

NORTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025



**BRINGING COMMUNITIES
TOGETHER SINCE 1977**

Message From Our President



JIM RENNINGER

County Commissioner
NEFRC Board President

It has been an honor to serve as President of the Board of Directors of the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) over the past year. Northeast Florida is a region where vibrant communities, rich history, and a thriving economy converge to create an exceptional environment for living, working, and visiting.

This year, the Council has continued to deliver on its mission: to strengthen and support the region and its member counties by engaging people, businesses, and organizations to address shared challenges and opportunities. We convene partners, provide trusted data analysis, and develop collaborative solutions that enhance resilience, safety, prosperity, and quality of life across Northeast Florida.

One of the most critical grants the NEFRC received this year targets the sustainment of one of Northeast Florida's key economic sectors – the military. The Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation within the Department of Defense awarded a grant for the completion of a Military Installation Readiness Review. This project identifies and prioritizes off-base infrastructure projects that enhance mission readiness and support the long-term sustainability of Northeast Florida military installations – Camp Blanding Joint Training Center, Naval Station Mayport, Naval Air Station Jacksonville and Marine Corps Support Facility Blount Island. This project is keeping with the Region's deep support for our installations, military personnel and their families and veterans who call Northeast Florida home.

Our Resilience Program has had a busy year. Through funding from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Resilient Florida Program and federal grants, we advanced key resilience planning projects, including Vulnerability Assessments, management of the Resilient First Coast Collaborative, and the Regional Resiliency Action Plan.

Message From Our President

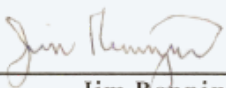
We also strengthened our partnership with the National Park Service to expand and enhance our regional trail network, supporting eco-tourism and improving recreational access across the region, with a focus on the St. Mary's River.

Beyond resilience, the Council launched its official Community Visioning Program, helping the small municipalities in the Region engage their residents to create shared roadmaps for future growth and economic prosperity. Our Transportation Disadvantaged Program continued to provide essential mobility services to residents who rely on safe, reliable transportation for healthcare, employment, and daily needs. The Healthcare Coalition invested nearly \$200,000 in lifesaving equipment for hospitals and long-term care facilities, ensuring our healthcare system is better prepared for emergencies. We also continued our valuable work in public safety and emergency management, from hazardous materials training to large-scale hurricane exercises that improve local and regional preparedness.

These accomplishments reflect the heart of who we are as a Council: fostering community engagement in future growth and development, promoting regional economic growth, and supporting our local governments in preserving and celebrating the unique character of Northeast Florida. Through innovative planning, strategic partnerships, and community outreach, we are building a stronger, safer, and more resilient region.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to working closely with our partners to create opportunities, address challenges, and shape a future that benefits every community we serve. Together, we can achieve great things.

Still Serving,



Jim Renninger

2024 - 2025 NEFRC BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Board Officers

Hon. Jim Renninger – President
Hon. James Bennett – 1st Vice President
Hon. Ken Amaro – 2nd Vice President
Darryl Register – Secretary/Treasurer

Baker County

Hon. Jimmy Anderson – County Commissioner
Hon. James Bennett – County Commissioner
Michael Griffis – City Manager, Macclenny
Darryl Register – Gubernatorial Appointee

Clay County

Hon. Betsy Condon – County Commissioner
Hon. Jim Renninger – County Commissioner
Steve Kennedy – City Manager, Green Cove Springs
Michael Bourre – Gubernatorial Appointee

Duval County

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Hon. Mike Gay – City Councilmember, Jacksonville
Hon. Sean Lynch – Mayor, Town of Baldwin
Elaine Brown – Gubernatorial Appointee

Flagler County

Hon. Andy Dance – County Commissioner
Hon. Leann Pennington – County Commissioner
Hon. Charles Gambaro – City Councilmember, Palm Coast

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Hon. John Martin – County Commissioner
Hon. Genece Minshew – City Commissioner, Fernandina Beach

Putnam County

Hon. Larry Harvey – County Commissioner
Hon. Leota Wilkinson – County Commissioner

St. Johns County

Hon. Krista Joseph – County Commissioner
Hon. Clay Murphy – County Commissioner
Hon. Virginia Morgan – City Commissioner, St. Augustine Beach

