring is associated with nine other nearby springs: Poe, Lily, Devil's Pond, Dogwood, July, Blue, Rum Island, Naked, and Poe. They are in a natural woodland setting easily accessible from each other. Much of the plant life near the springs is in a near natural state. Large species of cypress, oak, and maple trees surrounded by a dense undergrowth of natural vegetation, occur along the adjacent Santa Fe River and the spring group. A privately-owned campground surrounds Ginnie Spring.

Ginnie Spring is a large clear water spring with depths to 40 feet and is one of the most popular scuba-diving springs in the region. Devil's Eye Spring is in the middle of three boils in one of the most beautiful combinations of springs in the state. The spring contains a multi-caved tunnel leading to the Santa Fe River.

ii. Holton Spring and Holton Creek

Holton Spring and its run to the Suwannee River, Holton Creek, are located on the north side of the Suwannee River approximately one mile east of the Alapaha River in Hamilton County. Holton Spring is one of the region's 18 first magnitude springs. More importantly, it is one of the few remaining first magnitude springs in a relatively undisturbed, natural state.⁵⁵ Endangered species found in the area include the gopher tortoise and Suwannee cooter. The area also contains the cedar elm, an endangered tree. The area contains the largest known population of cedar elm in Florida with an estimated 100 to 1,000 individual trees.⁵⁶

iii. Withlacoochee Blue Spring

Withlacoochee Blue Spring is approximately five miles east of the City of Madison on the west bank of the Withlacoochee River in Madison County. The site is widely used by Madison and Hamilton county residents for recreational activities. The spring has also gained a national reputation for cave diving.

Withlacoochee Blue Spring is a first magnitude spring with an average flow of 78 million gallons per day. The spring pool is 90 feet wide and 30 feet deep. A clear run travels approximately 150 feet from the spring to the Withlacoochee River. Vegetation around the spring consists of high pine lands and sandhills on the west giving way to a dense hardwood forest along the river. The vegetation is diverse with many large trees contributing to the aesthetic appearance of the site.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Suwannee River Preserve Design Project, pg. 55.

⁵⁶Ibid, pg. 55.

⁵⁷Significant Natural Areas, pg. 69.



B. Problems, Needs and Opportunities

The Council identifies the following Natural Resources of Regional Significance problems, needs, and opportunities:

1. A need exists to preserve Big Bend coastal and marine resources identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance for future generations.
2. A need exists to maintain an adequate supply of high-quality groundwater for all of north central Florida for future generations.
3. A need exists to increase our knowledge of the relationship between ground and surface waters, the surface water needs of native species and natural systems, including minimum flows necessary to the survival of native species and natural systems.
4. A need exists to protect all sources of recharge to the Floridan Aquifer from activities which would impair these functions or cause a degradation in the quality of recharging waters.
5. A need exists to ensure the survival of flora and fauna native to the region.
6. A need exists to ensure the survival of all listed species currently found in the Regional Ecological Greenways Network.⁵⁸
7. A need exists for the state to protect the identified attributes of the habitats of listed species within the Regional Ecological Greenways Network.⁵⁹
8. A need exists to plan and manage Planning and Resource Management Areas identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance.
9. A need exists to maintain the quantity and quality of the region's surface water systems identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance.
10. A need exists to map the capture zones of all springs identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance.
11. An opportunity exists for state agencies and local governments to coordinate in the development of a comprehensive boating safety and resource protection plan for the Suwannee River System.

⁵⁸Listed species means an animal species designated as Endangered, Threatened, or Species of Special Concern in Chapter 68A-27.003-68A-27.005, Florida Administrative Code; a plant species designated as Endangered, Threatened, or Commercially Exploited as designated in Chapter 5B-40, Florida Administrative Code, or an animal or plant species designated as Endangered or Threatened in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 17.

⁵⁹Ibid.



12. A need exists to balance environmental concerns with existing needs for raw materials by industry. The survival of the timber industry is very important to the region as it provides the reason to own and protect much of what is identified in this plan as a Natural Resource of Regional Significance. The use of Best Management Practices is important to the sustainability of forests.
13. A need exists to encourage growth of biomass within the region in light of increasing demand for biomass electrical power generation.
14. As our region contains very sizeable quantities of biomass material for renewable energy production, there is an opportunity to increase the acreage of forested lands, improve the ecological quality of forested lands and provide for renewable energy supplies.
15. There is a need to encourage the sustainability of our forests.

C. Regional Goals and Policies

1. All Natural Resources of Regional Significance

REGIONAL GOAL 4.1. Use the natural resources of the region in a sustainable manner.

Regional Indicators

1. As of 2015, the number of north central Florida local government comprehensive plans which encourage the use of silvicultural best management practices is unknown.
2. As of 2015, the number of north central Florida local government comprehensive plans Impact which encourage the use of low impact development practices is unknown.
3. As of 2015, the number of north central Florida local government comprehensive plans which encourage the use of energy conservation design principles is unknown.
4. As of 2015, the number of north central Florida local government comprehensive plans which encourage the use of water conservation and reuse strategies is unknown.
5. As of 2015, with the exception of intracounty groundwater transfer by Gainesville Regional Utilities, no interbasin transfer of water occurs in the region.
6. As of 2015, north central Florida has 102.5 megawatts of electrical generation capacity using biomass as the primary fuel source.

Policy 4.1.1. Ensure that local government comprehensive plans include provisions which encourage the use of silvicultural best management practices for silviculture uses within Natural Resources of Regional Significance.

Policy 4.1.2. Ensure that local government comprehensive plans include provisions which encourage the use of low impact development practices within Natural Resources of Regional Significance.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



Policy 4.1.3. Ensure that local government comprehensive plans include provisions which encourage the use of energy conservation design principles in order to minimize demand on regional electric power generation facilities.

Policy 4.1.4. Ensure that local government comprehensive plans include provisions which encourage the inclusion of water conservation and reuse strategies in order to minimize demand for surface water and groundwater Natural Resources of Regional Significance.

Policy 4.1.5. Discourage the transfer of water across water management district boundaries until the receiving jurisdiction has implemented all practicable water supply alternatives and conservation measures, unless it is within a county which is located within two water management districts.

Policy 4.1.6. Discourage the transfer of groundwater and surface water across water management district boundaries, as provided for in Policy 4.1.5, where the current and projected water needs of the area from where the water is taken cannot be met, unless it is within a county which is located within two water management districts.

Policy 4.1.7. Encourage cooperative efforts to develop local and regional water supplies within water management districts, instead of the transport of water across water management district boundaries, and use water from sources nearest the area of use whenever practicable.

Policy 4.1.8. Encourage water management districts to take into account and to not violate the minimum flows and levels of waterbodies located within adjacent water management districts when preparing water supply plans and when issuing consumptive use permits.

Policy 4.1.9. Ensure that local government comprehensive plans do not include provisions relying upon Regional Plan Policies 4.1.5 and 4.1.6 contained herein as encouragement or justification to require the issuance of a local government permit for the consumptive use of water or the exercise of any other local government regulatory action preempting or having the effect of preempting the exclusive authority of water management districts over the consumptive use of water as authorized by Chapter 373, Florida Statutes.

2. Coastal and Marine Resources

a. Big Bend Salt Marsh, Big Bend Seagrass Beds and Florida Middle Ground

REGIONAL GOAL 4.2. Preserve Big Bend coastal and marine resources identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance for future generations of residents in recognition of their economic and ecological importance to the region.

Regional Indicators

1. As of May, 2016, the Big Bend Salt Marsh (Dixie, Levy, and Taylor County) coastline comprised 72,641.34 acres.



2. In 2001, that portion of the Big Bend Seagrass Beds extending 6 nautical miles seaward of the Dixie County and Taylor County coastline was comprised of 102,530.5 acres of bays and estuaries, 63,992.3 acres of open water, 7,638.6 acres of tidal flats, 11,515.0 acres of patchy seagrass, 192,556.6 acres of continuous seagrass, and 108,423.7 acres which were unclassified.⁶⁰
3. In 1996, the Florida Middle Ground comprised 132,000 acres.
4. As of May 2016, the Fenholloway River is in violation of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency water quality standards for dissolved oxygen, biochemical oxygen demand, and un-ionized ammonia.
5. As of January 2007, there were 60 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits in the Region.
6. As of January 2015, no offshore oil or natural gas wells are located within 100 miles of the Dixie and Taylor counties coastline.
7. As of January 2015, no offshore oil or natural gas wells are located within the Florida Middle Ground.

Policy 4.2.1. Use non-structural water management controls as the preferred water management approach for the coastal areas of the region.

Policy 4.2.2. Provide technical assistance to local governments in ensuring the preservation of the region's coastal and marine resources through their local planning processes.

Policy 4.2.3. Minimize the need for excavating and/or filling of the region's coastal wetlands and ensure impacts are mitigated where such activity occurs.

Policy 4.2.4. Minimize the impacts of development activities which occur within and/or adjacent to the coastal wetlands.

Policy 4.2.5. Remove either the Big Bend Seagrass Beds or an area 35 miles seaward of the coastline of Dixie and Taylor Counties, whichever is of the greater seaward extent, from areas available for oil, gas and mineral leasing in the eastern Gulf of Mexico.

Policy 4.2.6. Remove the Florida Middle Ground from areas available for oil, gas and mineral leasing in the eastern Gulf of Mexico.

Policy 4.2.7. Minimize the need for establishing new channels and maintenance dredging of existing channels within the seagrass beds and mitigate impacts where such activity occurs.

Policy 4.2.8. Coordinate land use and water resources planning for coastal and marine resources designated as Natural Resources of Regional Significance among the Council, local governments, and the water management districts through regional review responsibilities, participation in committees and study groups, and ongoing communication.

⁶⁰North Central Florida Regional Planning Council, March 2007. Derived from Seagrass Habitat and Monitoring in Florida's Big Bend, Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute and Suwannee River Water Management District, 2006.



Policy 4.2.9. Assist in environmental education efforts to increase public awareness of the region's coastal and marine resources through the North Central Florida Tourism Task Force.

Policy 4.2.10. Use incentives to encourage future development located within the service area of the unincorporated Town of Suwannee's wastewater treatment plant to hook up to the plant.

Policy 4.2.11. Monitor the entire Big Bend Seagrass Beds for a distance of six nautical miles seaward of the coastline and the Florida Middle Ground on a regular basis using a consistent methodology which provides meaningful trend analysis of their health and areal extent.

Policy 4.2.12. Ensure that local government comprehensive plans and requests for federal and state funds for development activities reviewed by the Council include adequate provisions for the protection of the Big Bend Salt Marsh and the Big Bend Seagrass Beds.

3. Groundwater Resources

a. Floridan Aquifer, Areas of High Recharge Potential to the Floridan Aquifer, Ichetucknee Trace, Stream-to-Sink Watersheds and Sinks

REGIONAL GOAL 4.3. Maintain an adequate supply of high-quality groundwater to meet the needs of north central Florida residents, in recognition of its importance to the continued growth and development of the region.

Regional Indicators

1. As of January 2015, the quantity of potable water contained in the Floridan Aquifer underlying the north central Florida region, its average daily recharge and discharge, were unknown.
2. In 2012, an estimated 332.9 million gallons per day of water were withdrawn from north central Florida groundwater sources.
3. As of May 2016, north central Florida contained 18 first-magnitude springs, 120 second-magnitude springs, and 82 third-magnitude springs.
4. As of June 2016, the known Nitrate Nitrogen readings for north central Florida first magnitude springs, and their date of measure, were as follows (see Table 4.5):

Policy 4.3.1. Water management districts should monitor at regular intervals the water quality and flows of springs identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance.

Policy 4.3.2. Continue to increase the region's knowledge of the relationship between ground and surface waters, the surface water needs of native species and natural systems, including minimum flows necessary to the survival of native species and natural systems.

Policy 4.3.3. Provide technical assistance to local governments in developing strategies in their local planning and land development regulations processes which can be used in addressing known water quantity, quality or recharge problem areas within their jurisdictions.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



Policy 4.3.4. Coordinate land use and water resources planning for groundwater resources designated as Natural Resources of Regional Significance among the Council, local governments, and the water management districts through regional review responsibilities, participation in committees and study groups, and ongoing communication.

Policy 4.3.5. Assist in environmental education efforts to increase public awareness of the region's ground water resources through The Original Florida Tourism Task Force.

Policy 4.3.6. Identify and map the capture zones of all public water supply wellfields.

Policy 4.3.7. Provide technical assistance to local governments in implementing wellfield protection programs based upon capture zones delineated by either the Florida Department of Environmental Protection or the local water management districts when such information becomes available.

Policy 4.3.8. Ensure that local government comprehensive plans and requests for federal and state funds for development activities reviewed by the Council include adequate provisions for the protection of the Floridan aquifer, Areas of High Recharge Potential to the Floridan aquifer, the Ichetucknee Trace, as well as Stream-to-Sink Watersheds and Sinks which have been identified and mapped in the regional plan as Natural Resources of Regional Significance.

Policy 4.3.9. Encourage local and regional development of alternative water supplies within south Georgia, the Suwannee River Water Management District and the St. Johns River Water Management District, including desalination, conservation, reuse of nonpotable reclaimed water and stormwater, as well as aquifer storage and recovery.

REGIONAL GOAL 4.4. Protect all sources of recharge to the Floridan aquifer from all activities which would impair these functions or cause a degradation in the quality of the water being recharged in recognition of the importance of maintaining adequate supplies of high-quality groundwater for the region.

Regional Indicators

1. As of May 2016, the Southwest Florida Water Management District, the St. Johns River Water Management District, the Suwannee River Water Management District, Alachua County, and Columbia County had identified and mapped 1,180,502.52 acres of areas of high recharge potential to the Floridan Aquifer within north central Florida.
2. In Fiscal Year 2010-2011, there were 204,586 visitors to Ichetucknee Springs State Park.⁶¹
3. In 2015, eight sinks were delineated as Natural Resources of Regional Significance in the North Central Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan.

Policy 4.4.1. Coordinate the mapping of high recharge areas in order to assure consistency in identification of such areas near district boundaries.

⁶¹2013 Florida Statistical Abstract, Table 19.52.



Policy 4.4.2. Update the regional map series delineating Areas of High Recharge Potential to the Floridan Aquifer with a map series depicting High Recharge Areas of the Floridan Aquifer when the latter information becomes available.

Policy 4.4.3. Assist state and local agencies in developing and implementing strategies for the protection of the Ichetucknee Trace so that activities occurring within the Trace do not adversely impact the water quality and flow of surface waters within Ichetucknee Springs State Park.

Policy 4.4.4. Provide technical assistance to local governments in the development and implementation of appropriate local government comprehensive plan policies and land development regulations necessary to maintaining the quantity and quality of ground water recharge in Areas of High Recharge Potential to the Floridan Aquifer, Stream-to-Sink Watersheds, and Sinks.

Policy 4.4.5. Ensure that local government comprehensive plans and requests for federal and state funds for development activities reviewed by the Council include adequate provisions for stormwater management and aquifer recharge protection in order to protect the quality and quantity of water contained in the Floridan Aquifer.

Policy 4.4.6. Work with the water management districts to develop and apply coordinated review procedures and criteria for reviewing groundwater issues related to federally-assisted projects, local plan amendments and revisions, local comprehensive plan evaluation and appraisal reports, and local comprehensive plan intergovernmental coordination elements.

Policy 4.4.7. Minimize the effect of mining activities on water quality and quantity of the Floridan Aquifer.

4. Natural Systems

a. Regional Ecological Greenways Network

REGIONAL GOAL 4.5. Protect all listed species within the Regional Ecological Greenways Network.⁶²

Regional Indicator

As of May 2016 the Regional Ecological Greenways Network comprised 1,861,136 acres in north Central Florida.

Policy 4.5.1. Allow development and economic activity within and near the Regional Ecological Greenway to the extent that such development and economic activity does not significantly and adversely affect the functions of the resource as an ecological greenway.

⁶²Listed species means an animal species designated as Endangered, Threatened, or Species of Special Concern in Chapter 68A-27.003-68A-27.005, Florida Administrative Code; a plant species designated as Endangered, Threatened, or Commercially Exploited as designated in Chapter 5B-40, Florida Administrative Code, or an animal or plant species designated as Endangered or Threatened in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 17.



Policy 4.5.2. Work with local governments and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to ensure the survival of all listed species and their habitats found in the Regional Ecological Greenways Network.⁶³

Policy 4.5.3. Increase citizen awareness on the effects of human activities on listed species and their habitats in the Regional Ecological Greenways Network.⁶⁴

Policy 4.5.4. Coordinate planning efforts to protect listed species and their habitats found within the Regional Ecological Greenways Network.⁶⁵

Policy 4.5.5. Endangered and threatened species and their habitats within the Regional Ecological Greenways Network shall be protected.⁶⁶

Policy 4.5.6. When a land use designation change is proposed or an increase in allowable land use density or intensity is proposed, listed species and their habitat known to exist within the Regional Ecological Greenways Network shall be protected. Protection should include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:

- a) conservation easements;
- b) on and offsite mitigation/conservation banks;
- c) tax breaks;
- d) transferable densities;
- e) management agreements; and,
- f) agriculture and silviculture best management practices.⁶⁷

Policy 4.5.7. Working with private property owners, encourage voluntary protection of listed species and their habitat located on private property within the Regional Ecological Greenways Network through the use of best management practices and public education programs.⁶⁸

Policy 4.5.8. Provide technical assistance to local governments in the development of appropriate local government comprehensive plan policies and land development regulations necessary to maintain the identified attributes of listed species and their habitat within the Regional Ecological Greenways Network.⁶⁹

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Loc. cit.

⁶⁵Loc. cit.

⁶⁶Listed species means an animal species designated as Endangered, Threatened, or Species of Special Concern in Chapter 68A-27.003-68A-27.005, Florida Administrative Code; a plant species designated as Endangered, Threatened, or Commercially Exploited as designated in Chapter 5B-40, Florida Administrative Code, or an animal or plant species designated as Endangered or Threatened in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 17.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Loc. cit.

⁶⁹Loc. cit.



Policy 4.5.9. Support agricultural and silvicultural practices that maintain the function and value of natural systems through the use of best management practices.

Policy 4.5.10. Ensure that requests for federal and state funds, federal and state permits, and direct federal and state actions for development activities reviewed by the Council include adequate provisions for the protection of listed species and their habitat within the Regional Ecological Greenways Network.⁷⁰

Policy 4.5.11. Ensure that local government comprehensive plans include policies which, for developments within the Regional Ecological Greenways Network require an evaluation to determine the presence of listed species and their habitat and, if such species are found, require the development of a management plan, including modifications to the proposed development as necessary, to ensure the protection of listed species and their habitat.⁷¹

Policy 4.5.12. Ensure that local government comprehensive plans include policies which protect native vegetation and provides for the use of native vegetation, thereby promoting the regeneration of natural habitats within the Regional Ecological Greenways Network.

