

# Board Meeting Summary

January 5, 2023

## Ecotourism

**"Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that foster environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation, and conservation."**

Ecological Benefits

Economic Benefits

Socio-Cultural Benefits

Can include Heritage Tourism

## NEFRC 2023 WORK PLAN

NEFRC staff presented a review of the Council's 2022 Work Plan and an overview of the 2023 Work Plan.

In 2022, the NEFRC focused on six key issues in the Region, with some being action-oriented items and some being support-oriented. Action items included Affordable Housing, the opioid epidemic, and cultivation in terms of economic development. Support-oriented issues included workforce training and development, strategic planning for local governments, and broadband.

In 2023, the Council will focus on one key issue: Ecotourism. The approach will include an inventory of current assets, resources, and programs as well as looking at potential opportunities, such as funding.

The Council will examine the benefits of ecotourism from an ecological, economic, and socio-cultural perspective to identify how to best support ecotourism in the Region.

Staff requested that the Board approve the 2023 Work Plan to focus on ecotourism and it did so unanimously.

**2023 Work Plan Ecotourism**

- ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ECOTOURISM
- INVENTORY EXISTING TRAILS & CONNECTIONS
- CHECKLIST TO A SUCCESSFUL TRAIL TOWN
- HIGHLIGHTING SUCCESSFUL PLACES
- FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS
- POTENTIAL FUNDING

## Comprehensive Plan Amendments:

*Reviewed by NEFRC Staff and Approved on the Consent Agenda*

Clay County Transmitted Ordinance 2022-58: Governor's Park DRI

Clay County Transmitted Amendment 22-3ESR

City of Bunnell Adopted Amendment 22-02ESR

St. Johns County Adopted Amendment 22-2ESR

City of Jacksonville Adopted Amendment 22-2ESR (Alternate Review)

City of Jacksonville Adopted Amendment 22-5ESR (Alternate Review)

Town of Hilliard Transmitted Amendment 22-IESR (Alternate Review)





Former Putnam County Commissioner Jeff Rawls

## NEFRC 2023 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The NEFRC presented its 2023 Legislative Priorities at the January 5th meeting.

After compiling the priorities of the member counties the Council has selected three key issues to focus on this year: County infrastructure support, community resiliency and affordable housing. These issues stood out to staff as significant for local governments across Northeast Florida.

### ACTIVITIES OF INTEREST

- NEFRC staff presented the October and November financial reports to the Board. Both were approved unanimously.
- The Board approved the Consent Agenda as presented.
- Resolution 2023-01, in recognition of former Putnam County Commissioner Jeff Rawls' service to the Council and the Board of Directors, was presented and unanimously approved by the Board.



2023 Legislative Priorities

**2023 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

**COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT**  
As Northeast Florida communities continue to develop and transition to suburban and urban counties, existing infrastructure is strained.

- Maintain and enhance funding for small, rural and transitioning county transportation infrastructure programs, including Small County Road Assistance Program (SCRAP) and Small County Outreach Program (SCOP).
- Increase funding for existing grant programs for septic to sewer conversions.
- Increase resources available for small communities to improve their aging water and wastewater infrastructure.
- Maintain broadband funding and assistance to local governments for the installation of needed broadband infrastructure.

**COMMUNITY RESILIENCY**  
Infrastructure and resiliency are inextricably linked as improvements reduce environmental impacts and create more livable and sustainable communities.

- Prioritize and proactively assist local governments in mitigating flooding through hardening, property buyouts, or elevating structures by providing match assistance and additional funding opportunities.
- Continue resiliency investments to support water quality, protect critical assets and maintain the safety of people and property from sea level rise and the growing threat and frequency of flood events and hurricanes.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING**  
Housing is a critical asset to the Region and is needed at all price points for residents to thrive.

- Ensure the Sadowski Trust Fund is fully funded while maintaining key local government programs that provide affordable housing opportunities, such as State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) and State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL).
- Recognize related factors that impact housing affordability, such as property insurance, rapidly rising rents, and short-term rentals, and support legislative policies that provide housing choices for all residents.

www.nefrc.org **BUILDING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER**