Ex-Officio Members

Curt Hart – Gubernatorial Appointee, FL Commerce
Derek Dixon – FL Department of Transportation
Douglas Conkey – St. Johns River Water Management District
Gregory Strong/ Kathryn Craver – FL Department of Environmental Protection

VISION & MISSION

The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) envisions a thriving, resilient, and connected region where communities collaborate to shape a prosperous future and enhance the quality of life for all residents. Guided by this vision, our mission is to strengthen and support Northeast Florida by engaging people, businesses, governments, and organizations to address shared challenges and opportunities. Through convening partners, providing trusted analysis, and advancing collaborative solutions, NEFRC works to build resilience, ensure public safety, foster economic prosperity, and improve quality of life across the Region.

Meet Our Staff



Elizabeth Payne, AICP
Chief Executive Officer



Eric Anderson, AICP
Deputy CEO



Donna Starling
Chief Financial Officer



Sheron Forde
Executive Assistant



Monica Dominguez
Economic Development
Program Manager



Fara Ilami
Regional Resiliency
Manager



Leigh Wilsey
Healthcare Coalition
Manager



Tyler Nolen
Special Projects
Coordinator



Jack Shad
Economic Development
Manager



Robert Jordan, MPA
Senior Regional Planner



Cassidy Taylor
Post-Disaster Economic
Recovery Coordinator



Annie Sieger
Senior Regional Planner



Andrew Prokopiak
Senior Regional Planner



Apurva Jhamb
Senior Regional Planner



Kenajawa Woody
Communication Specialist



Summer Jones
Transportation Disadvantaged
Coordinator



Carol Main
Administrative Assistant

Projects Completed At A Glance

This year, the Northeast Florida Regional Council advanced a diverse portfolio of projects aligned with our mission to strengthen communities, support local governments, and plan for the future. Below are highlights of the initiatives completed during this fiscal year and their impact across the Region.

COUNTY IMPACTED

Baker Clay Duval Flagler Nassau Putnam St. Johns

Military Installation Readiness Review	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Local Emergency Planning Committee Funding	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Regional Healthcare Coalition	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Economic Development District for EDA	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Visioning Program							X
Resilient First Coast Collaborative	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CDBG Healthcare Facilities Resiliency Regional Project	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Regional Resiliency Action Plan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Extreme Rainfall Analysis/ Mitigation Project	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Opioid Settlement Assistance		X	X		X		
Disaster Preparedness Planning through COAD	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Regional Leadership Academy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Countywide Vulnerability Assessment and/or Knowledge Building Session	X						X
Local Mitigation Strategy Assistance	X	X					
Transportation Disadvantaged Program	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
HCC funded Emergency Preparedness Table-top Exercises & Dialysis Workshop	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
LEPC funded Hazmat MAGNASEAL Equipment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Projects Completed At a Glance

COUNTY IMPACTED

	Baker	Clay	Duval	Flagler	Nassau	Putnam	St. Johns
HCC Purchased Disaster Preparedness Equipment		X	X	X		X	X
Hazardous Materials Training through LEPC		X	X		X	X	X
Economic Impact Modeling (REMI)		X	X				
Shrimping Industry Market Study			X	X	X		
Emergency Preparedness Exercises			X	X			X
Planning for COJ Climate Pollution Reduction Grant		X	X	X	X		X
South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative			X	X	X		X
Florida Business Guide to Hurricane Preparedness & Recovery	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Evaluation & Appraisal Review Updates to Comprehensive Plan			X			X	
Updated Water Supply Plan				X			
Compound Flooding Vulnerability Analysis & Adaption Plan			X				
Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis & Report for Substance Use Disorder				X		X	
Conceptual Stormwater Mitigation Plan				X		X	
Technical Assistance (Town of Interlachen)						X	
Town of Welaka Historic Property Survey						X	
Partnership with the Foundation for Museum of Black History							X
Collaboration with the National Park Service	X				X	X	



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Transportation Disadvantaged Program

Ensuring Mobility Resources Since 1989



Transportation
Disadvantaged



Who does the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program serve?