5. Planning and Resource Management Areas

a. Private Conservation Lands and Public Conservation Lands

REGIONAL GOAL 4.6. Protect Natural Resources of Regional Significance identified in this plan as "Planning and Resource Management Areas."

Regional Indicators

1. As of May 2016, north central Florida contained 5,861.31 acres of private conservation lands.
2. As of May 2016, north central Florida contained approximately 170,132.95 acres of federally-owned conservation lands.
3. As of May 2016, north central Florida contained 277,268.15 acres of state-owned conservation and recreation lands.
4. As of May 2016, north central Florida contained approximately 308,011.64 acres of water management District-owned conservation lands (including less than fee simple ownership).

Policy 4.6.1. Provide technical assistance to local governments in the development of appropriate local government comprehensive plan policies and land development regulations necessary to maintaining areas and water bodies identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance classified in this plan as "Planning and Resource Management Areas".

⁷⁰Listed species means an animal species designated as Endangered, Threatened, or Species of Special Concern in Chapter 68A-27.003-68A-27.005, Florida Administrative Code; a plant species designated as Endangered, Threatened, or Commercially Exploited as designated in Chapter 5B-40, Florida Administrative Code, or an animal or plant species designated as Endangered or Threatened in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 17.

⁷¹Ibid.



Policy 4.6.2. Seek the input of local governments and the regional planning council in the preparation of management plans for public conservation lands and private conservation lands identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance.

Policy 4.6.3. Continue to provide input to state and local agencies in reviewing existing or proposed designations of areas or water bodies as one of the categories identified as Natural Resources of Regional significance classified in this plan as "Planning and Resource Management Areas".

Policy 4.6.4. Ensure that local government comprehensive plans and requests for federal and state funds for development activities reviewed by the Council include adequate provisions for the protection of Planning and Resource Management Areas identified and mapped in the regional plan as Natural Resources of Regional Significance.

6. Surface Water Systems

a. Fresh Water Wetlands, Lakes, River Corridors and Springs

REGIONAL GOAL 4.7. Maintain the quantity and quality of the region's surface water systems in recognition of their importance to the continued growth and development of the region.

Regional Indicators

1. As of May 2016, the water management districts had identified 1,363,761.27 acres of fresh water wetlands within the region.
2. As of May 2016, 13 north central Florida lakes were identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance in the North Central Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan.
3. As of May 2016, 14 river corridors were designated as Natural Resources of Regional Significance in the North Central Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan.
4. As of May 2016, 139,918.29 acres of river corridor were designated as Natural Resources of Regional Significance in the North Central Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan.
5. As of May 2016, 138 North central Florida springs were listed as Natural Resources of Regional Significance in the North Central Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan.
6. In 2016, 17 north central Florida Natural Resources of Regional Significance were under a consumption advisory for Large-mouth bass.
7. In 2016, 13 north central Florida Natural Resources of Regional Significance were under a consumption advisory for Redbreast Sunfish and Redear Sunfish.
8. In 2016, seven north central Florida Natural Resources of Regional Significance were under a consumption advisory for Brown Bullhead.
9. In 2016, eight north central Florida Natural Resources of Regional Significance were under a consumption advisory for Black Crappie.

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10. In 2016, fourteen north central Florida Natural Resources of Regional Significance were under a consumption advisory for Bluegill.
11. In 2016, 6 north central Florida Natural Resources of Regional Significance were under a consumption advisory for Channel Catfish.
12. In 2016, 7 north central Florida Natural Resources of Regional Significance were under a consumption advisory for White Catfish.
13. In 2016, 15 north central Florida Natural Resources of Regional Significance were under a consumption advisory for Spotted Sunfish.
14. In 2016, one north central Florida Natural Resource of Regional Significance was under a consumption advisory for Chain Pickerel.
15. In 2016, one north central Florida Natural Resource of Regional Significance was under a consumption advisory for Striped Bass.
16. In 2016, five north central Florida Natural Resources of Regional Significance were under a consumption advisory for Warmouth.
17. In 2016, four north central Florida Natural Resources of Regional Significance were under a consumption advisory for Spotted Bullhead Catfish.
18. As of June 2007, minimum flows and levels have been established for the lower Suwannee River, Madison County Blue Spring, and Fanning Spring.

Policy 4.7.1. Provide technical assistance to local governments in the development and implementation of appropriate local government comprehensive plan policies and land development regulations necessary to maintaining the quantity and high quality of the region's surface water systems.

Policy 4.7.2. Continue the mapping of river floodplains.

Policy 4.7.3. Update the regional map series delineating river floodplains as this information becomes available.

Policy 4.7.4. Work with north central Florida local governments to standardize on a common source for wetland maps contained in local government comprehensive plans.

Policy 4.7.5. Use non-structural water management controls as the preferred water management approach for rivers, lakes, springs, and fresh water wetlands identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance.

Policy 4.7.6. Support the coordination of land use and water resources planning for surface water resources designated as Natural Resources of Regional Significance among the Council, local governments, and the water management districts through regional review responsibilities, participation in committees and study groups, and ongoing communication.



Policy 4.7.7. Assist in environmental education efforts to increase public awareness of the region's surface water systems through the North Central Florida Tourism Task Force.

Policy 4.7.8. Establish and enforce consistent boating safety zones along the Suwannee and Santa Fe rivers.

Policy 4.7.9. Assist local governments in establishing consistent regulations for development projects within river corridors identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance.

Policy 4.7.10. Identify and map the capture zones of all springs identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance. Once delineated, provide technical assistance to local governments in implementing spring protection programs based upon capture zones.

Policy 4.7.11. Provide technical assistance to local governments in obtaining grants to establish centralized sewer systems in identified septic tank problem areas.

Policy 4.7.12. Ensure that local government comprehensive plans and requests for federal and state funds for development activities reviewed by the Council include adequate provisions for stormwater management, including retrofit programs for known surface water runoff problem areas, and aquifer recharge protection in order to protect the quality and quantity of water contained in the Floridan Aquifer and surface water systems identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance.

Policy 4.7.13. Work with local governments, state and federal agencies, and the local water management districts in the review of local government comprehensive plans as they affect wetlands identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance to ensure that any potential adverse impacts created by the proposed activities on wetlands are minimized to the greatest extent possible.

Policy 4.7.14. Minimize the effect of mining on the surface water quality and seasonal flows of surface waters identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance.

Policy 4.7.15. Encourage water management districts to monitor at regular intervals the quality and quantity of surface waters identified as Natural Resources of Regional Significance.

Policy 4.7.16. Assist water quality working groups formed to meet the water quality standards of waterbodies included in the State of Florida 303(d) list.



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Chapter V

Regional Transportation

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



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Chapter V: Regional Transportation

A. Conditions and Trends

1. Introduction

The region is served by four public transit system service providers, two major and three shuttle/commuter air carriers, one passenger and three freight rail systems, one bus line, and the regional road network. Due to its rural nature, north central Florida is heavily dependent upon automobile and truck transportation. Generally, the existing motor vehicle ground transportation and rail freight transportation systems are adequate.

2. Public Transit

Public transit is lightly utilized in north central Florida. The Gainesville Regional Transit System is the region's only community with a fixed-route public transit system. Demand response public transportation services are available throughout the region provided by Big Bend Transit, Inc., Levy County Transit, MV Transportation, Inc., Suwannee River Economic Council, Inc., and Suwannee Valley Transit Authority. The City of Gainesville Regional Transit System provides fixed route service within the City of Gainesville. The Regional Transit System also contracts with MV Transportation, Inc. to provide complementary paratransit service under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Intercity bus transportation is provided by Greyhound Bus Lines. The carrier stops in the following north central Florida municipalities: Gainesville, Hawthorne (bus stop), Waldo (bus stop), Starke, Lake City, and Perry.¹

The region's rural character and low population density does not easily lend itself to the provision of public transit systems. Correspondingly, only a small percentage of the region's population use public transit. As indicated in Table 5.1 only 2.5 percent of year 2015 north central Florida workers age 16 and over reported using public transportation as their means of transportation to work. Alachua County, which includes Gainesville's fixed-route bus system, had the highest percentage of workers using public transit at 4.5 percent. Hamilton and Madison Counties reported the lowest usage at 0.0 percent. The table also reveals an increase in public transit usage between 2010 and 2015.

¹Greyhound Bus Lines, Inc., July 8, 2009, <http://www.greyhound.com/home/TicketCenter/en/locations.asp?state=fl>
Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



TABLE 5.1

**NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA RESIDENTS USING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
AS PRIMARY MEANS OF TRAVEL TO WORK
WORKERS AGE 16 AND OVER**

Area	Number of Workers Age 16 and Over		Number Using Public Transportation		Percent Using Public Transportation	
	2010	2015	2010	2015	2010	2015
Alachua	116,628	114,702	3,898	5,186	3.3	4.5
Bradford	10,470	9,217	0	12	0.0	0.1
Columbia	24,555	24,760	51	27	0.2	0.1
Dixie	5,168	4,716	5	0	0.1	0.0
Gilchrist	6,468	6,143	0	39	0.0	0.6
Hamilton	4,392	3,865	0	0	0.0	0.0
Lafayette	3,319	2,649	24	17	0.7	0.6
Levy	15,534	13,897	18	36	0.1	0.3
Madison	7,490	5,873	0	0	0.0	0.0
Suwannee	15,679	15,277	47	27	0.3	0.2
Taylor	8,693	6,987	17	6	0.2	0.1
Union	4,268	3,890	0	25	0.0	0.6
Region	222,664	211,976	4,060	5,375	1.8	2.5
State	8,317,203	8,432,513	160,263	178,238	1.9	2.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey, Means of Transportation to Work by Age



a. Public Transit Service Providers

i. Big Bend Transit, Inc.

Big Bend Transit, Inc. is the designated Community Transportation Coordinator for Madison and Taylor Counties under Florida's Transportation Disadvantaged Program. Big Bend Transit, Inc. provides demand-responsive public transportation services within Madison and Taylor counties. Transportation services are provided to employment centers as well as to social service, health, medical, and shopping facilities. Intra- and inter-county transportation service is provided within/from each of the rural counties in the service area with an emphasis on inter-county service to Leon County, which provides a high concentration of employment opportunities and specialized medical services.

ii. Gainesville Regional Transit System

The City of Gainesville Regional Transit System operates ten fixed main bus routes which serve the City of Gainesville and the adjacent surrounding urbanized area of Alachua County. The fixed route system operates on a radial pattern with seven of its ten routes originating at a downtown transfer point. The University of Florida contracts with the Gainesville Regional Transit System to provide campus shuttles. The Regional Transit System also contracts with MV Transportation, Inc. to provide complementary paratransit service under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Between 1999 and 2007, Gainesville Regional Transit System fixed route ridership increased by 170.9 percent, from 3,299,933 to 8,939,334.² The growth in ridership was primarily due to the University of Florida student government providing a subsidy to the Gainesville Regional Transit System in exchange for allowing university students to ride the system free of charge.

iii. Levy County Transit

Levy County Transit is the designated Community Transportation Coordinator for Levy County under Florida's Transportation Disadvantaged Program. Levy County Transit is operated by Levy County Board of County Commissioners. Demand response public transportation services are provided primarily for medical purposes. Intra- and inter-county transportation services are provided with an emphasis on inter-county service to the City of Gainesville for specialized medical services.

iv. MV Transportation, Inc.

MV Transportation, Inc. is the designated Community Transportation Coordinator for Alachua County under Florida's Transportation Disadvantaged Program. MV Transportation, Inc., operates a demand response public transportation service within Alachua County. Transportation services are provided to employment centers as well as to social service, health, medical, shopping and recreational facilities. The City of Gainesville Regional Transit System also contracts with MV Transportation, Inc. to provide complementary paratransit service under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

²Gainesville Regional Transit System, June 2000, and Gainesville Regional Transit System, Fiscal Year 2007 Ridership by Route, (http://www.go-rts.com/pdf/FY07_Ridership.pdf)



v. Suwannee River Economic Council, Inc.

Suwannee River Economic Council, Inc. is the designated Community Transportation Coordinator for Bradford, Dixie, Gilchrist, Lafayette and Union Counties. Intra- and inter-county demand response transportation services are provided with an emphasis on inter-county service to Alachua County for specialized medical services.

vi. Suwannee Valley Transit Authority

Suwannee Valley Transit Authority offers a variety of transportation services within Columbia, Hamilton, and Suwannee counties. These range from a weekly service which brings rural residents to Jasper, Lake City, and Live Oak, to daily commuter runs which carry workers to several major employment locations. Other services provided by the Suwannee Valley Transit Authority include the Gainesville Medical Bus which is a daily run which connects Jasper, Lake City, and Live Oak to regional medical facilities located in Gainesville. The Suwannee Valley Transit Authority also provides services to various human services agencies within its three-county area as well as charter services for groups needing special transportation requirements. The Suwannee Valley Transit Authority is the designated Community Transportation Coordinator for Columbia, Hamilton, and Suwannee counties under Florida's Transportation Disadvantaged Program.

b. Demand Response Public Transportation Service and the Transportation Disadvantaged

Demand response public transportation services are available in all north central Florida counties. Designated community transportation coordinators provide public transportation as part of Florida's Transportation Disadvantaged Program. The purpose of the program is to provide transportation services to the transportation disadvantaged in a manner that is cost-effective, efficient, and reduces fragmentation and duplication of services.³ Transportation services for the transportation disadvantaged are provided through the systems using a variety of vehicles, including mini-buses, vans, mini-vans and automobiles. Many of the vehicles used are specially equipped to serve the needs of the disabled and public transit riders. Designated Community Transportation Coordinators receive government public transit grants serve the general public, including the transportation disadvantaged general public. All of the coordinated transportation systems in the region heavily rely upon local, state, and federal financial assistance.

The Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged serves as the policy development and implementing agency for the state's transportation disadvantaged program. Major participants which implement the program at the county level include:

The Official Planning Agency, a Metropolitan Planning Organization or designated entity which performs long-range transportation disadvantaged planning and assists the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged and the Local Coordinating Board in implementing the transportation disadvantaged program within a designated service area;

³The transportation disadvantaged are those persons who, due to physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation and are, therefore, dependent upon others to obtain access to health care, employment, education, shopping, social activities, or other life-sustaining activities, or children who are handicapped or high risk or at-risk as defined in s.411.202, Florida Statutes and 427.011(1), Florida Statutes.



The Local Coordinating Board, a group with a diverse membership appointed by the Official Planning Agency which identifies local service needs, advises the Community Transportation Coordinator on the coordination of services, and serves as an advisory body to the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged in its designated service area;

The Community Transportation Coordinator, a public, private non-profit, or private for-profit entity functioning as a sole provider, partial brokerage or complete brokerage which is responsible for, among other things, the delivery of transportation disadvantaged services originating in its designated service area;

Purchasers of transportation services such as those available through the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged; and

Transportation operators, which are either public, private non-profit, or private for-profit entities which contract with a partial or complete brokerage Community Transportation Coordinator to provide transportation services within a coordinated transportation system.

Table 5.2 identifies the Official Planning Agency, Local Coordinating Board, and Community Transportation Coordinator for each of the counties within the region. The transportation services provided or arranged by Community Transportation Coordinators include program trips subsidized by government or social services agencies and general trips subsidized by state Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund trip/equipment grants or other sources. A general trip is one made by a transportation disadvantaged person or member of the general public to a destination of his or her choice. A program trip is one made by a client of a government or social service agency for the purpose of participating in a program of that agency. Examples include Medicaid, congregate meal, day training and day treatment program trips. Examples include medical, shopping, employment, and social/recreational trips. As can be seen in Table 5.2, the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council directly serves as the official planning agency for nine of the region's counties. The Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area is the official planning agency for Alachua County and is staffed by the Council.⁴

⁴See Coordination Outline, page VII-4, for additional information regarding the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area and the transportation disadvantaged program.



TABLE 5.2

**NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA
TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED PROGRAMS**

Area	Planning Agency	Community Transportation Coordinators
Alachua	Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area 2009 N.W. 67th Place Gainesville, FL 32653-1603	MV Transportation, Inc. 3713 SW 42nd Ave Gainesville, FL 32608 (sole provider)
Bradford	North Central Florida Regional Planning Council 2009 N.W. 67th Place Gainesville, FL 32653-1603	Suwannee River Economic Council, Inc. P.O. Box 70 Live Oak, FL 32060 (partial brokerage)
Columbia	North Central Florida Regional Planning Council 2009 N.W. 67th Place Gainesville, FL 32653-1603	Suwannee Valley Transit Authority 1907 Voyles St. Live Oak, FL 32060 (partial brokerage)
Dixie	North Central Florida Regional Planning Council 2009 N.W. 67th Place Gainesville, FL 32653-1603	Suwannee River Economic Council, Inc. P.O. Box 70 Live Oak, FL 32060 (sole provider)
Gilchrist	North Central Florida Regional Planning Council 2009 N.W. 67th Place Gainesville, FL 32653-1603	Suwannee River Economic Council, Inc. P.O. Box 70 Live Oak, FL 32060 (sole provider)
Hamilton	North Central Florida Regional Planning Council 2009 N.W. 67th Place Gainesville, FL 32653-1603	Suwannee Valley Transit Authority 1907 Voyles St. Live Oak, FL 32060 (partial brokerage)
Lafayette	North Central Florida Regional Planning Council 2009 N.W. 67th Place Gainesville, FL 32653-1603	Suwannee River Economic Council, Inc. P.O. Box 70 Live Oak, FL 32060 (sole provider)
Levy	North Central Florida Regional Planning Council 2009 NW 67th Place Gainesville, FL 32653-1603	Levy County Transit 970 E. Hathaway Ave., Ste A Bronson, FL 32621 (sole provider)
Madison	North Central Florida Regional Planning Council 2009 N.W. 67th Place Gainesville, FL 32653-1603	Big Bend Transit, Inc. P.O. Box 1721 Tallahassee, FL 32302 (partial brokerage)
Suwannee	North Central Florida Regional Planning Council 2009 N.W. 67th Place Gainesville, FL 32653-1603	Suwannee Valley Transit Authority 1907 Voyles St. Live Oak, FL 32060 (partial brokerage)
Taylor	Taylor County Board of County Commissioners P.O. Box 620 Perry, FL 32347	Big Bend Transit, Inc. P.O. Box 1721 Tallahassee, FL 32302 (partial brokerage)
Union	North Central Florida Regional Planning Council 2009 N.W. 67th Place Gainesville, FL 32653-1603	Suwannee River Economic Council, Inc. P.O. Box 70 Live Oak, FL 32060 (sole provider)

Source: North Central Florida Regional Planning Council, April 2016.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



The National Center for Transit Research developed a methodology for estimating the general and critical need of the transportation disadvantaged population based on the most current U.S. Census Bureau demographic and socio-economic data available. The general transportation disadvantaged population includes the estimates of all disabled, elderly, low income persons and children who are "high-risk" or "at-risk."