### Upcoming Events

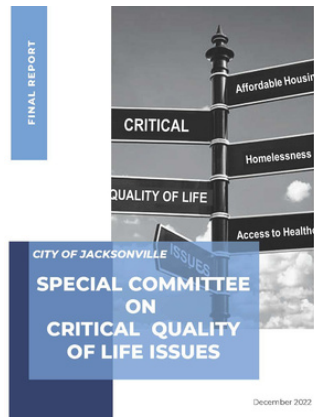
- Jan. 16, 2023 – **COUNCIL CLOSED (MLK Day)**
- Jan. 18, 2023 – Resilient First Coast Steering Committee Meeting
- Jan. 19, 2023 – EDA Hurricane Ian Recovery Workshop
- Jan. 25, 2023 – Regional Leadership Academy: Baker County
- Jan. 25, 2023 – North Central Healthcare Coalition Board Meeting
- Jan. 30, 2023 – Regional Community Institute (RCI) Board Meeting
- Feb. 2, 2023 – NEFRC Board & Committee Meetings
- Feb. 8, 2023 – Local Emergency Planning Committee Meeting
- Feb. 13, 2023 – Putnam & Clay Counties' TD Local Coordinating Board Meeting
- Feb. 14, 2023 – Flagler & St. Johns Counties' TD Local Coordinating Board Meeting
- Feb. 16, 2023 – Baker & Nassau Counties' TD Local Coordinating Board Meeting
- Feb. 22, 2023 – Cybersecurity Tabletop Exercise, Thrasher-Horne Center – Clay County
- Feb. 23, 2023 – Duval County TD Local Coordinating Board Meeting

# PRESENTATIONS



COJ Critical  
Quality of Life Issues  
Final Report

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: COJ SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CRITICAL QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES



NEFRC staff presented on the City of Jacksonville Special Committee on Critical Quality of Life Issues and the NEFRC's support in managing the process and spearheading the composition of the Final Report. The Final Report is comprised of the Current State of the issues, Best Practices, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, and Recommendations for moving forward.

The kickoff meeting was held in August and the three working groups (Affordable Housing, Homelessness, and Access to Health Care) met throughout the last quarter of 2022, meeting 20 times total and convening a total of 672 stakeholders from around Duval County to discuss the issues. Staff also interviewed impacted residents of Jacksonville for a "street-level" perspective.

Staff highlighted the NEFRC's ability to assist other local governments with these types of projects in the future.



*Access to Healthcare Working Group Meeting November 7, 2022*

## COMMUNITY RESILIENCY UPDATE

Staff gave an update on the Council's most recent resiliency activities. The most recent meeting of Resilient First Coast took place on December 6, 2022. The Steering Committee has identified its vision, pillars, goals, objectives, and action items. 2022 Storm Season impacts to the Region were also discussed in terms of the communities' recovery from the damage. The first 2023 meetings will take place in mid- to late-January.



### Storm Season: Impacts and Resiliency

#### St. Augustine:

- 506 properties impacted during Hurricane Ian.
- Some properties protected by residential flood proofing.
- 13 lift stations have been rehabilitated.

#### St. Johns County:

- Impacts included beach and A1A roadway washout.
- Some people have flooded 4 times since 2016.
- Raising homes is a viable option but is expensive.

#### Flagler County:

- Repeated high tides for excessive periods of time.
- Dune systems provided protection but were sacrificial.
- Finding solutions is difficult with high cost of flood insurance premiums, insufficient grant funding for county resiliency measures, and homeowners unwilling to leave their property.

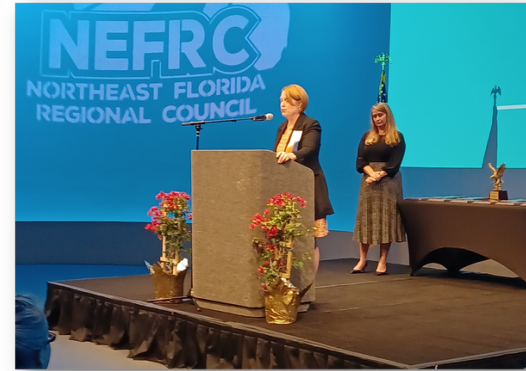


Staff also provided an overview of Military Installation Resiliency Reviews – what they are and why one is needed in Northeast Florida. Staff provided a summary of the Southeast Florida Climate Leadership Summit, emphasizing the focus on regional resiliency collaboratives throughout the State. Staff also provided status updates on multiple grant projects and announced the intent to hire a Resiliency Intern soon.

# PRESENTATIONS

## 2022 REGIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Staff announced the 2022 Regional Award for Excellence Winners to the full Board of Directors. The Board meeting was immediately followed by the Awards ceremony and Elected Officials Luncheon at WJCT Studios. NEFRC Board President Randy DeFoor presented the winners with their awards.