This program serves individuals with physical or mental disabilities, older adults, people with limited incomes, and children who are handicapped, high-risk, or at-risk. For these individuals, access to healthcare, employment, education, shopping, and social activities often depends on reliable transportation.

How are the services provided?

The TD Program provides that lifeline through a coordinated, statewide effort that groups riders together for shared-ride services. Transportation services are available in all 67 Florida counties, with the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) proudly serving the seven counties of Northeast Florida.

How is the program funded and managed?

The Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged oversees the statewide coordination of TD services through a seven-member, governor-appointed board and eight ex-officio members representing key purchasing agencies. Together, they set policies, approve the designation of every Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) at least once every five years, administer the TD Trust Fund, and review and approve Commission publications, among other responsibilities.

What is the Northeast Florida Regional Council's role in the program?

Locally, the NEFRC has served as the official planning agency for Baker, Clay, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns counties since 1984, and for Duval County since 2001. In this role, the Council assists CTCs and Local Coordinating Boards in implementing TD programs, provides staffing support for the Local Coordinating Board, procures and recommends CTCs, and leads transportation planning activities for the service area. The Local Coordinating Boards meet quarterly to provide oversight and guidance on the coordination of services, while the contracted CTCs deliver transportation directly to TD customers. For more than three decades, the NEFRC has worked alongside local partners to ensure that essential transportation is available to the Region's most vulnerable residents. We look forward to continuing this service and strengthening mobility across Northeast Florida.

Planning & Technical Assistance

The Council engages and supports its member local governments in various ways, including providing support with local policy issues and offering technical assistance for local planning. Among the assistance provided and communities supported this past year were:

✓ **Town of Baldwin (Duval County)**

Evaluation & Appraisal Review
Compliance Update to Comprehensive Plan

✓ **Town of Beverly Beach (Flagler County)**

Water Supply Facility Work Plan Update

✓ **Putnam County**

Evaluation & Appraisal Review
Compliance Update to Comprehensive Plan

Technical Assistance & Presentation of Staff
Report for Rezoning (Town of Interlachen)





Economic Development Program

For many years, the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) has proudly served as the designated Economic Development District for the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). In this role, the Council advances a broad range of economic development priorities that strengthen communities and promote long-term prosperity. These efforts include providing technical assistance for federal grant applications, supporting community visioning efforts, and utilizing advanced economic modeling tools, such as REMI PI+, to assist local governments with data-driven decision-making.

Community Visioning Program



This year, the Council launched its Community Visioning Program, a cornerstone of our economic development work. Visioning plays a vital role in shaping a community's future by building consensus around shared goals and aspirations. By bringing together residents, governments, and stakeholders, the program helps identify local priorities, uncover opportunities, and address challenges. The Community Visioning Program will focus on the Region's smaller communities that lack the resources to conduct visioning work.

This program will enhance the community's ability to plan for and incorporate long-term recovery and resiliency. The result is a clear roadmap that guides sustainable development and enhances the quality of life for all who call Northeast Florida home. This September the program will kickoff with participation from the City of Bunnell and the City of Palm Coast.



SHRIMPING INDUSTRY MARKET STUDY

The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC), with grant funding from the Florida Department of Commerce, led a Shrimping Industry Market Study across Duval, Nassau, Flagler, and St. Johns Counties. Guided by seven community meetings and direct input from local shrimpers, the study examined ways to support small businesses, enhance the regional food economy, and preserve this iconic coastal industry. The recommendations included forming a regional shrimping cooperative, establishing a strong local brand, partnering with workforce development programs, and enhancing public outreach efforts. With the

study complete, NEFRC is now working alongside shrimping stakeholders to implement these recommendations, ensuring a resilient and sustainable future for Northeast Florida's shrimping tradition.



ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS WITH REMI

The Northeast Florida Regional Council uses REMI, an advanced economic forecasting and policy analysis software, to project the impact of business development on employment, GDP growth, and population.

This year, staff completed a REMI analysis for the Thrasher-Horne Center, highlighting its outsized role in Clay County's economy as a national destination for dance competitions that attract visitors from outside the Region. NEFRC also updated its REMI analysis for Project Niagara, a bottling plant in Clay County, using actual job and salary data to model the impact of its recent expansion. Additionally, a REMI analysis was conducted for Duval County's Project Link, a facility to build small autonomous transit vehicles, providing insight into the potential regional economic benefits of this emerging industry.