The critical need transportation disadvantaged population includes individuals who, due to severe physical limitations or low incomes, are unable to transport themselves or purchase transportation and are dependent upon others to obtain access to health care, employment, education, shopping, social activities or other life sustaining activities.

Table 5.3 presents 2017 to 2022 transportation disadvantaged general and critical need population forecasts for north central Florida counties and the region as a whole. Forecasted annual rates of increase in the transportation disadvantaged general population range from 5.9 percent for Alachua and Suwannee Counties to 0.5 percent for Madison County. Forecasted rates of increase in the transportation disadvantaged critical need population range from 5.9 percent in Dixie County 0.5 percent in Suwannee County.



TABLE 5.3
PROJECTED TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED POPULATION

Area/Group	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Percent Increase 2017-2022
Alachua							
General	99,421	100,420	101,429	102,448	103,478	104,518	5.1
Critical Need	13,447	13,582	13,719	13,857	13,996	14,136	5.1
Bradford							
General	9,150	9,196	9,242	9,289	9,336	9,383	2.5
Critical Need	1,693	1,701	1,710	1,718	1,727	1,736	2.5
Columbia							
General	26,731	27,000	27,273	27,548	27,825	28,106	5.1
Critical Need	4,989	5,039	5,090	5,141	5,193	5,246	5.2
Dixie							
General	7,461	7,546	7,631	7,718	7,805	7,893	5.8
Critical Need	1,437	1,453	1,469	1,486	1,503	1,520	5.8
Glchrist							
General	8,528	8,616	8,704	8,793	8,883	8,974	5.2
Critical Need	1,766	1,784	1,802	1,821	1,839	1,858	5.2
Hamilton							
General	6,477	6,518	6,560	6,602	6,645	6,688	3.3
Critical Need	1,442	1,451	1,461	1,470	1,480	1,489	3.3
Lafayette							
General	3,707	3,744	3,782	3,820	3,858	3,897	5.1
Critical Need	815	823	831	840	848	857	5.2
Levy							
General	18,851	19,042	19,236	19,431	19,628	19,827	5.2
Critical Need	3,532	3,568	3,604	3,641	3,677	3,715	5.2
Madison							
General	8,431	8,440	8,449	8,458	8,467	8,475	0.5
Critical Need	1,710	1,712	1,714	1,716	1,717	1,719	0.5
Marion							
General	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Critical Need	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n.a
Suwannee							
General	19,454	19,677	19,903	20,131	20,362	20,595	5.9
Critical Need	3,587	3,628	3,670	3,712	3,754	3,797	5.9
Taylor							
General	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Critical Need	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n.a
Union							
General	4,978	5,021	5,064	5,107	5,151	5,195	4.4
Critical Need	951	959	967	976	984	992	4.3
Region							
General	213,189	215,220	217,273	219,345	221,438	223,551	4.9
Critical Need	35369	35700	36037	36378	36718	37065	4.8

n/a = Not Available

Source: National Center for Transit Research, Forecasting Paratransit Services Demand, June 2013.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



Table 5.4 presents 2000 to 2022 annual trip demand forecasts for north central Florida counties. As illustrated in the table, regional annual transportation disadvantaged annual trip demand is projected to increase by 9.2 percent during this time period. Additionally, the projected demand shows little variation at the county level, ranging from 11.0 percent in Madison County to 9.1 percent in most north central Florida counties.

TABLE 5.4

PROJECTED TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED ANNUAL TRIP DEMAND

Area	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Percent Change
Alachua	5,490,001	5,582,782	5,681,597	5,782,162	5,884,506	5,988,662	9.1
Bradford	423,350	430,843	438,469	446,230	454,128	462,167	9.2
Columbia	1,567,971	1,594,470	1,622,692	1,651,414	1,680,644	1,710,391	9.1
Dixie	398,121	404,849	412,015	419,308	426,729	434,282	9.1
Gilchrist	616,427	626,845	637,940	649,940	660,723	672,418	9.1
Hamilton	493,873	502,220	511,109	520,156	529,362	538,732	9.1
Lafayette	254,240	258,537	263,113	267,770	272,509	277,333	9.1
Levy	1,072,418	1,091,400	1,110,718	1,130,378	1,150,385	1,170,747	9.2
Madison	565,336	574,336	585,066	595,422	605,961	627,602	11.0
Suwannee	1,357,289	1,380,227	1,404,657	1,429,520	1,454,822	1,480,573	9.1
Taylor	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Union	292,034	296,970	302,226	307,575	313,019	318,560	9.1
Region	12,531,060.00	12,743,479.00	12,969,602.00	13,199,875.00	13,432,788.00	13,681,467.00	9.2

Source: National Center for Transit Research, Forecasting Paratransit Services Demand, June 2013.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



As indicated in Table 5.5, north central Florida paratransit ridership decreased by 19.9 percent between Fiscal Years 2013-14 and 2014-15, declining from 517,180 trips in Fiscal Year 2013-14 to 414,276 trips in Fiscal Year 2014-15. Hamilton and Columbia Counties experienced the largest percentage declines during this time period, at 59.7 and 67.0 percent, respectively. Lafayette and Suwannee Counties experienced the largest percentage increase in ridership during this period, with both counties recording a 10.9 percent increase.

TABLE 5.5
NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA PARATRANSIT RIDERSHIP
FISCAL YEARS 2013-14 AND 2014-15

Area	Fiscal Year 2013-14	Fiscal Year 2014-15	Percent Change
Alachua	110,757	102,557	(7.4)
Bradford	22,203	22,752	2.5
Columbia	58,206	23,446	(59.7)
Dixie	6,608	6,651	0.7
Gilchrist	4,105	3,814	(7.1)
Hamilton	12,749	4,202	(67.0)
Lafayette	3,419	3,791	10.9
Levy	57,480	46,318	(19.4)
Madison	18,667	19,025	1.9
Taylor	19,404	19,356	(0.2)
Suwannee	21,264	23,592	10.9
Union	10,336	9,761	(5.6)
Region	345,198	285,265	(17.4)
Region, w/o Alachua	234,441	182,708	(22.1)

Source: 2013/14 and 2014/15 Annual Performance Reports, Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, Tallahassee, Florida.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



Table 5.6 indicates that paratransit funding for north central Florida Transportation Disadvantaged service providers decreased by 13.0 percent during this period, from \$16,195,194 in Fiscal Year 2013-14 to \$14,084,883 in Fiscal Year 2014-15. Levy, Madison and Taylor Counties experienced increased funding during this period while the remaining counties experienced decreased funding. Hamilton County experienced the largest percentage decline in funding, dropping by 82.3 percent during this period.

TABLE 5.6
NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA PARATRANSIT FUNDING
FISCAL YEARS 2013-14 AND 2014-15

Area	Fiscal Year 2013-14	Fiscal Year 2014-15	Percent Change
Alachua	\$3,372,245	\$3,147,636	(6.7)
Bradford	\$601,554	\$552,849	(8.1)
Columbia	\$1,472,658	\$890,819	(39.5)
Dixie	\$427,324	\$423,851	(0.8)
Gilchrist	\$347,462	\$237,455	(31.7)
Hamilton	\$1,006,396	\$177,641	(82.3)
Lafayette	\$313,161	\$215,813	(31.1)
Levy	\$1,643,938	\$1,802,136	9.6
Madison	\$681,045	\$706,358	3.7
Suwannee	\$1,026,835	\$688,199	(33.0)
Taylor	\$606,794	\$649,601	7.1
Union	\$369,231	\$284,987	(22.8)
Region	\$11,868,643	\$9,777,345	(17.6)
Region w/o Alachua	\$8,496,398	\$6,629,709	(22.0)

Source: 2013/14 and 2014/15 Annual Performance Reports, Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, Tallahassee, Florida.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



3. Regionally Significant Transportation Facilities

Regionally significant transportation facilities are those facilities used to provide transportation between cities located both within and outside the region and other specially designated facilities. They include one airport, two interstate highways, 10 U.S. highways, 28 state roads, and six public transit service providers.⁵

TABLE 5.7

REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

Type	Name	Description	Length (miles)
Airport	Gainesville Regional Airport	Gainesville	n/a
Public Transit Service Provider	MV Transportation, Inc.	Designated coordinated community transportation provider for Alachua County	n/a
Public Transit Service Provider	Big Bend Transit, Inc.	Designated coordinated community transportation provider for Madison and Taylor Counties	n/a
Public Transit Service Provider	Gainesville Regional Transit System	Fixed-route public transit service provider for Gainesville and nearby urbanized, unincorporated Alachua County	n/a
Public Transit Service Provider	Levy County Transit	Designated coordinated community transportation provider for Levy County	n/a
Public Transit Service Provider	Suwannee Valley Transit Authority	Designated coordinated community transportation provider for Columbia, Hamilton and Suwannee Counties	n/a
Public Transit Service Provider	Suwannee River Economic Council, Inc.	Designated coordinated community transportation provider for Bradford, Dixie, Gilchrist, Lafayette and Union Counties	n/a
Regional Road Network - Interstate Highways	I-75	From Hamilton County line at the Georgia border to the Alachua County/ Marion County line (Strategic Intermodal System)	96
Regional Road Network - Interstate Highways	I-10	From the Madison County/Jefferson County line to the Columbia County/Baker County line (Strategic Intermodal System)	80.5
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 2	From Columbia County. - Georgia border to Columbia County - Baker County line	1.0

⁵ North central Florida regionally significant facilities and resources, as defined in Rule 27E.005, Florida Administrative Code, consist of Regionally Significant Emergency Preparedness Facilities identified in Table 3.2, Natural Resources of Regional Significance identified in Table 4.1, Regionally Significant Transportation Facilities identified in Table 5.7, and Regionally Significant Facilities and Resources, identified in Section VI.



TABLE 5.7(Continued)

REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

Type	Name	Description	Length (miles)
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 6	From I-10 to U.S. 41	1.5
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 10A	From US 90 to US 90	4.0
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 14	From I-10 to SR 53	5.5
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 18	From SR 121 to SR 231	4.5
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 20	From SR 26 to Alachua County - Putnam County line (Strategic Intermodal System)	18.0
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 21	From Putnam County Line to Clay County line	3.6
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 24	U.S. 301 to Cedar Key	72.2
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 26	From US 19/98 to Alachua County - Putnam County line (Strategic Intermodal System)	56.5
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 26A	From SR 26 to SR 26	2.0
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 47	From US 441 to US 129	41.0
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 51	From US 129 to terminus in unincorporated community of Steinhatchee	53.0
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 53	From Madison County - Georgia border to I-10	19.0
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 100	From US 90 to Bradford County - Clay County line (Strategic Intermodal System)	46.1
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 120	From US 441 to SR 23	2.5
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 121	From Union Co. - Baker Co. line to US 19/98	85.5
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 145	From Madison Co. - Georgia border to SR 53	16.0

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



TABLE 5.7(Continued)

REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

Type	Name	Description	Length (miles)
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 222	From I-75 to entrance to to SR 26 (Strategic Intermodal System)	14.3
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 226	From SR 24 to SR 331	2.3
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 231	From Florida Department of Corrections Lake Butler Receiving and Medical Center to SR 121	3.0
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 235	From US 441 to SR 121	21.2
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 238	From US 441 to SR 100	15.0
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 247	From US 129 to US 90	15.5
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 320	From Manatee Springs State Park to US 19/Alt 27/98	5.8
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 329	From SR 20 to SR 331	4.0
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 331	From I-75 to SR 20 (Strategic Intermodal System)	6.0
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 345	From NW 70th Avenue to US Alt 27	7.6
Regional Road Network - State Road	SR 349	From US 27 to US 19/98	24.5
Regional Road Network - U.S. Highway	US 19	From Madison County - Jefferson County line to Levy County - Citrus County line (Strategic Intermodal System)	125.2
Regional Road Network - U.S. Highway	US 27	From Madison County. - Jefferson County. line to Levy County - Marion County. line	128.3
Regional Road Network U.S. Highway	Alt US 27	From Gilchrist County - Levy County line to U.S. 27 (Strategic Intermodal System)	35.0
Regional Road Network - U.S. Highway	US 41	From Hamilton County - Georgia border to I-10	37.0
Regional Road Network - U.S. Highways	US 41	From I-10 to U.S. 90 (Strategic Intermodal System)	4.5
Regional Road Network -	US 41	From U.S. 90 to Levy County - Marion	74.4

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



TABLE 5.7(Continued)

REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

Type	Name	Description	Length (miles)
U.S. Highways		County line	
Regional Road Network - U.S. Highway	US 90	From Jefferson County - Madison County line to U.S. 41	80.0
Regional Road Network - U.S. Highway	US 90	From U.S. 41 to SR 100 (Strategic Intermodal System)	2.1
Regional Road Network - U.S. Highway	US 90	From SR 100 to Columbia County - Baker County line	8.9
Regional Road Network - U.S. Highway	US 98	From Taylor County - Jefferson County line to Levy County - Citrus County Line	127.8
Regional Road Network - U.S. Highway	US 129	From Hamilton County - Georgia border to U.S. 19/Alt 27/98	87.9
Regional Road Network - U.S. Highway	US 221	From Madison County - Jefferson County line to Perry	32.7
Regional Road Network - U.S. Highway	US 301	From Bradford County - Clay County line to Alachua County - Marion County. line (Strategic Intermodal System)	50.5
Regional Road Network - U.S. Highway	US 441	From Columbia County - Georgia border to Alachua County - Marion County line	69.5
Regional Rail Line	CSX Transportation	From Jefferson County - Madison County line to the Columbia County - Baker County line	85.1
Regional Rail Line	CSX Transportation	From Bradford County - Alachua County line to the Alachua County - Marion County line	33.4
Regional Rail Line	CSX Transportation	From Bradford County - Alachua County line to the City of Newberry	24.2
Regional Rail Line	CSX Transportation	From the City of Hawthorne to the Alachua County - Putnam County line	2.1
Regional Rail Line	CSX Transportation	From Alachua County - Bradford County line to the Bradford County - Clay County line	19.5
Regional Rail Line	CSX Transportation	From Alachua County - Bradford County line to the Bradford County - Clay County line	20.4
Regional Rail Line	CSX Transportation	From the City of Gainesville to the Bradford County - Alachua County line in the City of Newberry	12.4

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



TABLE 5.7(Continued)

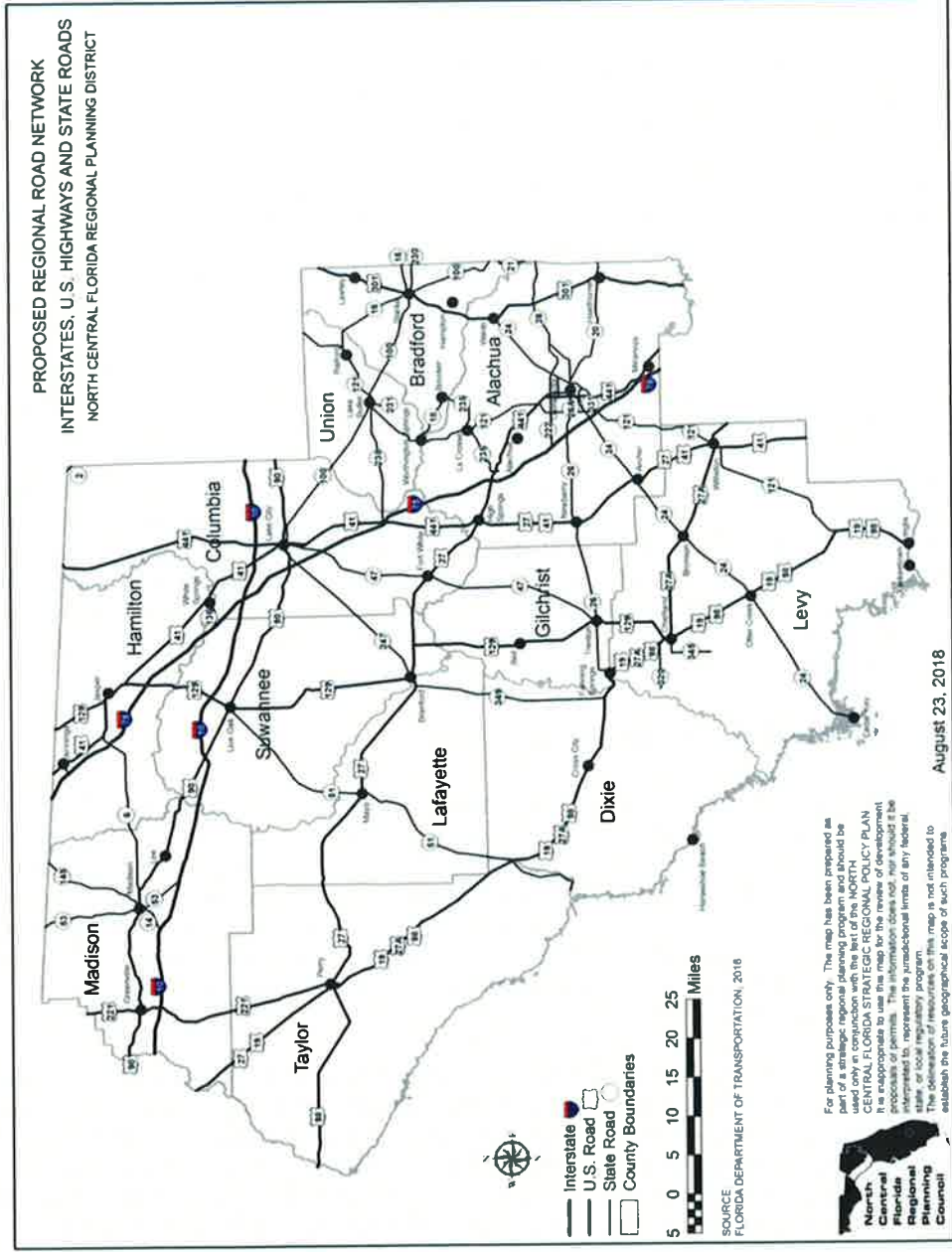
REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

Type	Name	Description	Length (miles)
Regional Rail Line	Florida Northern Railroad	From western Alachua County terminus to the Levy County-Marion County line	35.5
Regional Rail Line	Georgia and Florida Railnet	From Georgia State line - Madison County line to the City of Perry	48.2
Regional Rail Line	Norfolk Southern	From Georgia State line - Columbia County line to the City of Lake City	47.8

n/a = Not Applicable

Source: North Central Florida Regional Planning Council, July 2016.

ILLUSTRATION 5.1
NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA REGIONAL ROAD NETWORK



Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



Gainesville Regional Airport provides commercial air carrier service to north central Florida. The airport is a state-designated Strategic Intermodal System facility. The Gainesville Airport Authority oversees all aspects of airport operations. The Authority is composed of nine members, five of whom are appointed by the City of Gainesville, one by the Alachua County Commission, and three by the Governor.