*NEFRC President Randy DeFoor*

### **Affordable Housing**

St. Johns County Health and Human Services and Disaster Recovery

### **Planning & Growth Management**

Mayport Waterfront Partnership and the City of Jacksonville

### **Culture and Historic Preservation**

American Beach Community Master Plan

### **Public Safety**

Clay County Fire Rescue Community Paramedicine

### **Economic Development & Tourism**

Amelia Island Tourist Development Council

### **Quality of Life**

Florida Department of Health–Baker and Healthy Baker

### **Environmental Stewardship**

Flagler Beach’s “Big Blue” Glass Recycling Machine

### **Resiliency**

*ADAPT*  
WJCT

### **Healthcare Emergency Preparedness**

Sandi Courson

### **Transportation**

Putnam County Ride Solution

### **Regional Award for Leadership**

Margo Moehring

# PROGRAM REPORTS

## HEALTHCARE COALITION

In December, the Healthcare Coalition hosted four discussion-based, tabletop exercises across its 18-county region. The exercises were held in Lake City, Gainesville, Jacksonville, and Green Cove Springs – with a combined 62 attendees. These exercises provide the opportunity for individuals to problem-solve through an emergency scenario as it pertains to their facility or organization.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Affordable Housing Committee hosted Lindsay McClain, Executive Vice President with the First Coast Apartment Association, in November 2022. Lindsay provided an overview of each county's predominant zoning which is single-family and cited the current gap in affordable apartment units. Also, the NEFRC provided a history of presentations and topics at the meetings since the committee first met on July 7, 2016, to help determine the best way ahead, given the current housing crisis in the seven-county region. Topics included metrics/trends, the NEFRC Affordable Housing Strategy, the State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program, and convening of banks by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) mid-2017. Further, the NEFRC is re-addressing the FDIC setting up a second meeting of banks, potentially with developers, to consider solutions to creating more affordable housing.

## FIRST COAST WELL-BEING INDEX

The NEFRC attended the Smart North Florida (SNF) / University of Florida Association of Information Systems presentations on December 9, 2022. The presentations included one on the First Coast Wellbeing Index (FCWI), for which measures included rent as a share of median income, housing occupancy, and internet access. The analysis also included a geographic information system analysis and can be accessed via a user-friendly dashboard. In 2023, the NEFRC will continue to work with SNF on the First Coast Well-Being Index to determine additional data and metrics to be used in evaluating the strengths and successes of the Region. .

## PLANNING

The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) addressed seven comprehensive plan updates, including three through alternate review given the statutory timeframe and holidays. The NEFRC is supporting the Town of Glen St. Mary with a compliance update to its Comprehensive Plan, including developing a survey posted on the Town's website and county Chamber of Commerce's Facebook page. The Kickoff Meeting is scheduled with the Town Council on January 17, 2023 at 6p.m., which will provide an understanding of the project scope and schedule. The next meeting - a public workshop - will be held in February.

## TRANSPORTATION

Second quarter Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Local Coordinating Board (LCB) Meetings took place throughout the month of November 2022. Nassau and Flagler county's LCB ratified their Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP) "Rider Eligibility" sections drafted by NEFRC staff. Each county reviewed NEFRC suggested edits to the respective TDSP "Grievance Procedure" sections prepared with the Community Transportation Coordinators (CTC). Further, the Putnam County CTC was provided local public school Exceptional Student Education (ESE) data to help them consider advertising their services directly to that particular school population. Currently, the NEFRC staff and CTCs are meeting with commissioners recently appointed to chair TD LCBs to overview their county's program and share informational documents. Presentations to the public concerning how their local programs work and how to apply will precede February 2023 LCB meetings.

## LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Northeast Florida Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) arranged for 60 hazmat personnel from the Region to attend the 2023 Hazardous Materials Training Symposium in Daytona Beach January 17th-20th.

The LEPC is currently working with the Region's three hazardous materials teams to determine training and equipment needs for 2023.



## RLA/RCI

The Regional Community Institute continues to do policy work with the Regional Council. This year's focus is on "Cultivation", which they define as Agriculture, Fishing and Silviculture. Two meetings are being scheduled to discuss what the best available data is regarding each issue, what it says about the state of agriculture, fishing and silviculture in Northeast Florida, and what decisionmakers should consider as they focus on these issues. Please hold February 3 and February 17, 2023 for lunch and discussion on these topics. More information will be forthcoming, or contact Margo Moehring at [mmoehring@nefrc](mailto:mmoehring@nefrc).



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

NEFRC staff are working with the Town of Welaka to develop a downtown vision. NEFRC will also be assisting the US Economic Development Administration with a listening session regarding Hurricane Ian storm damage recovery on January 19.

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The Emergency Preparedness Program has been collaborating with St. Johns County Emergency Management on after-action reports for the 2022 Atlantic hurricane season and on the upcoming 2023 hurricane exercise. Following Hurricanes Ian and Nicole, NEFRC staff conducted an after-action meeting (AAM) with St. Johns County Emergency Management. The purpose of the AAM was to serve as a forum to review and reach a final consensus on strengths, areas for improvement, draft corrective actions, concrete deadlines, and owners/assignees for the implementation of corrective actions. The final after-action report and improvement plan will be available in January.

Additionally, NEFRC staff will be facilitating and supporting the 2023 hurricane exercise conducted at the St. Johns County Emergency Operations Center. This will be an operations-based exercise to test and validate actions during the response phase following a major hurricane strike. The exercise will take place on May 4th and regularly brings over 200+ participants together to solve problems in advance of hurricane season.



*Board of Directors - Thursday, February 2, 2023*

*Personnel, Budget, and Finance Committee - Thursday, February 2, 2023*

*Affordable Housing Committee - Thursday, February 2, 2023*