These analyses enable local leaders to understand how projects contribute to regional prosperity and inform data-driven economic development decisions.



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS



Flagler County Medical Countermeasures Point-Of-Dispensing Exercise



The exercise practitioners at the NEFRC implemented a discussion-based and operation-based POD exercise for the Florida Department of Health in Flagler County. The goal of the exercise series was to enhance and validate the Department of Health, Flagler County's Strategic National Stockpile, Mass Prophylaxis and Immunization Plan (POD Plan). Routine testing through exercising of the POD Plan is a requirement of the State of Florida. The discussion-based exercise was a procedural review of the policies and actions taken by DOH-Flagler County to activate and implement its POD Plan.

This includes coordinating with vital community partners/agencies to establish, support, and demobilize Point of Dispensing operations. The operations-based exercise was developed to provide just-in-time training to health department staff and support agencies on their expected roles and responsibilities to implement a POD in the community. The primary focus was on POD setup, operations, and demobilization, including collaboration with key community partners and agencies.

St. Johns County – Annual Hurricane Exercise

On May 29th, St. Johns County Emergency Management conducted its annual hurricane exercise, which brought together over 200 partners to address the hypothetical "Hurricane Waterloo," characterized by 100 mph winds, over 15 inches of rain, severe flooding, and critical road and bridge impacts. Activation staff had the opportunity to validate their WebEOC, a web-based platform for managing emergency operations, using a fictional hurricane scenario.

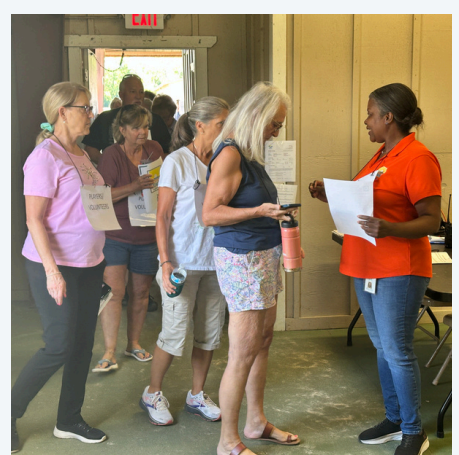
Participants from dozens of partners, including local governments, county and local agencies, emergency responders, nonprofits, and utilities, tested their capabilities to disseminate information, manage response missions, and validate financial plans. An After-Action Report and Improvement Plan was developed to help highlight strengths and opportunities for improvement.



JEA & City of Jacksonville: Annual Hurricane Drill



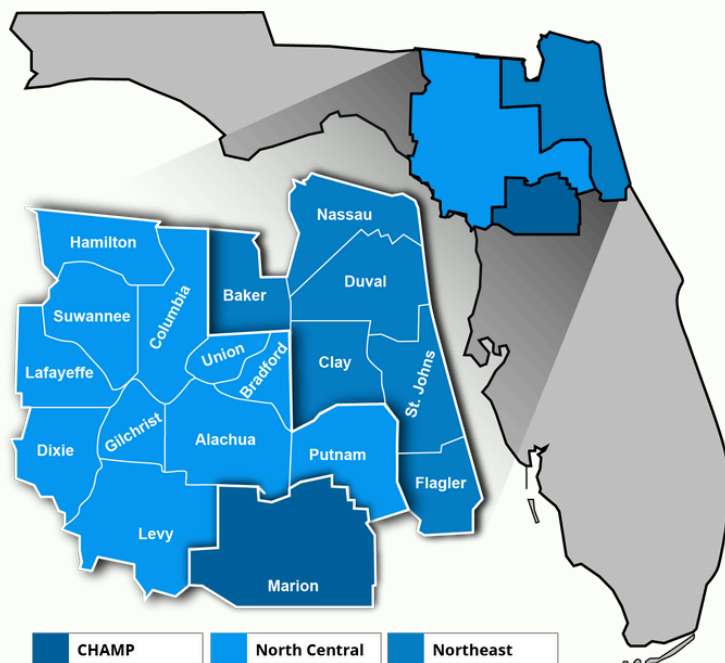
The 2025 JEA-COJ Hurricane Exercise was a three-day functional exercise with JEA's Leadership and Section Chiefs, the City of Jacksonville's Emergency Preparedness Division, and the Florida Division of Emergency Management. Due to multiple annual hurricane exercises and recent real-world activations, the emergency management program and exercise planning team decided to stress further and test JEA's preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities. The scale and magnitude of the hurricane resulted in significant regional-level impacts, with severe consequences at the local level. This further challenged the availability of resources, staffing, communications, and mutual aid agreements.