The airport is serviced by two major airlines providing service to north central Florida. Other major airports providing air service to the region are Jacksonville International Airport, Tallahassee Municipal Airport, Tampa International Airport, and Orlando International Airport.

The airport has one runway with the capacity to safely handle full-sized jet aircraft. The area to the east of the airport is most impacted by the noise, but population density under the flight path is low (four homes were affected by noise when a 1,000 foot runway extension was constructed in the late 1980s). Land to the west of the airport is expected to develop as urban uses, but both the City of Gainesville and Alachua County have adopted land use plans which assure compatible land uses in noise-sensitive areas near the airport.

For the 12 months ending in September 2009, Gainesville Regional Airport experienced a total of 20,470 enplanements and deplanements. For the 12 months ending in September 2014, the airport had 33,814 enplanements and deplanements, representing a 39.5 percent increase.⁶

The Multi-County Regional Airport Task Force was formed in 1987 to address the question of whether or not airport service could be improved by building a new airport located between the cities of Ocala (Marion County) and Gainesville. It was thought at the time that the combined market area of the two cities might be large enough to attract additional air carriers and more through flights than currently provided by Gainesville Regional Airport. The task force concluded that the combined market area was not large enough to attract a significant number of new flights and that the 174 million dollar price tag for a new airport was prohibitive.⁷

a. Regional Road Network

The regional road network is comprised of interstate highways, U.S. highways and state roads. Overall, the regional road network consists of 1,698.1 miles of roadways, of which 177.2 miles are comprised of interstate highways while 1,520.9 miles are designated as U.S. highways and state roads. Additionally, 504.4 miles of the regional road network are designated as a part of the Strategic Intermodal System. The regional road network provides good transportation service to the region. With the exception of a few specific segments in Gainesville, the largest municipality in the region, nearly all the regional road network operates at or above the minimum level of service standards contained within local government comprehensive plans.

Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, allows local governments to establish concurrency requirements for local government comprehensive plans. Concurrency requires public facilities to be adequate to service new development. New development cannot occur which will drop roadways below the minimum operating level of service standard established by the local comprehensive plan. The level of service for a road segment is determined by the average travel speed a motorist can reasonably attain through the section. The 2012 Quality/Level of Service Handbook, published by the Florida Department of Transportation, establishes five levels of service ranging from A (free-flowing traffic) to F (highly congested).

⁶Air Traffic Volume and Fuel Flowage for the 12 Months Ending September 30, 2009, Gainesville Regional Airport, and Air Traffic Volume and Fuel Flowage for the 12 Months Ending September 30, 2014, Gainesville Regional Airport.

⁷Multi-County Regional Airport Task Force, Economic/Market Feasibility Study, pp. V-1 - V-13, Aviation Planning Associates, Inc., Cincinnati, OH, January 1989.



b. Transportation Concurrency and Proportionate Share

Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, makes traditional transportation concurrency management optional for local government comprehensive plans. If local governments rely on traditional transportation concurrency, Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, authorizes the local government to establish minimum level of service standards for all state roads, including state roads which are part of the Strategic Intermodal System. Additionally, local governments relying on traditional level of service standards must also allow mitigation of transportation impacts through the use of proportionate-share.

The dollar amount of proportionate share mitigation is determined through a transportation impact study of the project to determine which road segments will fail to meet level of service standards as a result of the development, what it will cost to modify the failing facilities to meet level of service standards, and what proportion of the trips on the failing road network are attributable to the project. The percentage is multiplied by the costs of the transportation projects needed to restore level of service for the failing facilities to determine an amount of money, which is the developer's proportionate-fair share payment.

c. Transportation Planning Best Practices

While north central Florida local governments are financially unable to fund traditional transportation concurrency, adverse impacts to the regional road network can be minimized through sound transportation planning. Transportation Planning Best Practices for north central Florida local governments could include enhancing road network connectivity, providing parallel local routes to the Regional Road Network, incorporating access management strategies, and developing multimodal transportation systems. By relying on transportation planning best practices, urban development can still be directed to incorporated municipalities, urban service areas, and urban development areas while minimizing transportation infrastructure costs and declines in level of service. Examples of policy areas which could be addressed in local government comprehensive plans to implement these transportation planning best practices include the following.

Enhance Road Network Connectivity by

- Establishing a comprehensive system of street hierarchies with appropriate maximum spacing for local, collector, and arterial street intersection and arterial spacing, including maximum intersection spacing distances for local, collector, and arterial streets;

- Establishing a thoroughfare plan and right-of-way preservation requirements to advance the development of arterial and collector streets throughout the jurisdiction;

- Limiting or discouraging the use of cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets, limiting the maximum length of cul-de-sacs and dead end streets, and encouraging the use of traffic calming devices and strategies as an alternative to dead end streets and cul-de-sacs;

- Encouraging street stubs for connections to future development requiring connections to existing street stubs/dead end streets when adjacent parcels are subdivided/developed in the future, and requiring developments to connect through to side streets at appropriate locations;



Encouraging the creation of paths that provide shortcuts for walking and cycling where dead-end streets exist, mid-block bike paths and pedestrian shortcuts, and limiting the maximum spacing between pedestrian/bicycle connections as well as; or

Limiting or discouraging gated communities and other restricted-access roads.

Provide Parallel Local Routes and Other Alternative Local Routes to the Regional Road Network.

Planning and mapping parallel roadway and cross street networks to provide a clear framework for implementing alternative routes to the Regional Road Network;

Adding segments of the parallel roadway and cross street networks to the capital improvements program;

Encouraging developer participation in implementing the system through fair share agreements as a condition of development approval for Regional Road Network concurrency mitigation; or

Encouraging the establishment of a long-term concurrency management system plan for accomplishing the parallel local routes and interparcel cross-access in selected areas.

Promote Access Management Strategies by

Requiring large commercial developments to provide and/or extend existing nearby local and collector streets and provide street connections with surrounding residential areas so residents may access the development without traveling on the Regional Road Network;

Requiring shopping centers and mixed-use developments to provide a unified access and circulation plan and require any outparcels to obtain access from the unified access and circulation system;

Properties under the same ownership or those consolidated for development will be treated as one property for the purposes of access management and will not received the maximum potential number of access points for that frontage indicated under minimum access spacing standards;

Existing lots unable to meet the access spacing standards for the Regional Road Network must obtain access from platted side streets, parallel streets, service roads, joint and cross-access or the provision of easements;

Establishing minimum access spacing standards for locally maintained thoroughfares and use these to also guide corner clearance;
Maintaining adequate corner clearance at crossroad intersections with the Regional Road Network;



Encouraging sidewalk connections from the development to existing and planned public sidewalk along the development frontage;
Encouraging cross-access connections easements and joint driveways, where available and economically feasible;

Encouraging closure of existing excessive, duplicative, unsafe curb cuts or narrowing of overly wide curb cuts at the development site;

Encouraging safe and convenient on-site pedestrian circulation such as sidewalks and crosswalks connecting buildings and parking areas at the development site;

Encouraging intersection and/or signalization modifications to improve roadway operation and safety;

Encouraging the addition of dedicated turn lanes into and out of development;

Encouraging the construction of public sidewalks along all street frontages, where they do not currently exist;

Encouraging the widening of existing public sidewalks to increase pedestrian mobility and safety;

Encouraging the deeding of land for the addition and construction of bicycle lanes;

Encouraging the provision of shading through awnings or canopies over public sidewalk areas to promote pedestrian traffic and provide protection from inclement weather to encourage walking;

Encouraging the construction of new road facilities which provide alternate routes to reduce congestion; or

Encouraging the addition of lanes on existing road facilities, especially where it can be demonstrated that the road will lessen impacts to the Regional Road Network.

Develop Multimodal Transportation Systems by

Encouraging development at densities within urban areas which support public transit;

Providing one or more park-and-ride lots to encourage carpooling and ridesharing, and the use of public transit among inter-city commuters;

Providing a system of sidewalks and/or bike paths connecting residential areas to schools, shopping, and recreation facilities;

Establishing an interlocal agreement with an existing public mass transit system provider to provide regular daily inter-city transit service for inter-city commuters; or

Establishing a local public mass transit system.

d. Regional Review of Local Government Comprehensive Plans and Plan Amendments

Transportation impact analysis of local government comprehensive plans and plan amendments conducted by the Council are generally limited to applicable road segments within one-half mile of the property which is the subject of the comprehensive plan and/or plan amendment. The analysis assumes that the subject property is developed to the maximum allowable intensity of use permitted by the Future Land Use Map category. The analysis does not include a trip distribution, although a trip distribution is used by the Council if a trip distribution is provided by the local government. In lieu of a trip distribution analysis, the Council examines what would happen if all of the trips were distributed to all directions of functionally classified road segments. If the resulting analysis finds that a segment of the regional road network will not meet level of service standards, the Council includes an Objection in its report. The Council recommends that the local government conduct a trip distribution analysis for the amendment and should the analysis result in adverse impacts, modify the amendment to prevent the adverse impacts. Such modification could include a reduction in the size of the subject property, a reduction in maximum allowable intensity of use, or a lowering of the adopted level of service standard of adversely impacted regional road segments.

4. University of Florida Campus Master Plan and Impacts to Regional Transportation Facilities

Section 240.155, Florida Statutes, requires the University of Florida to prepare a campus master plan to address the impacts of campus development on off-site public facilities. The data and analysis on which the plan is based must identify the projected impacts of campus development on off-site infrastructure. Campus master plans are required by Section 240.155(5), Florida Statutes, to be consistent with the State Comprehensive Plan and not to conflict with local government comprehensive plans.

Florida Statutes also require the university and applicable local governments to enter into a campus development agreement. The agreement must identify any deficiencies in service which the proposed campus development will create or contribute and identify all improvements to facilities and services necessary to eliminate the identified deficiencies. Section 240.155(13), Florida Statutes, states that the Board of Regents is responsible for paying its fair share of the costs for removing deficiencies to affected services and facilities. Identification of the board's fair share must be included in the agreement. Once the campus development agreement is completed, all campus development may proceed without further review by the host local government provided such development is consistent with the adopted campus master plan and associated campus development agreement. In 2016 enrollment at the University of Florida main campus was 52,286 students.

a. Context Area

Rule 6C-202(3), Florida Administrative Code, defines the Context Area as an area surrounding the University, within which on-campus development may impact local public facilities and services and natural resources, and within which off-campus development may impact university resources and facilities. The size of the Context Area may be defined by natural or man-made functional or visual boundaries, such as areas of concentration of off-campus student-oriented housing and commercial establishments, stormwater basins, habitat range, or other natural features.

b. Impacts to Regional Transportation Facilities

The following segments of the regional road network within the Context Area are projected to operate below the adopted minimum level of service standard contained in local government comprehensive plans by 2015:

1. I-75 from the southern Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area boundary to State Road 222 (Northwest 39th Avenue);
2. U.S. 441 (West 13th Street) from State Road 24 (Archer Road) to Northwest 29th Avenue;
3. State Road 24 (Archer Road) from Southwest 75th Street to Southwest 16th Avenue;
4. State Road 26 (West Newberry Road) from Northwest 122nd Street to Northwest 8th Avenue;
5. State Road 121 (West 34th Street) from State Road 331 to Northwest 16th Avenue; and
6. State Road 331 (Williston Road) from Southwest 8th Avenue to U.S. 441 (West 13th Street).

c. Transportation Demand Management

One of the most significant developments mitigating University-related transportation impacts in the last 10 years is the implementation of an agreement between the Gainesville Regional Transit System and the University to provide University students and employees with prepaid, unlimited access to transit service. The agreement has led to enhancements to the Gainesville Regional Transit System service, including an increase in number of buses, a decrease in headtimes (intervals between buses), and expanded hours of operation for certain bus routes heavily used by University students. A student transportation fee was added in 1998 at a rate of \$0.19 per credit hour to pay for the additional service. The fee has been increased over the years to a rate of \$9.44 per credit hour in the 2015-16 school year. As a result, Gainesville Regional Transit System bus ridership has increased from 2.9 million passengers in 1998 to 10.3 million in 2015. The Campus Master Plan Transportation Element contains a number of policies continuing the relationship between the University and Gainesville Regional Transit System.

d. Off-Campus Park-and-Ride

The University operates two park-and-ride facilities on the western edge of its main campus (Park and Ride Lot #1, located near SW 34th Street at the Cultural Plaza, and Park and Ride Lot #2, located on Hull Road west of SW 34th Street). Furthermore, campus shuttle buses connect the park and ride lots, as well as other on-campus parking facilities, to the main campus. Additionally, Campus Master Plan Transportation Element Policy 3.1 of Goal 2.0 calls for the University to participate with the City and the County and the Gainesville Regional Transit System to examine the feasibility of park and ride facility development and expanded transit service. While the Campus Master Plan proposes the construction of an additional 1,000 parking space near the Ben Hill Griffin, Jr., Stadium and the Stephen C. O'Connell Center adjacent to State Road 26, it also proposes the construction of an additional 888 parking spaces in the western portion of the campus in areas which are currently used, essentially, as park and ride facilities.

Although the University has established and is proposing to expand its park and ride facilities, the current and proposed parking facilities continue to require automobile drivers to use roads which are, or are projected to be, operating below the minimum level of service standard contained in local government comprehensive plans by 2015. The Campus Master Plan Transportation Element Data and Analysis Report notes a trend of student populations moving from west of Interstate Highway 75 to areas closer to campus in the downtown and the West 13th Street corridor. Such movement may make the establishment of park-and-ride facilities unfeasible if located a significant distance from student residences.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



e. On-Campus Housing

The Campus Master Plan indicates that on-campus housing is currently available for approximately 25 percent of the student population. The Housing Data and Analysis Report notes that an additional 835 housing units are needed to maintain the current percent level. In conjunction with increased enrollment, the Capital Improvements Element of the Campus Master Plan calls for two on-campus housing construction projects with the intent of increasing the number of students residing on campus by approximately 800. One of the projects is only partially funded and the other project is completely unfunded. Nevertheless, should neither of these two on-campus housing projects are constructed, the percentage of students housed on-campus will be 20.3 percent in 2015.

The 2005-2015 Campus Master Plan goal targeting 22 percent of main campus enrollment to be housed on-campus did not anticipate university-controlled housing facilities being developed off of the main campus. The housing physically located on main campus can satisfy the 22 percent goal; however, the off-campus housing will be part of the University-controlled inventory. This off-campus housing will function the same as on-campus housing. Housing assignments, scheduling, furnishings, data connectivity, supervision and disciplinary action will be managed by the University Department of Housing and Residence Education. The anticipated off-campus housing will be located in close proximity to the main campus and away from single-family residential areas. It will also be located in areas consistent with the City of Gainesville Comprehensive Plan. The University will count these off-campus units toward the 22 percent target in the future with a clarification that the goal is for housing in university-controlled residential facilities. The addition of Cypress Hall, the expansion of on-campus fraternities and sororities as well as the additional of beds in other on-campus housing facilities are anticipated to exceed the University goal of 22 percent university-controlled student housing by 2025.

f. Evening Classes

Campus Master Plan Transportation Element Policy 7.4.3 states that the University shall continue to expand, where appropriate, distance learning and evening class offerings to reduce the peak hour travel demand and its impact on roads and parking. Additionally, the University Campus Master Plan Data and Analysis report indicates that, during 2005, 642 class meetings occurred after 5:00 pm on weeknights. The report notes that this represents an increase of 49 class meetings since 1999, and that 274 more students were served by evening classes in 2005 compared to 1999.

g. Prohibitions on Freshmen Parking On-Campus

Campus Master Plan Transportation Element Policy 4.1 of Goal 2.0 calls for the University to restrict parking overall availability for lower division students, combined with incentives and opportunities to use public transit, as an alternative to driving.

5. Livable Community Reinvestment Plan

Regional Plan Policy 5.6.3 calls for the Council to assist the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area in implementing the vision statement entitled, The Livable Community Reinvestment Plan. The plan serves as a policy and program guide for the development of the Gainesville Metropolitan Area transportation system over 25 years. The plan also guides the City of Gainesville and Alachua County in the update of their growth management plans and the Florida Department of Transportation in the preparation of its five-year work program. As such, the plan outlines the priority list of transportation projects which can be funded with available revenue sources over 25 years.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



The Year 2035 Transportation Plan includes a strategic vision for integrating transportation and land use decisions in the Gainesville area. The vision statement states:

"The Gainesville Urbanized Area will have a multimodal transportation system that integrates land use and transportation planning and investments to promote community well-being through good healthy relations with the region's other communities and natural systems. Specific outcomes will be:

- 1. sustainable, safe, secure, energy efficient and livable land use patterns and complementary context-sensitive transportation networks that provide mobility choices within and between compact, mixed-use, multimodal-supportive development;*
- 2. balanced east-west Gainesville Urbanized Area growth to reduce socioeconomic disparity through increased transportation mobility and accessibility;*
- 3. transportation infrastructure investments that direct growth to existing infill and redevelopment areas;*
- 4. greenbelts to preserve natural and agricultural lands between all municipalities in the Alachua County region through compact land use patterns served by express transit service and park-and-ride facilities; and*
- 5. a network of Rapid Transit Facilities connecting regional employment centers in order to enhance the economic competitiveness of the area."*

The Livable Community Reinvestment Plan is the framework upon which the economic strength of the Gainesville Metropolitan Area, its development character, and its continued quality of life rests. Transportation decisions made in the past have shaped the way the area has developed and how it continues to grow today. Decisions made today will shape how the area grows and how its transportation system will function in the future. As the economic and institutional center of north central Florida, the successful implementation of The Livable Community Reinvestment Plan strategic vision statement is of regional importance.

The Year 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan of the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area includes recommended transportation modifications on or adjacent to the University of Florida campus. These include the construction of the Cross Campus (Bicycle and Pedestrian) Greenway from Archer Road to SW 34th Street; the Hull Road Parking Area Bicycle Pedestrian Facility from SW 34th Street to the end of the Hull Road Parking Area; the State Road 26 (University Avenue) Multimodal Emphasis Corridor Study from Gale Lemerand Drive to Waldo Road; and the US 441 Multimodal Emphasis Corridor Study from NW 33rd Avenue to Archer Road. Also included in this Plan are several projects to implement bus rapid transit service, including a proposed Bus Rapid Transit project on Archer Road that will serve portions of the University of Florida Campus and the Shands Teaching Hospital area. Policy 1.1.1 of the 2005 - 2015 Campus Master Plan Transportation Element states that the University will cooperate with Gainesville, Alachua County, the Florida Department of Transportation, and the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area in the planning, implementation, and updating of multimodal strategies and projects outlined in the Long Range Transportation Plan. Regional Policy 5.6.1 calls for the Council to coordinate with Gainesville Regional Transit System, the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area, the University, Gainesville, and Alachua County to assist in implementing the Livable Communities Reinvestment Plan.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



B. Problems, Needs and Opportunities

The Council identifies the following regional transportation problems, needs, and opportunities:

1. A need exists to provide public transit services to the north central Florida transportation disadvantaged.
2. A need exists to increase ridership on north central Florida fixed-route public transit systems.
3. A need exists to mitigate transportation impacts to the regional transportation facilities associated with increased enrollment at the University of Florida.
4. An opportunity exists to minimize adverse transportation impacts to segments of the regional road network which service the University of Florida by relocating proposed on-campus parking lots to off-campus locations and operating a series of shuttle buses between the off-campus parking lots and the campus.
5. A need exists to maximize the use of the Gainesville Regional Airport before constructing a new regional airport.
6. A need exists to direct urban development to existing north central Florida municipalities and urban areas.
7. A problem exists with the use of traditional transportation concurrency assessments within many small north central Florida municipalities and urban areas which cannot allow new development due to segments of the Regional Road Network which are either at or near capacity.
8. An opportunity exists to provide policy guidance at the regional level which results in sound transportation planning within small north central Florida municipalities and urban areas while also encouraging urban development within small north central Florida municipalities and urban areas and thereby discouraging urban sprawl.



