



NEFRC

NEWSLETTER

February 2025 - Bringing Communities Together Since 1977



**St. Johns County Commissioner Whitehurst passing the gavel to incoming President Commissioner Jim Renninger from Clay County*

THE COUNCIL WELCOMES A NEW PRESIDENT & BOARD MEMBERS

This past October the Northeast Florida Regional welcomed Clay County Commissioner Jim Renninger as the new Council Board President. We look forward to the time ahead under his leadership.

We also welcome new Board Members Flagler County Commissioner Leann Pennington, City of Palm Coast Council Member Charles Gambaro, Jr., Nassau County Commissioner A.M. Huppman, Nassau County Commissioner Genece Minschew, Putnam County Commissioner Leota Wilkinson, St. Johns County Commissioner Krista Joseph, St. Johns County Commissioner Clay Murphy, and Honorable Virginia Morgan of City of St. Augustine Beach.

Don't Miss Out On What's Happening In
The Northeast Florida Region

JOIN
OUR
EMAIL LIST

Thank you for reading this newsletter. We hope you found it informative and useful. Please share it with others, and don't forget to subscribe to stay up-to-date with all the exciting developments happening in the Northeast Florida Region. Together, we can continue to make the Region a better place for everyone.

A Message From Our President



I am excited for my tenure as the President of the Board of Directors of the Northeast Florida Regional Council. Northeast Florida is a place where vibrant communities, rich cultural heritage, and stunning natural landscapes come together to create an exceptional environment for living, working, and visiting.

Our council is dedicated to a variety of initiatives, and we currently have several exciting projects underway that align with our mission of collaboration and community engagement to drive positive change. We are actively working with some of our communities, including the City of St. Augustine and Putnam County. There are resiliency efforts, funded by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and supported by a federal grant, allowing the Council to focus on protecting our military installations while ensuring that surrounding communities are resilient and supportive of their missions. Additionally, our partnership with the National Park Service enables us to leverage expertise that promotes and strengthens our regional trail network and eco-tourism efforts.

Our efforts are concentrated on fostering sustainable development, promoting regional economic growth, and assisting our local governments in preserving and celebrating our region's unique character. Through innovative planning, strategic partnerships, and community outreach, we are committed to making our region a better place for everyone.

Thank you for your interest in the Northeast Florida Regional Council. We invite you to join us in our mission to build a brighter, more sustainable future for our region. Together, we can achieve great things.

Warm regards,
Commissioner James Renninger, Clay County
President, Northeast Florida Regional Council

21ST ANNUAL REGIONAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE & ELECTED OFFICIALS LUNCHEON



The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) hosted the 21st Annual Regional Awards for Excellence and Elected Officials Luncheon, bringing together leaders and visionaries from across the Region to celebrate outstanding contributions to Northeast Florida. The event, held to honor the 2024 Northeast Florida Regional Leadership Awards winners, recognized innovative projects and remarkable individuals who exemplify a commitment to enhancing the Region's communities. The ceremony's highlight was the prestigious **Regional Leadership Award** presentation to former **City of St. Augustine City Commissioner Roxanne Horvath**. As a Regional Council Board Member for over a decade, Ms. Horvath has left an indelible mark through her dedication to community service and regional resiliency efforts.



Other award winners included:

- **Affordable Housing** – Heirs Property-LISC Jacksonville
- **Culture and Historic Preservation** – Nassau 200/Fernandina Beach 200 Bicentennial Celebrations
- **Economic Development** – PLANT Agricultural Systems – Baker County Economic Development Commission
- **Environmental Stewardship** – Nassau County – Atlantic to Okefenokee Florida Forever Designation
- **Healthcare Emergency Preparedness** – UF Health Pediatric Evacuation Full Scale Exercise
- **Planning and Growth Management** – City of Palm Coast – Imagine 2050 City on the Rise
- **Public Safety** – Flagler County's FAA Certificate of Waiver for Drones Beyond Line of Sight
- **Quality of Life** – Florida Department of Health – St. Johns County Mobile Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
- **Resiliency** – St. Johns County's Alpine Groves Park Shoreline Restoration
- **Transportation** – Clay County's Bonded Transportation Program
- **Special Achievement** – Henry Dean, former St. Johns County Commissioner



PROJECT & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) is pleased to announce that it has been awarded \$1,009,099 in federal funds from the Department of Defense's Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation. This funding will support the development of a Military Installation Readiness Review and Implementation Action Plan (MIRR) aimed at enhancing military readiness and response to natural and human-made hazards while directly addressing future conditions that require longer-term planning, mitigation, and investment.

"This project represents a significant step forward in strengthening the resilience of our military installations and the communities they serve," said Fara Ilami, Regional Resiliency Manager of the NEFRC. "By actively engaging military commanders, municipal and county governments, economic development organizations, and the State of Florida, utilizing previously developed regional tools and plans, best practices, and qualitative data. Through these efforts, we are fostering collaboration that will pay dividends in terms of readiness and response."

A kickoff meeting will be held in the Spring to inform stakeholders about the project; more details to follow. For more information please visit our website.



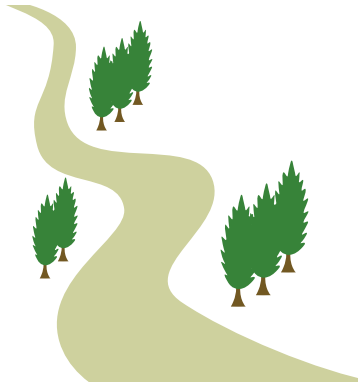
COMMUNITY VISIONING
A Program of the Northeast Florida Regional Council



The Community Visioning Initiative is a new initiative at the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC). The program is funded by the Economic Development Administration to inspire smaller communities to envision and plan for a future that is vibrant, resilient, and community-driven. The NEFRC will provide this service to smaller communities that lack the resources to undertake a visioning process.

This program will engage community stakeholders to create a unique vision plan for each community. Throughout the process, the NEFRC will focus on long-term resiliency, create a shared vision, cultivate equity, guide development, increase community capacity, and enhance quality of life. The NEFRC will engage in a robust 6-month visioning program that prioritizes community engagement for selected communities.

PROJECT & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



The Regional Community Institute of Northeast Florida, in collaboration with the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) hosted a series of trail itinerary development workshops in the seven counties of Northeast Florida. These workshops convened stakeholders and interested citizens in each county to assist in developing trail itineraries that residents, visitors, and outdoor enthusiasts can use. These itineraries include information about access, amenities, safety considerations, historical/cultural attributes, the environment, and local plants and animals.

Attendees provided recommendations on suggested marketing and promotional efforts. NEFRC staff plan to take the draft itineraries and create a standardized format for the region. Staff will also work with local destination marketing organizations to identify amenities that can be included on the itineraries, and for outreach and marketing activities.



NEFRC 2025 Workplan

Tackling the Trash Together: Innovative Solutions for Solid Waste Management

At the January Board meeting, the NEFRC Board of Directors approved the 2025 workplan focusing on solid waste. Workplans allow the NEFRC to engage issues that are relevant and timely to the Northeast Florida Region. Previous workplans have addressed ecotourism & trails, the opioid epidemic and affordable housing.

“Tackling the Trash Together: Innovative Solutions to Solid Waste Management,” is a framework that will explore the challenges each local government faces – from costs, availability of services, capacity, expansion, and integration of new technologies. The work has started with identifying key stakeholders who will build a foundation of data and information on this topic.