Healthcare Coalition Program



The Healthcare Coalition Program (HCC) is a federal initiative bringing together all healthcare sectors to plan, train, exercise, and equip in advance of disasters and emergencies. Comprised of 10 funded HCC regions, the Florida Department of Health contracts with the NEFRC to manage three 501(c)3 healthcare coalitions that serve 18 counties. Known as the Alliance, coalition membership includes 945 individuals (from 578 organizations, agencies, and facilities) across 11 business sectors.



Focus Areas

Specialty Surge Topics:

- Infectious Diseases
- Pediatrics
- Burn
- Chemical
- Radiological

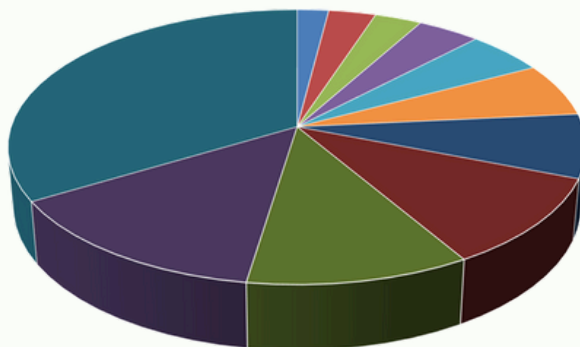
Regional Assessments:

- Extended Downtime
- Cybersecurity

Core Members:

- Public Health
- Hospitals
- Emergency Management
- EMS
- Long-Term Care

Membership Breakdown



- EMS
- Emergency Management
- Public Safety
- Behavioral Health
- Public Health
- Dialysis
- Hospitals
- Outpatient/Primary Care
- Other
- Home Health
- Long-Term Care

945 Individuals from 578 Organizations, Agencies & Facilities

Impact In The Region

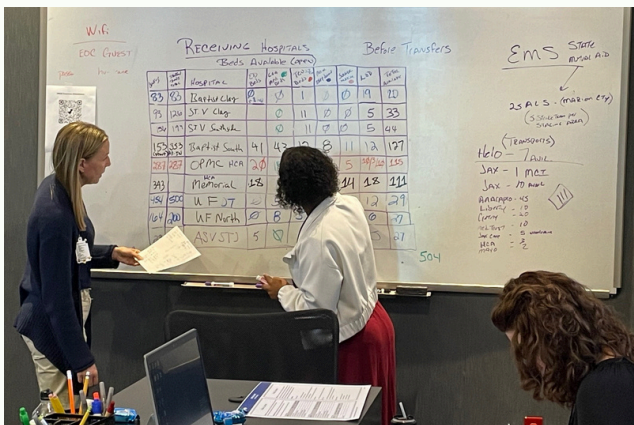
- ## For Long-Term Care Facilities

Florida Infectious Disease Transportation Network Exercise

Each year, the Alliance and its Board of Directors review mitigation strategies to fund projects that will increase the capacity, capability, and resilience of the regional healthcare system. This past fiscal year, funding was allocated to purchase evacuation equipment for long-term care facilities and disaster stretchers for hospital medical surge.

These resources make a measurable impact. Evacuation sleds and stair chairs allow residents in long-term care facilities to be moved quickly and safely during emergencies, reducing risks for both patients and staff. Disaster stretchers expand hospital surge capacity, providing mobile, easily deployable beds that can be used during mass casualty incidents, alternate care site activations, or other emergencies that overwhelm traditional hospital resources.