C. Regional Goals and Policies

1. Regional Road Network

REGIONAL GOAL 5.1. Mitigate the impacts of development to the Regional Road Network as well as adverse extrajurisdictional impacts while encouraging development within urban areas.

Regional Indicators

1. In 2016, the Regional Road Network consisted of 216.8 miles of Interstate highways, 993.4 miles of U.S. Highways and 678.9 miles of State roads.

a. Local Government Comprehensive Plans

Table 5.8 below summarizes Regional Policies 5.1.1 through 5.1.4.

TABLE 5.8

**SUMMARY OF REGIONAL PLAN POLICIES 5.1.1 THROUGH 5.1.4
LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMPREHENSIVE PLANS**

Area	Local Government Comprehensive Plans Containing Transportation Planning Best Practices	Regional Plan Determination of Impacts
Municipalities, Urban Service Areas, Urban Development Areas	Yes	Adequately Mitigated
Municipalities, Urban Service Areas, Urban Development Areas	No	Florida Department of Transportation Level of Service E
Rural Areas	Yes	Florida Department of Transportation Level of Service E
Rural Areas	No	Florida Department of Transportation Level of Service D

Source: North Central Florida Regional Planning Council, 2011.

Policy 5.1.1. Within municipalities, urban service areas, or urban development areas where local government comprehensive plans include goals and policies which implement Transportation Planning Best Practices, adverse impacts to the Regional Road Network are adequately. Such local government comprehensive plans and plan amendments within municipalities, urban service areas, or urban development areas shall not be subject to a regional planning council determination of Regional Road Network or extrajurisdictional impacts.

Policy 5.1.2. Within municipalities, urban service areas, and urban development areas where local government comprehensive plans do not include goals and policies implementing Transportation Planning Best Practices, local government comprehensive plans and plan amendments shall be subject to a regional planning council determination of Regional Road Network and extrajurisdictional impacts based on the minimum level of service standard of E as determined by the Florida Department of Transportation Quality/Level of Service Handbook.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



Policy 5.1.3. Outside municipalities, urban service areas, and urban development areas where local government comprehensive plans include goals and policies implementing Transportation Planning Best Practices, local government comprehensive plans and plan amendments shall be subject to a regional planning council determination of Regional Road Network and extrajurisdictional impacts based on the minimum level of service standard of E as determined by the Florida Department of Transportation Quality/Level of Service Handbook.

Policy 5.1.4. Outside municipalities, urban service areas, and urban development areas where local government comprehensive plans do not include goals and policies implementing Transportation Planning Best Practices, local government comprehensive plans and plan amendments shall be subject to a regional planning council determination of Regional Road Network and extrajurisdictional impacts based on the minimum level of service standard of D as determined by the Florida Department of Transportation Quality/Level of Service Handbook.

2. Coordination and Assistance

REGIONAL GOAL 5.2. Coordinate with and assist state agencies, transportation planning organizations and local governments to implement an energy-efficient, interagency coordinated transportation system.

Regional Indicator

As of January 2016, the Council provides staff services to the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area.

Policy 5.2.1. Provide technical assistance to local governments in preparing and updating Traffic Circulation Elements in local government comprehensive plans to implement an energy-efficient, interagency coordinated transportation system.

Policy 5.2.2. Coordinate with the Florida Department of Transportation regarding proposed modifications to the Regional Road Network to assure consistency with local government comprehensive plans which implement an energy-efficient, interagency coordinated transportation system.

Policy 5.2.3. Review proposals for road widening and new transportation corridors for impacts upon natural resources of regional significance and adjacent local governments.

Policy 5.2.4. Provide technical assistance to local governments seeking funds for transportation modifications which implement an energy-efficient, interagency coordinated transportation system.

a. University of Florida

REGIONAL GOAL 5.3. Mitigate adverse impacts to regional transportation facilities associated with enrollment growth at the University of Florida.

Regional Indicator

During the fall 2016 semester, the University of Florida had no off-campus park-and-ride lots.



Policy 5.3.1. Construct off-campus parking lots and garages which serve the University of Florida and operate a series of University-sponsored shuttle buses between the parking lots and the campus instead of constructing additional parking spaces on the campus.

Policy 5.3.2. Maintain the percentage of students living on-campus at 22.0 percent.

Policy 5.3.3. Provide an evening division of classes in order to reduce off-campus impacts on the regional road network during peak hour traffic periods.

Policy 5.3.4. Adopt transportation demand management strategies such as carpools, vanpools, public transit, bicycling, incorporating public transit costs in University of Florida student activity fees, and walking to encourage use of the multi-modal corridors for modes of travel other than single-occupant automobiles.

Policy 5.3.5. Adopt measures such as prohibiting freshmen from purchasing parking decals to park on campus in order to reduce the demand for parking facilities and encouraging freshmen to use public transit, bicycles, and walking while traveling to and from the University area.

b. Gainesville Regional Airport

REGIONAL GOAL 5.4. Maximize the use of the Gainesville Regional Airport before developing a new regional airport.

Regional Indicator

For the 12 months ending in September 2014, Gainesville Regional Airport had a total of 33,814 enplanements and deplanements.⁸

Policy 5.4.1. Coordinate development plans of the Gainesville Regional Airport with the City of Gainesville and Alachua County comprehensive plans to avoid unnecessary conflicts, to ensure the safety of airport operations, and to allow for future increases in the operational capacity of the airport.

c. Rail Lines

REGIONAL GOAL 5.5. Include rail lines and railroads as part of an integrated regional transportation system consisting of the Regional Road Network, regional airports and transit service providers.

Regional Indicator

As of 2016, north central Florida has 394.7 miles of rail lines.

Policy 5.5.1. Coordinate rail line expansion plans with the Florida Department of Transportation and with local governments to ensure consistency with local government comprehensive plans, to ensure public safety, and to allow for future increases in the operational capacity of rail lines.

Policy 5.5.2. Review proposals for new rail lines for impact upon natural resources of regional significance and adjacent local governments.

⁸ Air Traffic Volume and Fuel Flowage for the 12 Months Ending September 30, 2014, Gainesville Regional Airport. Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



d. Paratransit Services and the Transportation Disadvantaged

REGIONAL GOAL 5.6. Reduce the unmet General Trip demand of the north central Florida Transportation Disadvantaged population.

Regional Indicators

1. In fiscal year 2014-15, 414,276 paratransit trips occurred in the region by north central Florida paratransit service providers.
2. In Fiscal Year 2014-15, north central Florida paratransit service providers reported annual operating revenues of \$14,084,883.

Policy 5.6.1. Improve mobility options for low-income, elderly and disabled citizens.

Policy 5.6.2. Increase funding for coordinated transportation systems for the transportation disabled.

Policy 5.6.3. The Council and/or the Metropolitan Transportation Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area should provide technical assistance to designated north central Florida local transportation coordinating boards and community transportation coordinators.

e. Public Transit and Livable Community Reinvestment Plan

REGIONAL GOAL 5.7. Increase the percentage of north central Florida residents using public transportation as a primary means of transportation.

Regional Indicator

For the 12 months ending in September 2015, Gainesville Regional Transit System fixed route ridership was 10,293,434.⁹

Policy 5.7.1. Coordinate with the Gainesville Regional Transit System, the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Agency for the Gainesville Urbanized area, the University of Florida, the City of Gainesville, and Alachua County to provide opportunities through their respective plans and programs for a greater likelihood of increased public transit ridership.

Policy 5.7.2. Coordinate with Community Transportation Coordinators and north central Florida local governments to provide opportunities through their respective plans and programs for a greater likelihood of increased public transit ridership.

Policy 5.7.3. Assist the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area in implementing the vision statement contained in its Gainesville Metropolitan Area Year 2035 Transportation Plan entitled, The Livable Community Reinvestment Plan.

⁹Fiscal Year 2015 Gainesville Regional Transit System Ridership Report.
Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



Chapter VI

Regionally Significant Facilities and Resources

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



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Chapter VI: Regionally Significant Facilities and Resources

Regionally Significant Facilities and Resources are those facilities and resources identified by the Council as being of regional importance and meets one or more of the following criteria: (1) its uniqueness, function, benefit, service delivery area, or importance is identified as being of regional concern; (2) a facility or resource that requires the participation or involvement of two or more governmental entities to ensure proper and efficient management; or (3) a facility or resource that meets either criteria in 1 or 2 above and is defined to be of state or regional concern or importance in state or federal laws or rules of state or regional agencies adopted pursuant to Chapter 120, Florida Statutes.¹

Facilities recognized by the North Central Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan as regionally significant facilities and resources not addressed elsewhere are comprised of cultural facilities, educational institutions, electric power generation stations, hospitals, landfills, military facilities, and state prisons.

Cultural Facilities recognized as regional facilities are those which are either owned or funded (at least in part) by the state or provide cultural opportunities to residents of multiple local jurisdictions.

Educational institutions recognized as regional facilities are those which provide either two or four year college degrees or technical training to residents of multiple local jurisdictions.

Electrical power facilities recognized as regional facilities are those facilities which provide electrical power to multiple local government jurisdictions.

Florida Greenways recognized as regional facilities are those greenways which have been formally recognized as such by the Florida Greenways Commission.

Hospitals recognized as regional facilities are those facilities which provide medical services to residents of multiple local government jurisdictions.

Landfills recognized as regional facilities are those facilities which provide solid waste disposal services to multiple local government jurisdictions.

State prisons are recognized as regional facilities as they hold prisoners whose place of residence is from outside the region. They also represent a significant source of employment for north central Florida residents. Since the majority of prisoners housed in north central Florida prisons are from outside the region, state prisons are considered to be a basic industry for north central Florida.

¹North central Florida regionally significant facilities and resources, as defined in Rule 27E.005, Florida Administrative Code, consist of Regionally Significant Emergency Preparedness Facilities identified in Table 3.2, Natural Resources of Regional Significance identified in Table 4.1, Regionally Significant Transportation Facilities identified in Table 5.9, and Regionally Significant Facilities and Resources, identified in Section VI.



A. Cultural Facilities

Cedar Key Museum State Park
Center for Performing Arts
Florida State Museum
Florida Trail
Forest Capital Museum
Hippodrome State Theater
Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings State Historical Site
Samuel P. Harn Art Museum
Stephen Foster State Folk Culture Center

B. Educational Institutions

Big Bend Technical College
Bradford-Union County Vocational Technical Center
Central Florida College
Florida Gateway College
North Florida Community College
Santa Fe College
Suwannee-Hamilton Vocational Technical Center
University of Florida

C. Electric Power Facilities

Electric Power Generating Stations
Electric Transmission Lines of 500 KVA
Electric Transmission Lines of Lesser Voltage That Serve Multi-County Jurisdictions
Electric Substations to Support Above-Referenced Transmission Line Facilities

D. Florida Greenways

Alapaha River Trail (Hamilton County)
Alapahoochee River Paddling Trail (Hamilton County)
Archer Braid Corridor (Alachua County)
Archer Road Corridor (Alachua County)
Aucilla River (Madison and Taylor Counties)
Big Bend Saltwater Paddling Trail (Dixie, Levy and Taylor Counties)
Crooked Creek Paddling Trail (Taylor County)
Cross Florida Greenway Corridor (Levy County)
Dudley Farm Historic State Park (Alachua County)
Econfina River Paddling Trail Corridor (Taylor County)
Fanning Springs State Park (Gilchrist and Levy Counties)
Florida National Scenic Trail (Bradford, Columbia, Hamilton, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor and Union Counties)
FL Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail (Levy, Dixie and Taylor Counties)
Four Freedoms Trail Corridor (Madison County)
Gainesville to Branford Corridor (Alachua, Columbia and Suwannee Counties)
Gainesville to Hawthorne Corridor (Alachua County)
Gainesville to Newberry Trail Corridor (Alachua County)

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



Ichetucknee River Trail
Lake Santa Fe Corridor (Alachua and Bradford Counties)
Manatee Springs State Park (Levy County)
Nature Coast Trail Corridor (Alachua, Dixie, Gilchrist and Levy Counties)
Nature Coast Trail State Park (Gilchrist and Dixie Counties)
Palatka to Hawthorne Corridor (Alachua County)
Palatka to Lake City Corridor (Bradford, Columbia and Union Counties)
Patono State Paddling Trail (Alachua County)
Santa Fe River State Paddling Trail (Alachua, Columbia, Gilchrist, Lafayette and Suwannee Counties)
State Road 121 Rail Trail Corridor (Alachua and Union Counties)
State Road 320 Trail Corridor (Levy County)
Steinhatchee River Trail (Dixie and Taylor Counties)
Suwannee River Wilderness State Paddling Trail (Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Madison and Suwannee Counties)
Suwannee/Cedar Key Refuge Paddling Trails (Dixie and Levy Counties)
Troy Springs State Park (Suwannee County)
Waccasassa River Paddling Trail (Levy County)
Waldo Road Corridor (Alachua and Bradford Counties)
Wekiva River Paddling Trail (Levy County)
Withlacoochee Gulf Preserve Paddling Trail (Levy County)
Withlacoochee River (North) (Hamilton and Madison Counties)
Withlacoochee South State Paddling Trail (Levy County)

E. Historical Facilities

All districts, buildings, and sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places
All pre-historic sites listed in the Florida Master Site File

F. Hospitals

North Florida Regional Medical Center, Gainesville
Shands Hospitals in Alachua County
Veterans Administration Hospital, Gainesville
Veterans Administration Hospital, Lake City

G. Landfills

New River Solid Waste Management Association (Baker, Bradford, & Union counties)
Suwannee Valley Solid Waste Management Association (Dixie, Jefferson, Madison, & Taylor counties)

H. Natural Gas Transmission Lines

Natural Gas Transmission Lines

I. Military Facilities

Camp Blanding



J. State Prisons

Columbia Correctional Institution, Columbia County
Columbia Correction Institution Annex, Columbia County
Cross City Correctional Institution, Dixie County
Florida State Prison, Bradford County
Florida State Prison, West Unit, Bradford County
Gainesville Community Correctional Center, Alachua County
Hamilton Correctional Institution, Hamilton County
Hamilton Correctional Institution Annex, Hamilton County
Lake Butler Reception and Medical Center, Union County
Lake City Community Correctional Facility, Columbia County
Lancaster Correctional Institution, Gilchrist County
Lawtey Correctional Institute, Bradford County
Madison Correctional Institution, Madison County
Mayo Correctional Institution, Lafayette County
New River Correctional Institution, Bradford County
New River "O" Unit, Bradford County
Reception and Medical Center, Main Unit, Union County
Reception and Medical Center, West Unit, Union County
Suwannee Correction Institution, Suwannee County
Taylor Correction Institution, Taylor County
Taylor Correction Institution Annex, Taylor County
Union Correctional Institution, Union County



Chapter VII

Coordination Outline

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



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Chapter VII: Coordination Outline

The coordination outline provides an overview of the Council's cross acceptance, dispute resolution, public participation, and related regional planning and coordination activities. It focuses on how the Council helps to resolve inconsistencies among the various (local/regional/state) plans and programs.

A. Public Participation

The Council actively seeks public participation in all of its endeavors. Every meeting of the Council and its committees is advertised in Florida Administrative Weekly. Additionally, Council and committee meeting notices/agendas are distributed to the news media and directly to interested persons who have requested to be placed on the Council's notification lists. Agendas are also available to the public through the Internet via the World Wide Web. The Council's home page Internet address is <http://www.ncfrpc.org>.

Citizens participate in Council programs in a variety of ways. Ongoing citizen participation is accomplished by including eight non-voting citizen members on the Council and various Council committees. This format allows direct citizen input at the policy-making level. Also, citizen advisory committees are created for special projects in which more organized citizen input is desirable.

In developing the regional plan, the Council held one public workshop during the early stages of plan formulation to describe the regional planning effort and to receive input from the public regarding the content, structure, and application of the plan as well as to receive input regarding the process of plan formulation and adoption. Additionally, the Council will hold at least three well-advertised meetings at different locations throughout the region to describe the content of the proposed plan submitted to the Executive Office of the Governor and to receive public comment regarding the proposed plan.

B. Dispute Resolution

The Council has adopted a dispute resolution process (Rule 29C-8, Florida Administrative Code) designed to reconcile differences in planning, growth management, and other issues among local governments, regional agencies, and private interests. The voluntary process attempts to identify and resolve problems early, provide a range of dispute resolution options, appropriately involve all affected parties, and be both time- and cost-effective.

C. Cross-Acceptance

Chapter 186.505(22), Florida Statutes, states that regional planning councils have the power "to establish and conduct a cross-acceptance negotiation process with local governments intended to resolve inconsistencies between applicable local and regional plans, with participation by local governments being voluntary."



In order to encourage up-front compatibility among the various regional planning council and local government plans, the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council has established a voluntary cross-acceptance process which can be used to prevent high-profile conflicts between plans of two regional planning Councils, between the regional planning Council and local government plans, and between plans (and plan amendments) being developed by adjacent local governments.

1. How the Cross-Acceptance Process Works

The Council's cross-acceptance process consists of an informal, non-binding, staff-level review of local government plans/plan amendments as well as strategic regional policy plans/plan amendments of adjacent regional planning Councils.

The process is initiated when a local government submits a plan or plan amendment to the Council requesting initiation of the process prior to submitting the plan/amendment for review pursuant to Chapter 163, Florida Statutes. For regional plans/amendments, the process begins when the Council receives a request by an adjacent regional planning Council to initiate the cross-acceptance review. Within ten days of receipt of the plan/amendment for review through the cross-acceptance process, the Council staff will make an informal, non-binding, review of the plan or plan amendment. In the case of a local government comprehensive plan/amendment review, the Council will communicate the results of the review to the initiating local government. In the case of a regional plan/amendment review, the Council will communicate the results of the review to the appropriate regional planning Council.

