

NEFRC

Highlights

Monthly Report of the Northeast Florida Regional Council

March 2008

NEFRC Legislative Delegation storms Tallahassee with Northeast Florida's most critical priorities

On March 19, 2008, the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) sent a delegation, headed by Council President Harold Rutledge, to Tallahassee to promote the 2008 Legislative Priorities of the NEFRC. These priorities were derived by consensus of the seven member counties that comprise the Region and were published in a recent publication prompted by the Council's Legislative Committee.

The Legislative Committee exists to address critical concerns within the member counties of Northeast Florida. It is composed of one delegate from each county (Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns). The Committee is guided by the *Home Rule Philosophy* to develop and implement community based solutions.

The legislative priorities of each county within the Northeast Florida Regional Council's membership and other regional stakeholders were collected. Each entity was requested to determine at least three priorities which most significantly represented the critical needs and concerns of their communities and constituents. The cumulative list totaled 42 priorities. Through the gathering and analysis of all priorities submitted by each county individually, the Legislative Committee collectively determined the top four "regional priorities" which represented the most critical concerns of the Northeast Florida Region.

The 2008 priorities are: [to] Protect Local Revenue, Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Coordinated System, Transportation Funding and Water Supply.

The NEFRC delegation included President Rutledge, Councilman Art Graham, Commissioner Cyndi Stevenson, Mr. Harry Maxwell, Mr. Larry Williams and several members of the Council staff. The group had an audience with Representatives Pat Patterson, Bill Proctor, Dick Kravitz and Aaron Bean. They also met with Senator Evelyn Lynn and President Rutledge was able to spend a few moments with Governor Charlie Crist in discussion of the issues that matter most to Northeast Florida. In addition to the general discussion of regional priorities, strong emphasis was placed particularly on the water supply issue that affects the St. Johns River and our Region so critically.

For more information, please contact Mario Taylor at (904) 279-0885 X 170.



From top to bottom: Photo A: Governor Charlie Crist (left) and NEFRC President Harold Rutledge. Photo B: (L-R) Councilman Art Graham, Mr. Larry Williams, Mr. Harry Maxwell, Representative Dick Kravitz, Commissioner Cyndi Stevenson and President Rutledge. Photo C: President Rutledge and Senator Evelyn Lynn.

Chief Administrative Officers convene at Council offices for regional cooperation

On March 17, 2008, the Northeast Florida Regional Council brought together the Chief Administrative Officers of its 7 counties and 27 municipalities.

The purpose of the meeting was to foster communication and dialogue among the chief staff people within local governments that comprise Northeast Florida. The forum allowed those present to exchange information on issues and ideas for issue management among the group; identify opportunities to work together to solve common problems and ultimately provide feedback and direction to the Northeast Florida Regional Council.

The agenda for the meeting was composed of the following topics: Local Government Budget Responses to Tax "Reform", Water Supply and Central Florida's proposed withdrawals from the St. Johns River, Governmental Benchmarking, the 2008 Legislative Session and Regional Visioning. For more information, please contact Brian Teeple at (904) 279-0885 X 104.

Bringing Communities Together to Advance the Regional Agenda

Transportation Disadvantage supporters promote day of awareness in Tallahassee

Every year supporters of the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) program gather in the courtyard of the Capitol in Tallahassee for a day of awareness and support for the TD program.

This year's theme for the annual TD Legislative Day was: *TD – The Difference Between Life and Living*. The event held on March 6, 2008, began with performances by the North Florida Christian Band, the Gretchen Everhart Chorus, and a special performance of the "Star Spangled Banner" by a TD Commission staff person, Robert Craig. Dr. JR Harding, chairperson for the Commission, welcomed many supporters and riders of the system, and introduced Representative Julio Robaina and Representative Will Weatherford who spoke to the crowd offering encouraging words and support for the TD program.

Northeast Florida was well represented by the presence of many recently taken poster-sized photos of local TD riders, along with their stories of what transportation means to them, placed throughout the courtyard.

The event's main focus was to encourage constituents to talk with their local legislators about the barriers the TD program faces, and ask for their support of several bills in the Legislature that would strengthen Chapter 427, the policy that governs the TD program, and increase funding.

Council staff, along with representatives from several of the TD local coordinating boards in Northeast Florida, attended the day's courtyard activities, and walked down the Capitol halls throughout the day stopping at several offices to speak with senators and representatives regarding current legislative issues.

For questions regarding the TD program, please contact Jeanie Palmer at (904) 279-0885 x146.



Boyd Thompson (left), transportation director, and Commissioner Nancy Harris, both from Putnam County, pose with Representative Joe Pickens at TD Legislative Day at the Capitol.

Regional Council plays role in acquisition of threat assessment system

The Critical Infrastructure Threat Assessment Mitigation System (CITAMS) purchase was facilitated by the Regional Council for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and is intended to be deployed to the Regional Domestic Security Task Force (RDSTF)'s Region 3, which includes Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Gilchrist, Levy, Marion, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, and Union Counties. To implement the program, NEFRC has contracted Digital Sandbox, Inc. and their *Site Profiler* software.

On March 21, 2008, Digital Sandbox, Inc. submitted their deployment plan for the software and the timeline for the completion of the project. The next step will be to develop a Risk and Threat Baseline by utilizing many subject matter experts of different disciplines throughout the Region. The ultimate goal of the CITAMS program is to aide the county in not only identifying critical infrastructure and key resources, but to accurately assess risk and enhance funding opportunities.

For additional information, please contact Pam Kirchner at (904) 279-0885 X 131.

Leadership Academy focuses on environment and water resources

The Northeast Florida Regional Leadership Academy (RLA) held its Environment and Water Resources Program Day on March 13, 2008, at the Ravines Gardens State Park. The topic of the day centered around environmental issues related mostly to the St. Johns River. In light of the recent attention related to the water withdrawal issue, various speakers representing all aspects of the issue were present. Neil Armingeon, The St. Johns Riverkeeper gave an overview of the heritage of the River; Dr. Quinton White, Dean of Arts and Sciences at Jacksonville University presented the scientific perspective; and Mr. Kirby Smith, Executive Director of the St. Johns River Water Management District gave the perspective of the WMD. Following the formal program, class members were treated to a tour of the St. Johns River hosted by River Adventures.

The next Program Day of the RLA will be held on April 8, 2008, at the Baker County School Board Building and will cover the topic of Economic Development.

Recruiting for the Class of 2009 will begin soon. For more information about the RLA or to request an application for the upcoming class, please contact Mike Hadden at (904) 279-0885 X 104.