Through strategic investment in regional projects, training, and exercise, the Alliance is closing gaps in regional preparedness and easing the burden on healthcare providers. Together, we are building a stronger, safer, and more resilient regional healthcare system.



LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE



The Northeast Florida Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) is one of ten regional committees across the State, serving as a vital link between hazardous materials facilities, first responders, and the community. Appointed by the State Emergency Response Commission, the LEPC brings together hazmat professionals and engaged citizens with one shared mission: to strengthen chemical safety and emergency preparedness in our region.

The Committee's work centers on accident prevention, response readiness, and compliance with hazardous materials reporting laws. Under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act of 1986 (EPCRA), facilities that use, produce, or store hazardous substances must file annual reports detailing their chemical inventories. The Northeast Florida Regional Council serves as the public repository for this information, ensuring transparency and supporting regional planning.

Using these reports, the LEPC develops and updates local and regional hazardous materials emergency response plans. These plans guide first responders during a chemical emergency and are regularly refined as new facilities come into compliance or as inventories change. Through this ongoing effort, the LEPC enhances community safety and strengthens the Region's ability to respond effectively to hazardous materials incidents.

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ✓ **232 EMERGENCY PERSONNEL TRAINED**
- ✓ **\$81,072 TRAINING DOLLARS SPENT**
- ✓ **REGIONAL MAGNASEAL EQUIPMENT PURCHASE**

Trainings Offered:

- Florida Hazmat Symposium
- Pilot Maritime Hazmat Course
- Advanced Hazmat Life Support
- Railway Emergencies w/ CSX
- 160-hr Hazmat Technician Course
- Alternative Fuels Response

HANDS-ON RAIL TRAINING STRENGTHENS HAZMAT RESPONSE



In February 2025, the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC), through its Local Emergency Planning Committee (NEFL LEPC), partnered with CSX and regional hazmat teams to host a weeklong hands-on rail training. The program brought together first responders from Clay County, Jacksonville, and St. Johns County to enhance preparedness for rail-related hazardous materials incidents. Using CSX's Responder Incident Training Train, participants gained practical experience with rail safety, leak control, and hazardous materials handling.

Hazmat Technicians completed advanced coursework, while awareness-level training was offered for non-hazmat responders. Hands-on work with multiple railcar types, including DOT 105, 111, 112, and 117, and a CSX Training Locomotive provided critical skills in fire suppression, spill management, and equipment safety.

By blending collaboration with real-world practice, the training strengthened responder capabilities and reinforced Northeast Florida's collective readiness to safeguard communities against hazardous materials emergencies.

OPERATION FROZEN SUMMER: STRENGTHENING SAFETY THROUGH SIMULATION



On August 22, 2025, the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) hosted Operation Frozen Summer, a multi-agency tabletop exercise in Jacksonville focused on improving preparedness for hazardous materials incidents at cold storage facilities. The discussion-based exercise

engaged partners from Sysco International Foods, Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department (JFRD), and its hazmat teams, along with environmental response agencies.

Participants worked through a progressively complex scenario, starting with an internal facility issue and escalating to a coordinated, multi-agency response that required protective actions for the surrounding community. The exercise emphasized critical objectives such as establishing unified command, strengthening communication and notification systems, and developing strategies to safeguard both employees and residents. Interactive mapping further enhanced the experience, enabling agencies to visualize protective zones, staging areas, and the impact on communities.

By providing a no-fault, collaborative environment, Operation Frozen Summer reinforced the strength of Jacksonville's emergency response network and advanced the Region's readiness to manage complex hazmat events.



RESILIENCY





RESILIENT FIRST COAST

Resilient First Coast (RFC) is Northeast Florida's regional resilience collaborative, led by the Northeast Florida Regional Council. Launched in 2022, the Collaborative brings together local governments, businesses, non-profits, academic partners, and state and federal agencies with a shared goal: to strengthen the Region's ability to adapt to climate change and future hazards.