For proposed regional and local plans/amendments, staff review will consist of a determination as to its effects on regional resources or facilities identified in the regional plan and extrajurisdictional impacts on adjacent local governments. The review will include recommendations as to how the plan/amendment can be made to mitigate significant adverse impacts on adjacent local governments as well as ensure its consistency with the Council's regional plan.

2. Council's Local Government Comprehensive Plan Review Process and Its Relationship with the Voluntary Cross-Acceptance Process

The Council is authorized to review and comment on local government proposed comprehensive plans and plan amendments by Chapter 163, Florida Statutes. The Council's review of proposed plans/amendments is limited to the effects on regional resources or facilities identified in the regional plan and extrajurisdictional impacts which would be inconsistent with the comprehensive plan of the affected local government. Council review of adopted plans/amendments consists of a determination of consistency of the plan as amended with the regional plan. The Council's review findings are considered by the Department of Economic Opportunity during its compliance review of local plans/plan amendments.

This process must be followed regardless of any agreements reached through or modifications made to local plans/amendments as a result of the Council's voluntary cross-acceptance process. Furthermore, any determination or recommendation made by Council staff through the voluntary cross-acceptance process is subject to review and reversal by the Department through the Chapter 163, Florida Statutes, review process described above, with or without a recommendation to do so by the policy body of the Council.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



The Council's cross-acceptance process does not obligate the local government or adjoining regional planning Council to change its plan/amendment as a result of the process; nor does it obligate the Council to find the plan/amendment consistent with the regional plan through the Council's formal review processes should the local government or adjoining regional planning council implement any or all of the staff recommendations contained in the cross-acceptance review.

D. Regional Planning and Coordination Activities

The Council conducts a number of various planning activities and programs. These activities and programs include intergovernmental coordination and review, functioning as a regional information center, hurricane preparedness planning, regional public facilities planning, hazardous materials emergency management planning, staffing of the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville urban area, staffing of county transportation disadvantaged programs, and local government technical assistance. These activities and programs are discussed below.

1. Intergovernmental Coordination and Review

One of the ways the Council implements its regional plan is through a federal/state/regional review process formally known as the Intergovernmental Coordination and Review process. The Governor has designated the state's ten regional planning Councils as areawide clearinghouses for federally-funded projects that affect local governments in Florida.

The Council reviews these applications/projects to avoid and/or mitigate potential adverse impacts that may be created by an activity in neighboring communities or counties, insure coordination and consistency with local government and comprehensive regional policy plans, and to avoid duplication or conflict with other area programs.

2. Regional Information Center

The Regional Information Center is the information service and publication center of the Council. It includes a library, a research service, and public information resources. The Center is often the starting place for many developers, consultants, marketing specialists, media representatives, students, and planners looking for regional statistics and information. The Council is a Florida Census Data Affiliate and an official repository for federal home loan disclosure reports. Data research requests are filled on a regular basis.



3. Hurricane Preparedness

In 1990, the Council completed its first five-year update of the regional hurricane evacuation and inland shelter studies. Both regional and county plans were prepared by the Council in 1985. The 1990 regional study focuses on updating the number and location of people who need to evacuate in the event of a hurricane, including any special needs created by disabilities or age. The study includes the location and type of shelter spaces available to accommodate evacuees. Evacuation routes and potential impediments, such as flooding, to the movement of vehicles are also discussed. A technical committee composed of county civil defense directors, representatives of the Florida Division of Emergency Management, and the American Red Cross assisted in this effort.

4. Regional Public Facilities

Since 1987 when its comprehensive regional policy plan was initially adopted, the Council has assisted the region's counties in creating regional landfills and regional library systems. In a time when economics, new technologies and/or other factors are forcing local governments to look for safe and cost-effective alternatives, the Council can provide the expertise and forum for developing regional solutions to a number of problems facing local governments in Florida.

5. Hazardous Materials

The Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act, also known as Title III of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act requires the preparation of local emergency hazardous material response plans. In Florida, hazardous materials emergency response plans have been developed utilizing the eleven regional planning Council districts and state-appointed local emergency planning committees. The emergency response plan for the North Central Florida Region was adopted by the Local Emergency Planning Committee on June 9, 1989, and annually updated in November of each year.

Florida follow-up legislation also requires the state's 67 counties to each prepare or update site-specific hazards analyses. The hazards analyses include site-specific information on facilities that contain extremely hazardous substances. The hazards analyses identify the quantities of hazardous material on-site, the vulnerable zone that could be impacted by a worse-case release, and the probability of a release occurring.

The Local Emergency Planning Committee, with financial assistance from the state, also organizes free training sessions for emergency fire and rescue teams, police, and others whose job is to respond to accidents which may involve hazardous materials. Different levels of training are being provided to the "First Responders" with the first level focusing on how to safely recognize and make proper notifications for possible hazardous materials incidents. The most advanced level is for hazardous materials technicians who will wear chemical protective clothing to stop a toxic release.



6. Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area

Through an agreement signed by the Florida Department of Transportation, Alachua County, and the City of Gainesville, the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area was formed to conduct transportation planning activities in the Gainesville urbanized area. This program makes the area eligible to receive federal funds for transportation projects. The Council serves as the staff providing technical and administrative assistance in developing transportation plans and programs.

7. Transportation Disadvantaged Program

Another major transportation planning activity of the Council is the Transportation Disadvantaged planning program. Counties are required to develop plans in order to receive state funds to increase transportation services to low-income, elderly, and handicapped persons. The Council serves as the designated official planning agency for nine counties in the region. The Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization serves as the planning agency for Alachua County while the Taylor County Commission is the designated official planning agency for Taylor County. These agencies are responsible for conducting planning studies needed to increase transportation services to low-income individuals, elderly individuals, and persons with disabilities.

8. Local Government Technical Assistance

The Council also offers technical assistance to local governments which do not have available staff or expertise for certain activities. These activities range from comprehensive planning to community development.

a. Comprehensive Planning Assistance

The Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulation Act requires local governments to prepare and adopt comprehensive plans which are consistent with regional and state comprehensive plans. In addition, local governments are required to adopt land development regulations to implement their comprehensive plans. Since this legislation was initially enacted back in 1975, the Council has assisted nearly every local government in the region with preparing all or a portion of their comprehensive plans and development regulations. Technical assistance on plan amendments and general administration of local planning programs is provided on a continuing basis to many of these same local governments by Council under contract.

b. Community Development Block Grants

The Council also assists local governments in assessing their community development needs, then applying for and administering Community Development Block Grants. The federal block grant program, administered by Department, helps local governments address the need for housing rehabilitation of low-and moderate-income occupied dwelling units, the need for the commercial revitalization of downtowns, and the need for revitalizing public facilities in neighborhoods occupied by low-and moderate-income persons.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



c. Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program Grants

The Council also assists local governments in preparing applications for Florida Department of Environmental Protection Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program grant funds, a program designed to assist local governments in the acquisition and development of recreational sites and facilities for the general public.

9. Economic Development

The economic development program of the Council consists of economic development planning and technical assistance, and tourism promotion.

a. Economic Development District

Since the federal Economic Development Administration designation of the region as an Economic Development District in 1978, the Council has continued to maintain a high level of involvement in providing technical assistance to local governments and development authorities in order to promote economic growth.

b. The Original Florida Tourism Task Force

The Council developed a tourism strategic plan in 1992. Upon completion, the Council entered into a formal agreement with public and private agencies in the region's counties whose representatives form a Tourism Task Force to undertake promotional efforts and other activities for tourism throughout the region. The Council provides in-kind staff assistance to this on-going effort.



Appendix A

Dispute Resolution Rule

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



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Appendix A: Dispute Resolution Rule

CHAPTER 29C-8

RULES OF PROCEDURE AND PRACTICE PERTAINING TO THE REGIONAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

29C-8.001	Purpose
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29C-8.009	Situation Assessment
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29C-8.014	Advisory Decision-making
29C-8.015	Settlement Agreements and Reports
29C-8.016	Other Dispute Resolution Processes

29C-8.001 Purpose.

(1) The purpose of the rule is to establish a voluntary regional dispute resolution process to reconcile differences on planning, growth management and other issues among local governments, regional agencies and private interests. The process consists of two basic components: process initiation (initiation and response letters), and settlement meetings; and five optional components: pre-initiation meeting, situation assessments, mediation, advisory decision-making, and reference to other dispute resolution processes (judicial, administrative or arbitration proceedings).

(2) The intent of the regional dispute resolution process is to provide a flexible process to reconcile differences on planning and growth management issues. The process is designed to clearly identify and resolve problems as early as possible, utilize the procedures in a low-to-high cost sequence, allow flexibility in the order in which the procedures are used, provide for the involvement of affected and responsible parties, and provide as much process certainty as possible.

(3) The regional dispute resolution process may be used to resolve disputes involving: extrajurisdictional impacts as provided for in the intergovernmental coordination elements of local comprehensive plans, as required by Section 163.3177, F.S.; inconsistencies between port master plans and local comprehensive plans, as required by Section 163.3178, F.S.; the siting of community residential homes, as required by Section 419.001(5), F.S.; and any other matters covered by statutes which reference the regional dispute resolution process.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



(4) The regional dispute resolution process shall not be used to address disputes involving environmental permits or other regulatory matters unless all of the parties involved agree to initiate use of the regional dispute resolution process.

(5) Use of the regional dispute resolution process shall not alter a jurisdiction's organization's, group's or individual's right to a judicial determination of any issue if that entity is entitled to such a determination under statutory or common law.

(6) Participation in the regional dispute resolution process as a named party or in any other capacity does not convey or limit intervenor status or standing in any judicial or administrative proceedings.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History—New 7-12-94.

29C-8.002 Definitions.

(1) **SITUATION ASSESSMENT** is a procedure of information collection that may involve review of documents, interviews and an assessment meeting to identify the issues in dispute, the stakeholders, information needed before a decision can be made, or a recommendation for appropriate dispute resolution procedures.

(2) **PRE-INITIATION MEETINGS** are opportunities for a party to discuss the suitability of the regional dispute resolution process with the Council staff for resolving their dispute before formally initiating the regional dispute resolution process.

(3) **FACILITATION** is a procedure in which a neutral party, acting as a facilitator, helps the named parties design and follow a meeting agenda, and assists parties to communicate more effectively throughout the process. The facilitator has no authority to make or recommend a decision.

(4) **MEDIATION** is a procedure in which a neutral party, acting as a mediator, assists named parties in a negotiation process in exploring their interests, developing and evaluating options, and reaching a mutually-acceptable agreement. A mediator may take more control of the process than a facilitator and usually works in more complex cases where a dispute is more clearly defined.

(5) **ADVISORY DECISION-MAKING** is a procedure aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of negotiations and helping parties more realistically evaluate their negotiation positions. This procedure may include neutral evaluation, or advisory arbitration in which a neutral party or panel listens to the facts and arguments presented by the parties and renders a non-binding advisory decision.

(6) **JURISDICTION** is any local, regional, or state government or agency, including special districts, authorities and school boards.

(7) **NAMED PARTY** shall be any jurisdiction, public or private organization, group or individual which (who) is named in an initiation letter, including the initiating jurisdiction, or is admitted by the named parties to participate in settlement of a dispute pursuant to subsections 29C-8.003(1), (2) and (3), F.A.C. Being a "named party" in the regional dispute resolution process does not convey or limit standing in any judicial or administrative proceeding.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



(8) REPRESENTATIVE is an individual who is given guidance and authority to act, to the extent possible, by a named party in a regional dispute resolution process case. Subsection 29C-8.003(4), F.A.C., sets forth the designation process.

(9) INITIATION LETTER is a letter from a jurisdiction formally identifying a dispute and asking named parties to engage in this process to resolve the dispute and, at a minimum, attend the initial settlement meeting. Subsection 29C-8.010(2), F.A.C., specifies what must be included in an initiation letter.

(10) RESPONSE LETTER formally notifies the initiator and other named parties that a party is willing to participate in the regional dispute resolution process and, at a minimum, attend at least one settlement meeting. Subsection 29C-8.010(3), F.A.C., specifies what must be included in a response letter.

(11) SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS may be voluntarily approved by the individual or governing body authorized to bind the named party. Agreements may take the form of memorandums of understanding, contracts, interlocal agreements or other form mutually agreed to by the signatory parties or as required by law. A settlement may be agreed to by some or all of the named parties.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History–New 7-12-94.

29C-8.003 Participation.

(1) Named parties shall automatically be allowed to participate. Other jurisdictions, public or private organizations, groups, or individuals suggested by named parties in response letters or during regional dispute resolution process meetings or submitting a petition to participate, shall be allowed to become named parties if agreed to by a two-thirds majority of the participating named parties, except as provided for in subsection 29C-8.003(2), F.A.C. Fee allocation agreements may be amended as appropriate.

(2) All initiation and response letters made in accordance with intergovernmental coordination elements of local government comprehensive plans shall only list affected local government jurisdictions as named parties. The named parties may, at the initial settlement or at subsequent regional dispute resolution process meetings, add public or private named parties by mutual agreement of all the current named parties.

(3) Other jurisdictions, public or private organizations, groups or individuals seeking to become named parties shall submit to the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council a written petition to participate, including reasons for the request and information required in subsection 29C-8.010(2), F.A.C. Such jurisdictions, public or private organizations, groups, or individuals shall become named parties if agreed to by a two-thirds majority of the named parties prior to or during regional dispute resolution process meetings, except as provided by subsection 29C-8.003(2), F.A.C. Named parties who do not respond within thirty days of the initiation letter may not participate in the regional dispute resolution process unless they submit a petition for participation.



(4) Each of the jurisdictions, organizations, groups, or individuals participating as named parties in this process shall designate a representative, in writing, or be represented by the chief administrative officer. Such a representative shall have responsibility for representing that party's interest in this process and for maintaining communications with that party throughout the process and, to the extent possible, shall have the authority to act for that party. Jurisdictions are encouraged to designate a representative to participate in the regional dispute resolution process in advance of initiating or receiving a request.

(5) Any named or neutral party may invite individuals or organizations to attend meetings under this process who (which) can provide information and technical assistance useful in the resolution of the dispute. The parties, by agreement, or the presiding neutral shall determine when and under what circumstances such invited parties may provide input.

(6) All communications by a named party called for in this process shall be submitted to all other named parties and the Council in writing.

(7) All named parties who agree to participate in this process commit to a good faith effort to resolve problems or disputes.

(8) Any named party may withdraw from participation in the regional dispute resolution process upon written notice to all other named parties and the Council.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History—New 7-12-94.

29C-8.004 Costs.

(1) There shall be no charge for processing a regional dispute resolution process initiation request and facilitation of the initial settlement meeting. The Council shall be compensated for situation assessments, facilitation of additional settlement meetings, mediation, technical assistance and other staff services based on reasonable actual costs. Outside professional neutrals shall be compensated at their standard rate or as negotiated by the parties.

(2) The costs of administration, settlement meetings, mediation or advisory arbitration shall be split equally between the named parties or according to another agreed upon allocation. The agreed upon cost allocation shall be documented in a written fee agreement.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History—New 7-12-94.

29C-8.005 Timeframes.

(1) The initial settlement meeting shall be scheduled and held within forty-five days of the date of receipt of the initiation letter at a time and place convenient to the named parties.

(2) Additional settlement meetings, mediation or advisory decision-making shall be completed within sixty days of the date of the conclusion of the initial settlement meeting.



- (3) All timeframes specified or agreed to in this process may be shortened or extended if agreed to by a two-thirds majority of the named parties.
- (4) The parties may, by mutual agreement, utilize procedures in the regional dispute resolution process in any order.
- (5) Where necessary to allow this process to be effectively carried out, named parties should defer or seek stays of judicial or administrative proceedings.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History–New 7-12-94.

29C-8.006 Administrative Protocols.

The Council may adopt administrative procedures to implement this rule. These may address staff and council roles, procedures for situation assessment, selection of neutrals, consumer guides or other matters. Where required pursuant to Section 120.52, F.S., policies and guidelines should be adopted as rules.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History–New 7-12-94.

29C-8.007 Public Notice, Records, and Confidentiality.

- (1) Named parties should provide appropriate opportunities for public input at each step in this process, such as submitting written or oral comments on issues, alternative solutions and impacts of proposed agreements.
- (2) Applicable public notice and public records requirements shall be observed as required by Chapters 119 and 120, F.S.
- (3) Parties utilizing these procedures agree that no comments, meeting records, or written or oral offers of settlement shall be presented by them as evidence in any subsequent judicial or administrative action.
- (4) To the extent permitted by law, mediation under this process will be governed by the confidentiality provisions of applicable laws, which may include Chapter 44, F.S.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History–New 7-12-94.

29C-8.008 Pre-initiation Meeting.

A jurisdiction, organization, group, or individual contemplating initiation of this process must request an informal pre-initiation meeting with the Council staff in order to ascertain whether the potential dispute would be appropriate for this process.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History–New 7-12-94.

29C-8.009 Situation Assessment.

- (1) A jurisdiction, organization, group, or individual may request that the Council (or other entity if the Council is one of the named parties) perform a situation assessment at any time, before or after initiation of the process.

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



(2) The situation assessment may involve examination of documents, interviews and assessment meetings, and shall recommend issues to be addressed, parties that should participate, appropriate resolution procedures, and a proposed schedule.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History–New 7-12-94.

29C-8.010 Formal Initiation of the Process by Jurisdictions.

(1) A formal process is initiated by an initiation letter from the representative of the governing body of a jurisdiction, other than a regional planning council, to the named parties as provided for in subsections 29C-8.003(1) and (2), F.A.C., and to the Council. The initiation letter must be accompanied by a resolution of the governing body authorizing the specific initiation or by a letter which authorizes its designated representative as defined in this rule to initiate requests utilizing the regional dispute resolution process.

(2) Such an initiation letter shall identify the following: the issues to be discussed; the named parties to be involved in the dispute resolution process; the initiating party's representative and others who will attend; and a brief history of the dispute indicating why it is appropriate for this process.

(3) Named parties shall send a response letter to the Council and all other named parties confirming their willingness to participate in a settlement meeting within thirty days of receipt of the initiation letter. This response letter shall include any additional issues and potential named parties the respondent wishes considered, as well as, a brief history of the dispute and description of the situation from the respondent's point of view.

(4) Upon receipt of an initiation letter, the Council shall assess its interest in the case. If the Council is a named party or sees itself as a potential party, it shall notify the named parties of the nature of its interest and ascertain whether the parties desire an outside facilitator for the initial settlement meeting.

(5) The Council may not initiate the regional dispute resolution process but recommend that a potential dispute is suitable for this process and transmit its recommendation to potential parties who may, at their discretion, initiate the regional dispute resolution process.

(6) The Council shall schedule a settlement meeting within thirty days of the date of receipt of the initiation request.

(7) In the event that a dispute affects jurisdictions involving two or more regions, the process adopted by the region of the initiating jurisdiction shall govern, unless the named parties agree otherwise.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History–New 7-12-94.

29C-8.011 Requests to Initiate Process Submitted by Others.

(1) Private interests may request any jurisdiction to initiate the process.



(2) Any public or private organization, group, or individual may request that the Council recommend use of this process to address a potential dispute in accordance with subsection 29C-8.010(5), F.A.C. Such a request shall be submitted in writing and shall include the information required for an initiation letter as outlined in subsection 29C-8.010(2), F.A.C.

(3) After reviewing the rationale submitted by and consulting with the requesting organization, group, or individual, the Council will conduct a situation assessment and respond in writing.

(4) If the Council determines that the potential dispute is suitable for the process, it shall transmit that determination in writing to the potential parties. The determination may include a recommendation that one or more of the jurisdictions among the potential parties initiate the procedure. The Council may also suggest that other, resolution processes be considered.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History—New 7-12-94.

29C-8.012 Settlement Meetings.

(1) Settlement meetings shall, at a minimum, be attended by the named parties' representatives designated pursuant to subsection 29C-8.003(4), F.A.C.

(2) Settlement meetings may be facilitated by a Council staff member or other neutral facilitator acceptable to the named parties and shall be held at a time and place acceptable to the named parties.

(3) At the settlement meeting, the named parties shall consider adding named parties, consider guidelines for participation, identify the issues to be addressed, present their concerns and constraints, explore options for a solution, and seek agreement.

(4) The named parties shall submit a settlement meeting report in accordance with subsection 29C-8.015(4), F.A.C., of this process.

(5) If an agreed-upon settlement meeting is not held or a settlement meeting produces no agreement to proceed to additional settlement meetings, mediation or advisory decision-making, any named party who has agreed to participate in this procedure may proceed to a joint meeting of governing bodies pursuant to Chapter 164, F.S., litigation, an administrative hearing or arbitration, as appropriate.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History—New 7-12-94.

29C-8.013 Mediation.

(1) If two or more of the named parties submit a request for mediation to the Council, the Council shall assist them in selecting and retaining a mediator or the named parties may request that the Council select a mediator.



(2) All disputes shall be mediated by a mediator who understands Florida growth management issues, has mediation experience and is acceptable to the parties. Named parties may consider mediators who are on the Florida Growth Management Conflict Resolution Consortium rosters or any other mutually-acceptable mediator. Mediators shall be guided by the Standards of Professional Conduct, Florida Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 10, Part II, Section 020-150.

(3) Named parties shall submit a mediation report in accordance with subsection 29C-8.015(4), F.A.C., at the conclusion of advisory decision-making.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History—New 7-12-94.

29C-8.014 Advisory Decision-making.

(1) If two or more of the named parties submit a request for advisory decision-making to the Council, the Council shall assist the named parties in selecting and retaining an appropriate neutral party or the named parties may request that the Council make the selection.

(2) All disputes shall be handled by a neutral party who understands Florida growth management issues, has appropriate experience and is acceptable to the named parties.

(3) The named parties shall submit an advisory decision-making report in accordance with subsection 29C-8.015(4), F.A.C., of this process.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History—New 7-12-94.

29C-8.015 Settlement Agreements and Reports.

(1) The form of all settlements reached through this process shall be determined by the named parties and may include interlocal agreements, concurrent resolutions, memoranda of understanding, plan amendments, deed restrictions, or other forms as appropriate.

(2) Agreements signed by designated representatives may be in the form of recommendations to the named parties and subject to their formal approval.

(3) Agreements may be reached by two or more parties even if all of the named parties do not agree or do not sign a formal agreement.

(4) After settlement meetings, mediation, or advisory decision-making under this process, the named parties shall submit a joint report to the Council which shall, at a minimum, include:

(a) Identification of the issues discussed and copies of any agreements reached;

(b) A list of potentially affected or involved jurisdictions, organizations, groups, or individuals (including those which may not be named parties);



- (c) A timeframe for starting and ending informal negotiations, additional settlement meetings, mediation, advisory decision-making, joint meetings of elected bodies, administrative hearings or litigation;
- (d) Any additional Council assistance requested;
- (e) A written fee allocation agreement to cover the costs of regional dispute resolution process procedures;
- (f) A description of responsibilities and schedules for implementing and enforcing agreements reached. The report shall include any statements that any named party wishes to include.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History–New 7-12-94.

29C-8.016 Other Dispute Resolution Processes.

- (1) The regional dispute resolution process is a voluntary opportunity for parties to negotiate a mutual agreement. It may be used before, in parallel with, or after judicial or administrative proceedings.
- (2) When appropriate, parties may obtain a stay of judicial or administrative proceedings to provide time for regional dispute resolution process negotiations.
- (3) Use of the regional dispute resolution process shall not alter a jurisdiction's, organization's, group's or individual's right to a judicial or administrative determination of any issue if that person is entitled to such a determination under statutory or common law.
- (4) Participation in the regional dispute resolution process as a named party or in any other way does not convey or limit intervenor status or standing in any judicial or administrative proceedings.
- (5) Other resolution processes that the parties may wish to consider utilizing which exist within Florida Statutes include the following: Intergovernmental Coordination Element, Section 163.3177(h)1. & 2., F.S.; Port Master Plans, Section 163.3178 F.S.; Community Residential Homes, Section 419.001(5) F.S.; Cross Acceptance Negotiation Process, Section 186.505(22) F.S.; Location of Spoil Sites, Section 380.32(14) F.S.; Administrative Procedures Act, Chapter 120 F.S.; Florida Governmental Cooperation Act, Chapter 164, F.S.; Mediation Alternatives to Judicial Action, Chapter 44, F.S.

Specific Authority 186.509 FS. Law Implemented 186.509 FS. History–New 7-12-94.



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Appendix B Glossary of Terms

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



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Appendix B: Glossary of Terms

100-year Floodplain: An area delineated on the Flood Insurance Rate Map series published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency estimated to have a one in 100 chance of flooding in any given year.

Acquire/Public Acquisition: Refers to a variety of ownership forms of real property, including fee simple ownership as well as the ownership of specific rights such as land development rights, mineral rights, and timber rights.

Adverse Transportation Impact: A transportation facility operating below the adopted level of service standard contained in a local government comprehensive plan for transportation facilities which are not part of the Strategic Intermodal System. A transportation facility which is part of the Strategic Intermodal System operating below the adopted level of service standard established by the Florida Department of Transportation.

Affordable Housing: Housing for which annual costs (including utilities, taxes, maintenance, and other associated costs) represents no more than 30 percent of the residing household's annual income.

Aquifer: An underground geologic formation holding ground water.

Assessed Value: The value of real property established by a tax assessor which is used as a basis for determining ad valorem property taxes.

Backlogged Roadway: An unconstrained roadway operating at a level of service below the adopted minimum level of service standards and not programmed for improvement in the first three years of the Florida Department of Transportation adopted work program or the first three years of the five year schedule of improvements in the local government comprehensive plan's capital improvement element. A roadway formally categorized as such in local government comprehensive plans.

Basic Industries: Industries whose products are sold or whose profits are otherwise generated beyond the geographic boundaries of the region. North central Florida basic industries include, but are not limited to, agriculture, educational services, health services, manufacturing, and mining.

Catastrophic Disasters: Disasters that require massive state and federal assistance, including immediate military involvement, such as a category four or five hurricane that hit a densely populated area.

Coastal High Hazard Area: The evacuation zone for a Category 1 hurricane as established in the regional hurricane evacuation study applicable to the local government.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy: An economic development plan or strategy for the North Central Florida region developed under guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Commerce. The document is the guiding plan for the activities of the North Central Florida Economic Development District.



Concurrency Management System: An ongoing mechanism which ensures that public facilities and services needed to support development is available concurrent with the impacts of such development.

Cone of Influence: A depression in the potentiometric surface around a well or spring from which water is withdrawn.

Constrained Roadway: A roadway which cannot be widened or enhanced due to physical constraints. A roadway formally categorized as such in local government comprehensive plans.

Density: An objective measurement of a number of units per unit of area, such as residents or housing units per acre.

Economic Development District: A regional economic development administration district authorized by the U.S. Economic Development Administration that assists local governments within the district with economic development initiatives.

Ecosystem: A functional system that includes the organisms of a natural community together with their environment.

Endangered species: Animal or plant species that are recognized by federal or state agencies as in imminent danger of extinction or expiration.

Estuary: A semi-enclosed coastal body of water having a free connection with the open sea and within which sea water is measurably diluted with fresh water.

Eutrophication: The processes that result in a higher concentration of dissolved nutrients in a water body.

Farm: means any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold or normally would have been sold, during the census year (1992 Census of Agriculture).

First Magnitude Spring: A spring which discharges an average of 100 cubic feet or more of water per second.

First Responders: Individuals which are most likely to be first to respond to the scene of a hazardous material release. First responders typically include fire fighters, policemen, and county sheriff personnel.

Florida Greenways (or Greenways): Florida Greenways are connections linking existing parks, rivers, and wetland systems to create a statewide network of native habitats, open spaces, and linear parks which have been formally recognized as Florida Greenways by the Florida Greenways Commission.

Focal Species: Animal species considered by wildlife biologists to be indicator species of overall ecosystem health. If these species are present in an area, then wildlife biologists are confident that species commonly found in association with the focal species are also present.

Goal: A long-term end toward which programs and activities are ultimately directed.

Gross Rent: The monthly contract rent plus the estimated average cost of utilities (electricity, gas, and water) and fuels (oil, coal, kerosene, wood, etc.) if these are paid for by the renters.

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Ground Water: Water occurring in an aquifer below the surface of the land.

Habitat: The place where an organism lives, and where one would go to find it. It is the place that provides an organism with essential life needs, such as food, water, cover, space, and mates.

Hardwood: Wood from trees such as oaks and beeches used to make lumber.

Hardwood Hammock: A densely wooded upland or wetland community with high plant species diversity, which is dominated by oaks, cabbage palms, or other species of hardwood trees.

Hazardous Material: One of several hundred thousand chemicals for which the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration requires a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS). An MSDS is a legal document which details a chemical's synonyms; physical properties; shipping, handling, and storage procedures; and health hazard, first aid, reactivity, fire, and explosion, and spill and leakage data.

Household: One or more persons, related or unrelated, living together in a single housing unit.

Identified Attributes: Selected qualities or characteristics of larger ecosystems or habitats which have been identified, described, and mapped through field surveys by qualified wildlife biologists, botanists, and ecologists as necessary to the survival of self-sustaining populations of representative samples of native Florida animal species, plant species, and habitat types.

Infrastructure: Man-made structures which serve the common needs of the population such as sewage disposal systems, potable water systems, potable water wells serving a system, solid waste disposal sites and retention areas, stormwater systems, utilities, piers, docks, wharves, breakwaters, bulkheads, seawalls, bulwarks, revetments, causeways, marinas, navigation channels, and roadways.

Listed Species: Listed species means an animal species designated as Endangered, Threatened, or Species of Special Concern in Chapter 68A-27.003-68A-27.005, Florida Administrative Code; a plant species designated as Endangered, Threatened, or Commercially Exploited as designated in Chapter 5B-40, Florida Administrative Code, or an animal or plant species designated as Endangered or Threatened in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 17.

Low Income Household: A household with an annual income between 50 and 80 percent of the median annual income.

Major Disaster: A disaster that will likely exceed local capabilities and require a broad range of state and federal assistance, such as a hurricane.

Marine League: A unit of linear measure equal to three nautical miles. A nautical mile equals 6,076.12 feet.

Mesic Hammock: An upland natural community characterized as an open canopy forest of widely spaced pine trees with little or no understory, but a dense ground cover of herbs and shrubs.

Minor Disaster: A disaster that is likely to be within the response capabilities of local government and to result in only a minimal need for state and federal assistance, such as a tropical storm.



Moderate Income Household: A household with an annual income between 80 and 120 percent of the median annual income.

Monthly (Home)owner Costs: The sum of payments for mortgages, deeds of trust, contracts to purchase or similar debts on the property (including payments for the first mortgage, second or junior mortgages, and home equity loans); real estate taxes; fire, hazard and flood insurance on the property; utilities (electricity, gas, and water); and fuels (oil, coal, kerosene, wood, etc.). It also includes, where appropriate, the monthly condominium fee for condominiums and mobile home costs (personal property taxes, site rent, registration fees, and license fees) for mobile homes.

Natural Resource of Regional Significance: A natural resource or system of interrelated natural resources, that due to its function, size, rarity or endangerment retains or provides benefit of regional significance to the natural or human environment (27E-5.002(4), Florida Administrative Code). Natural resources of regional significance may be referred to as "regionally significant resources" in state law and other Strategic Regional Policy Plans.

Noninstitutionalized Civilian Labor Force: Persons age 16 and over, excluding inmates of institutions and military personnel, classified as "employed" or "unemployed" by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Noninstitutionalized Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate: The percentage of noninstitutionalized civilians age 16 and over who are either employed or are seeking employment.

Occupation: A craft, trade, or profession, or other means of earning a living. The occupational classification system developed for the 1990 Census, which consists of 500 specific occupational categories for employed persons arranged into six summary and 13 major occupational groups. This classification was developed by the U.S. Census Bureau to be consistent with the Standard Occupational Classification Manual: 1980, published by the Office of Federal Statistical Policy and Standards, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Overcrowding: A dwelling unit with more than 1.0 persons (residents) per room.

Paratransit: Those elements of public transit which provide service between specific origins and destinations selected by the individual user with such service being provided at a time that is agreed upon by the user and the provider of the service. Paratransit service is provided by taxis, limousines, 'dial-a-ride' buses, and other demand-responsive operations that are characterized by their nonscheduled, nonfixed route nature (341.031(5), Florida Statutes (1993)).

Policy: A way by which programs and activities are conducted to achieve identified goals.

Poverty Threshold (or Poverty Level/Line): As defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. The average poverty threshold for a family of four was \$12,674 in 1989. Poverty thresholds were applied on a national basis and were not adjusted for regional, state, or local variations in the cost of living. For a fuller discussion of poverty thresholds, see U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, Florida, Section 2 of 3, pages B-27 through B-29, Washington, D.C., 1992.



Projects that Promote Public Transportation: Projects that directly affect the provisions of public transit, including transit terminals, transit lines and routes, separate lanes for the exclusive use of public transit services, transit stops (shelters and stations), office buildings or projects that include fixed-rail or transit terminals as part of the building, and projects which are transit oriented and designed to complement reasonably proximate planned or existing public facilities.

Public Facilities: Transportation systems or facilities, sewer systems or facilities, solid waste systems or facilities, drainage systems or facilities, potable water systems or facilities, educational systems or facilities, parks and recreation systems or facilities and public health systems or facilities.

Public Transit: The transporting of people by conveyances, or systems of conveyances, traveling on land or water, local or regional in nature, and available for use by the public. Public transit systems may be either governmentally owned or privately owned. Public transit specifically includes those forms of transportation commonly known as 'Paratransit' (341.031(6), Florida Statutes (1993)).

Recharge: The process whereby rain water or surface water seeps into the ground and enters an aquifer.

Regional Indicator(s): Associated with regional goals. A statement of baseline information against which progress can be measured in the region's five-year evaluation and appraisal report.

Regulatory Environment: All government plans, goals, policies, standards, and regulations which directly or indirectly affect land and land development.

Regional Road Network: Road segments identified in Table 5.10 of the North Central Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan. The Regional Road Network also includes all intersections contiguous to the road segments identified in Table 5.10. of the North Central Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan.

Rookery: The nesting or breeding grounds of gregarious (i.e., social) birds or mammals; also a colony of such birds or mammals.

Salary-income Range: A salary-income range is a subset of an income class (i.e., Very Low-income, Low-income, Moderate-Income, or Above Moderate-income). An income class is comprised of multiple salary-income ranges. A salary-income range spans a maximum range of \$2,500.

Sandhill Community: An upland natural community located on a well-drained, natural elevation, ridge, or rolling ridges of sand characterized as a forest of widely spaced pine trees with a sparse understory of turkey oaks and a dense ground cover of grasses and herbs.

Second Magnitude Spring: A spring which discharges between ten and 100 cubic feet of water per second.

Significant and Adverse Transportation Impact: A transportation impact which is both an adverse transportation impact and a significant transportation impact.

Significant Transportation Impact: When traffic uses 5.0 percent or more of the adopted peak hour level of service maximum service volume of a transportation facility.



Silviculture: A branch of forestry dealing with the establishment, development, reproduction, and care of forest areas.

Softwood: Wood from trees such as pine trees used to make paper and similar products.

Stream-to-sink Watersheds: Drainage basins containing one or more sinkholes which, in some cases, have direct connection to the Floridan Aquifer.

Storm Surge: The rise in sea water level accompanying the approach of a hurricane. The extent of storm surge varies with the strength of the hurricane, coastal topography, and tides. Storm surge is compounded by wind-driven wave action on top of the surge water level.

Storm Water Runoff: Water that originates from the drainage of land surfaces after a rain event.

Submergence: The act of covering or overflowing with water.

Suwannee River System: The Suwannee River and its major tributaries (i.e., the Alapaha, Ichetucknee, Santa Fe, and Withlacoochee rivers).

Taxable Value: That portion of the assessed value of real property which is taxed for purposes of valorem property taxation.

Tenure: The ownership status of housing unit residents. Residents are typically classified by the U.S. Census Bureau as either owners or renters.

Third Magnitude Spring: A spring which discharges one to 10 cubic feet of water per second.

Trace: A course or path.

Transportation Demand Management: Strategies designed to reduce the number of trips made by single occupancy vehicles and enhance the regional mobility of all citizens. These strategies include but are not limited to encouragement and enhancement of traditional ridesharing (carpooling and vanpooling), public transportation, alternative work hours (flextime, compressed work week, etc.), non-motorized transportation (bicycle and pedestrian modes), priority of preferential parking for ride-sharers, and development and implementation of shuttle services. Also included in the promotion of telecommuting programs.

Transportation Disadvantaged: Those persons who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation and are, therefore, dependent upon others to obtain access to health care, employment, education, shopping, social activities, or other life-sustaining activities, or children who are handicapped or high risk or at-risk as defined in s.411.202, Florida Statutes, (427.011(1), Florida Statutes (1993)).

Transportation Management Organization: An organization which is formed by private organizations such as local businesses, corporate employers, and developers and sometimes partnered with local, regional, or state agencies to address community transportation problems.



Urban Development Area: A mapped area on a local government comprehensive plan future land use map which identifies areas planned for future urban development. Sometimes referred to as a Designated Urban Development Area or an Urban Service Area in local government comprehensive plans.

Very Low Income Household: A household with an annual income below 50 percent of the median annual income.

Vulnerable Zone: An area where the estimated chemical concentration from an accidental release is at a level where people's health could be adversely impacted during a worst-case release.

Wetland: An area which has hydric soils and hydrophilic vegetation where the ground is saturated for a portion of the year.



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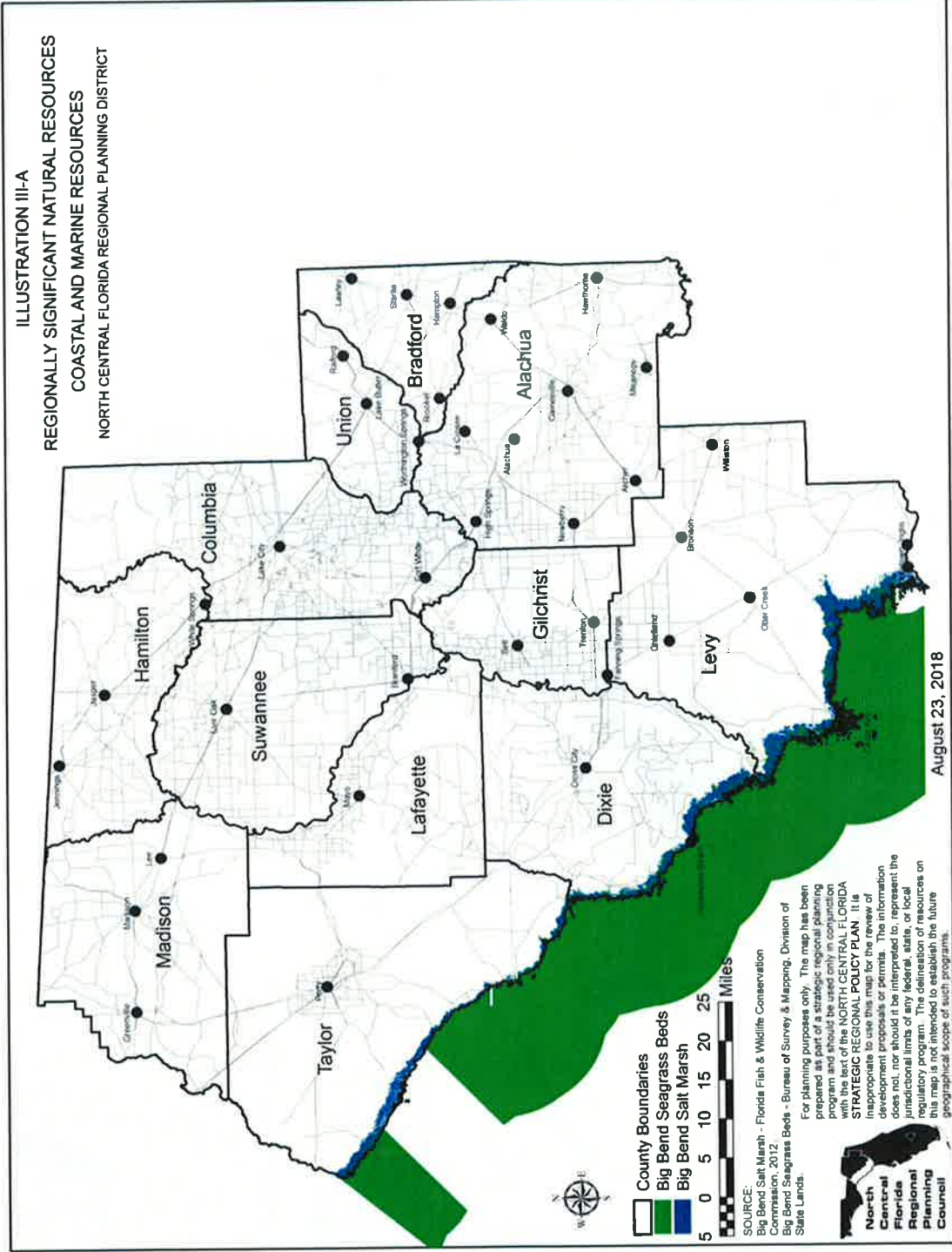
Appendix C

Maps of Natural Resources of Regional Significance

Adopted May 23, 1996, Amended August 28, 1997, February 27, 2003, October 27, 2011 and August 23, 2018



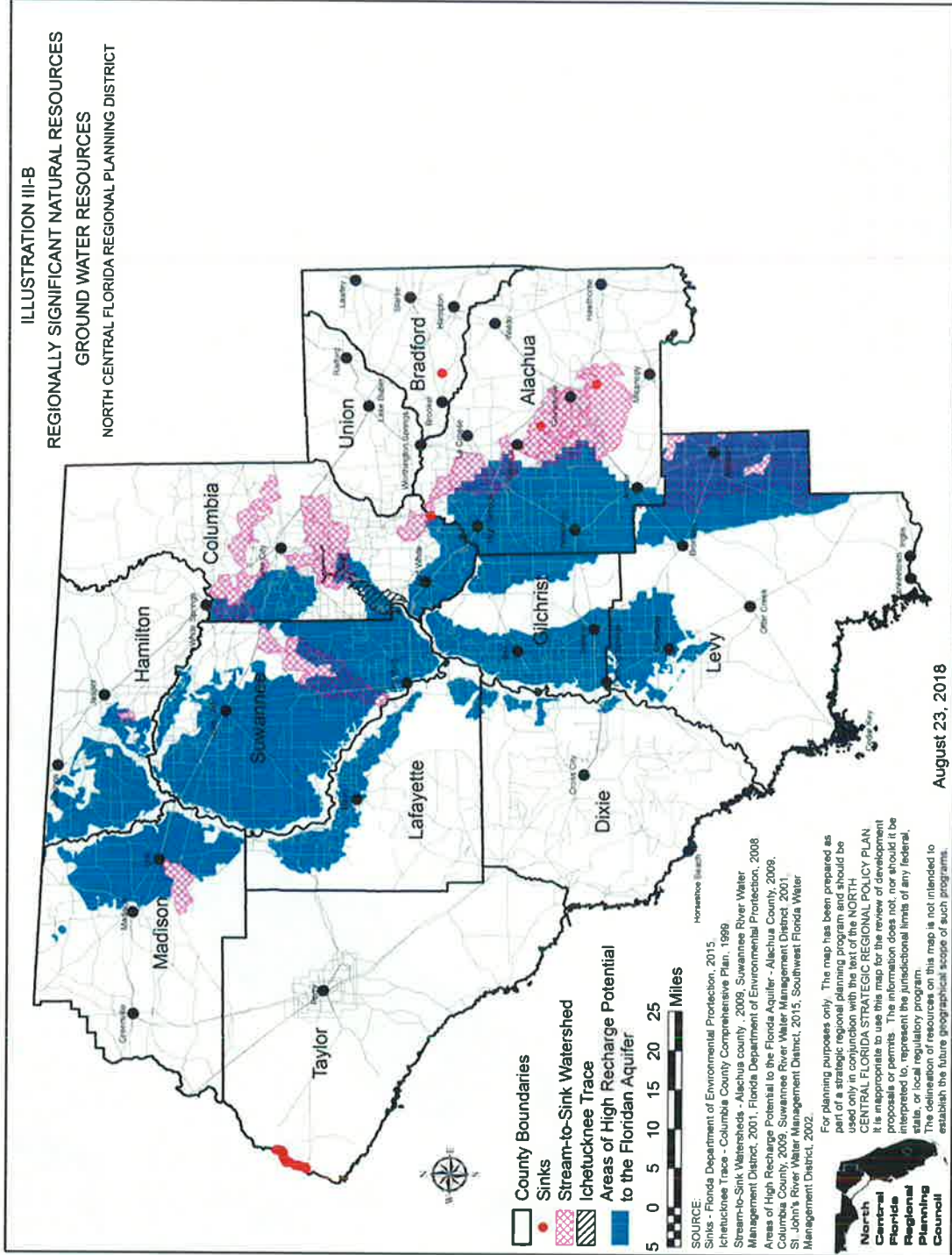
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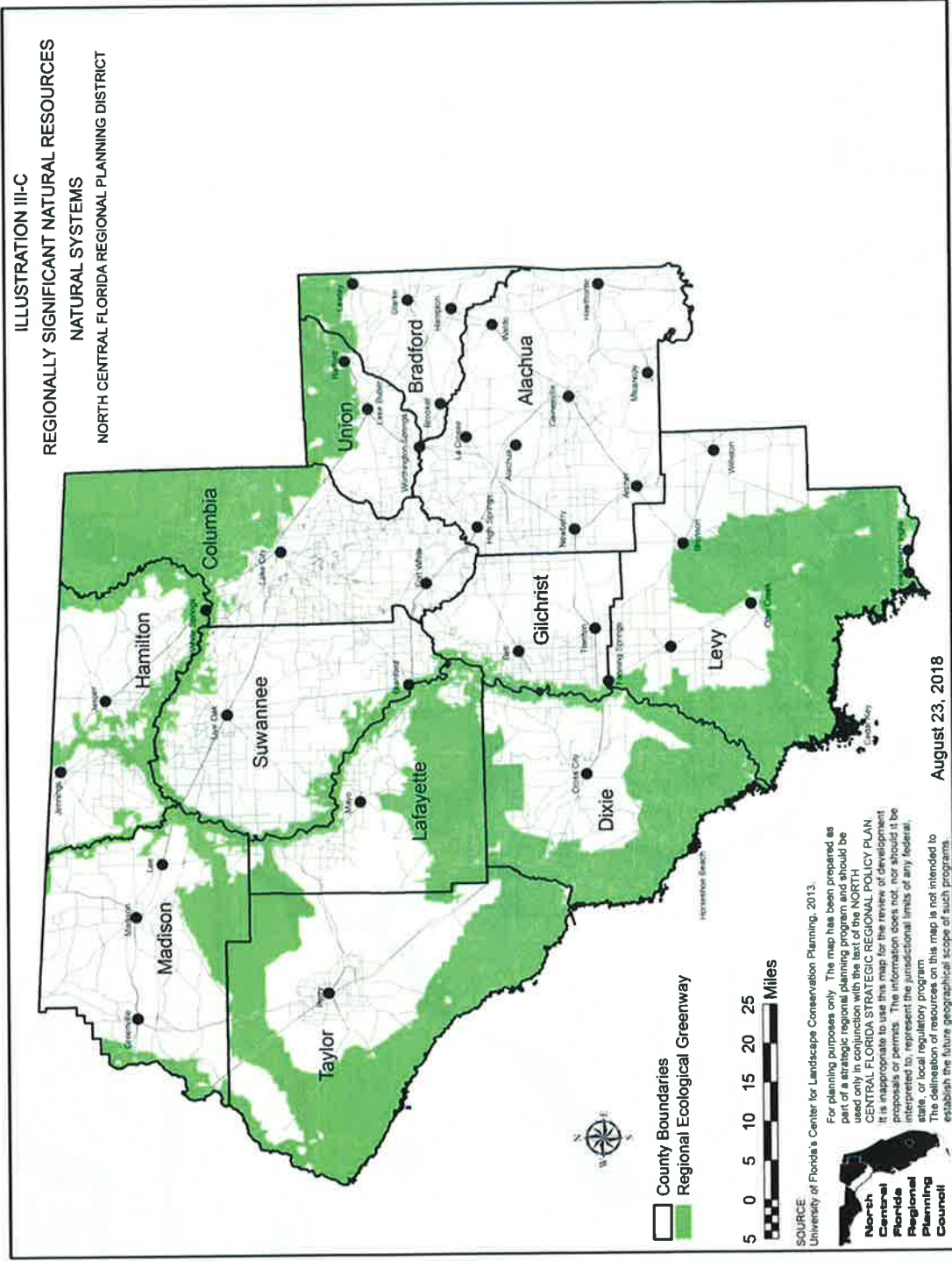
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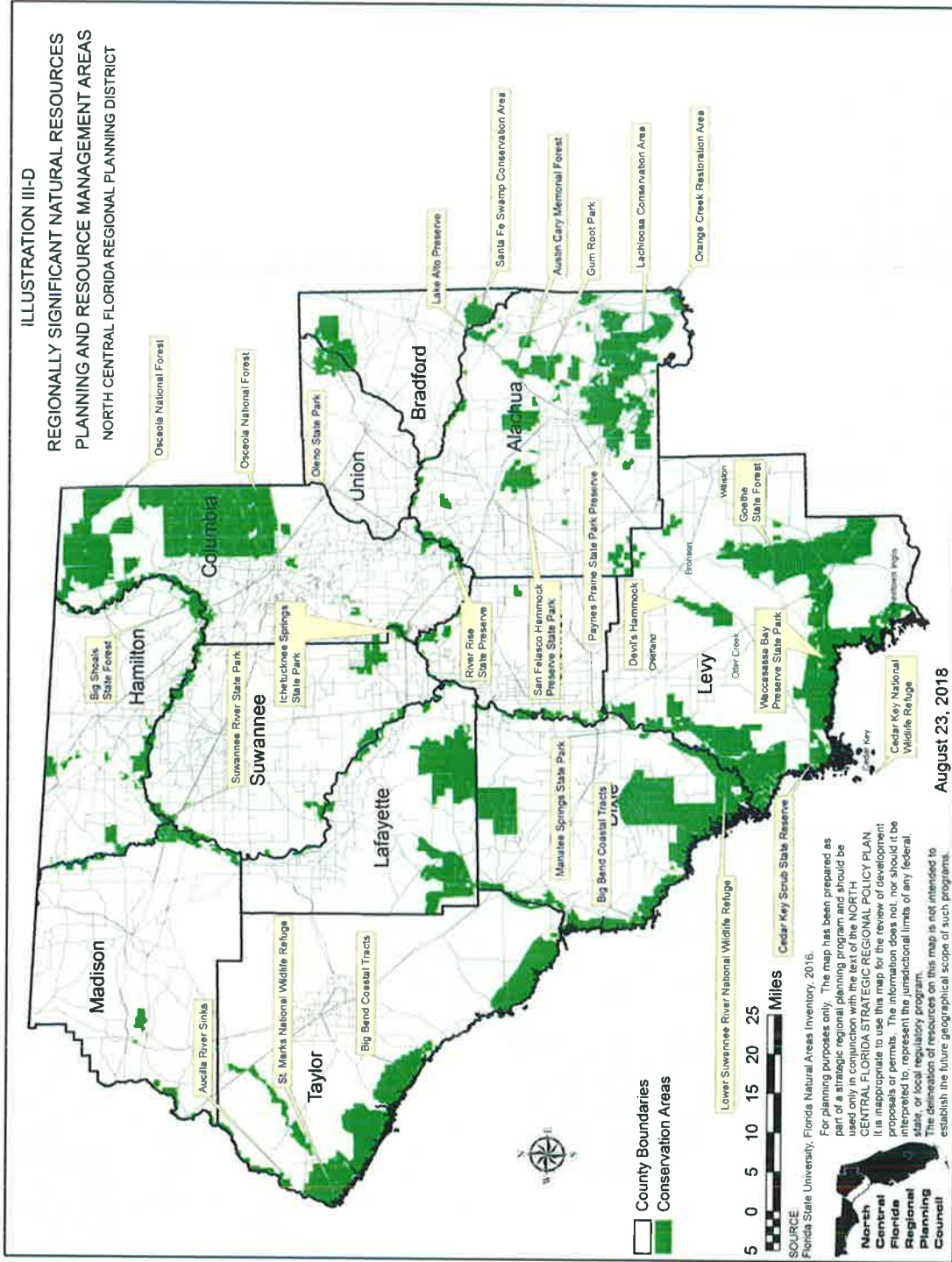
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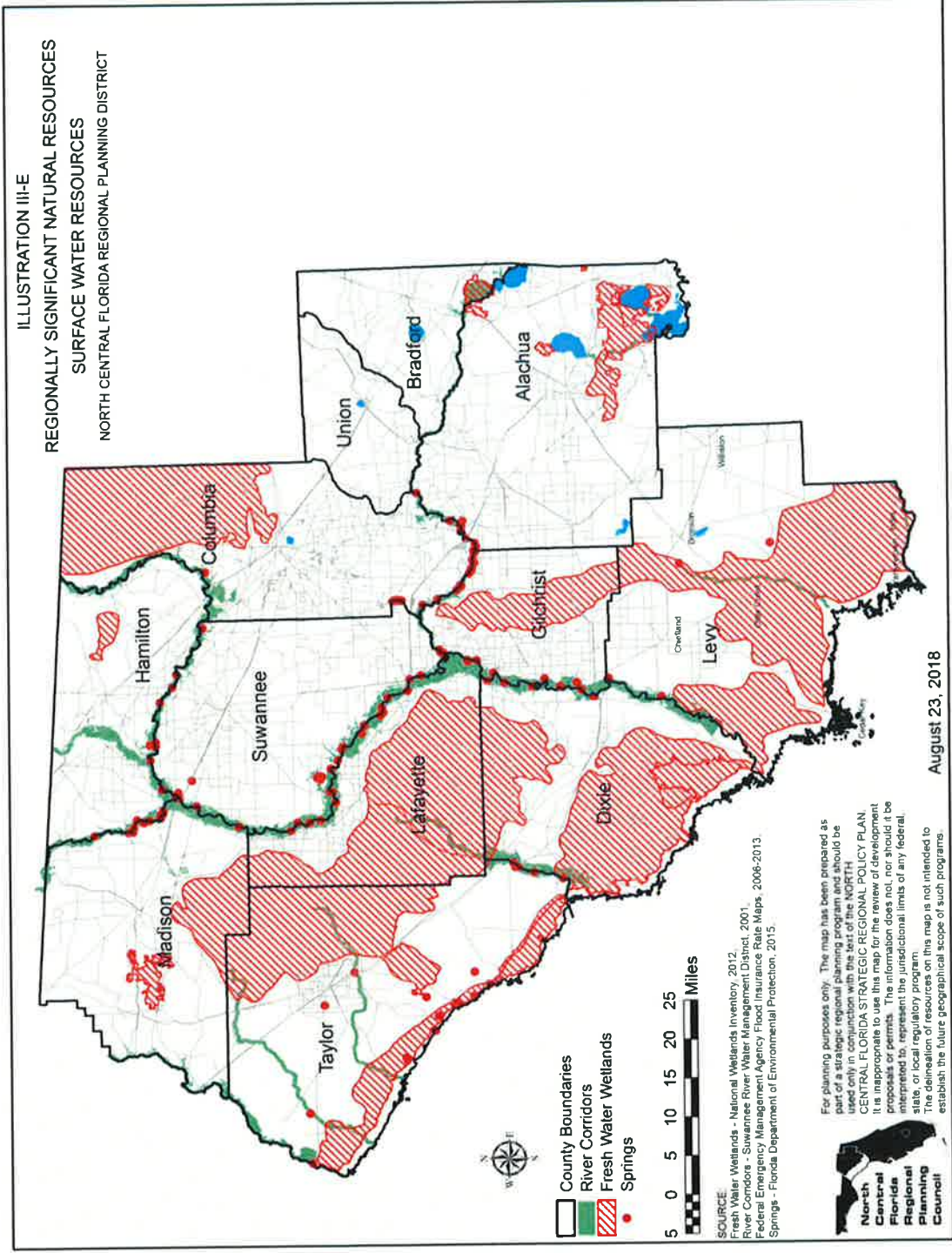
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