LOCAL RESILIENCY PROJECTS

The NEFRC is nearing completion of major resiliency projects in Flagler and Baker Counties. In Flagler, the Council has worked over several years to develop a comprehensive understanding of flood risk, starting with a vulnerability assessment, progressing to a compound flooding analysis, and culminating this year in an adaptation plan. Together, these efforts identify flooding hazards, model their combined impacts, and provide strategies for reducing risk, while fostering

coordination among municipalities across the County. In Baker County, the vulnerability assessment focused on rainfall-driven flooding, while also evaluating the potential for tidal inundation and storm surge along the St. Marys River. The project also explores green roadway solutions in identified problem areas, offering innovative options to manage stormwater and reduce future impacts.

REGIONAL RESILIENCE ACTION PLAN



The Regional Resilience Action Plan (RRAP) was developed by NEFRC and Resilient First Coast (RFC). Phase I of the RRAP, which outlined and described goals, objectives, and best practices, was completed in the previous fiscal year and recognized with an Impact Award from the National Association of Development Organizations. Phase II, which focuses on specific actions and sub-actions distilled from the concepts in Phase I, was completed this fiscal year. The new RRAP begins by defining a clear vision statement, as well as goals and objectives related to enhancing regional resilience. Context is provided on Northeast Florida and various shocks and stressors facing the Region today, including flooding, heat, and hurricanes.

It then describes various actions that NEFRC and RFC can take to improve regional resilience. The regional approach will advance resilience far beyond what could be accomplished by local governments working alone. This document outlines ways in which NEFRC and RFC can facilitate cooperation to find effective solutions to regional challenges, provide resources and guidance to advance work happening at the local level, and analyze and synthesize regionally significant data to help inform decision-making.



MILITARY INSTALLATION READINESS REVIEW

The Military Installation Readiness Review (MIRR) is a region-wide effort led by the Northeast Florida Regional Council in partnership with Jacobs to identify risks, hazards, and vulnerabilities that affect the ability of local military installations to carry out their missions. Unlike traditional base planning, the MIRR looks “outside the fence line,” focusing on how community infrastructure, land use, and environmental factors impact mission assurance. Since its launch in April 2025, the project has brought together military leaders, elected officials, planners, engineers, and community stakeholders to address shared challenges such as flooding, traffic congestion, shoreline erosion, encroachment, and utility reliability.



To date, the MIRR team has completed installation tours and stakeholder workshops at Marine Corps Support Facility Blount Island, Naval Station Mayport, Camp Blanding Joint Training Center, and Naval Air Station Jacksonville. These sessions have highlighted critical needs, from backup water supply, encroachment concerns to stormwater compliance, road and rail corridor resilience, and fire and emergency response capacity; while also surfacing opportunities for collaboration.



The MIRR will continue assessing vulnerabilities, mapping risks, and developing a prioritized list of projects that can strengthen both military readiness and community resilience. By uniting regional partners around shared goals, the project is ensuring that Northeast Florida’s installations remain secure, its communities prepared, and its role in national defense protected for the future.



SPECIAL PROJECTS



WELCOME!

21st Annual Regional
Awards of Excellence &
Elected Officials Luncheon



NORTHEAST FLORIDA
REGIONAL COUNCIL

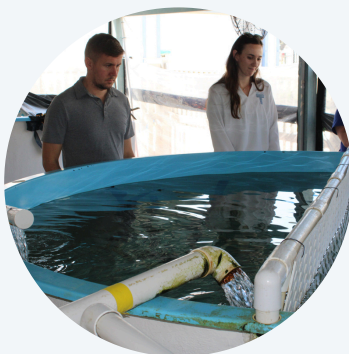


The Regional Community Institute (RCI) was established in 2005, in response to a growing recognition that Northeast Florida needed a broad-based organization dedicated to advancing and promoting regionalism. Its mission is to enhance the quality of the Region's natural, built, economic, and social environments. RCI is organized exclusively for charitable and educational purposes and is housed within the Northeast Florida Regional Council. Its members consist of graduates of the Regional Leadership Academy.



Regional Leadership Academy

The Regional Leadership Academy is a program of the NEFRC dedicated to fostering a commitment to regionalism and empowering future leaders to shape the Region's success. Since its start in 2006, the academy has graduated over 330 local leaders. Through an immersive eight-month program covering each county in the Northeast Region, this experience prepares graduates to actively drive regional collaboration.



Congratulations to the 2025 RLA Graduates



Abigale Bell
Alanna Luksha
Amanda Polematidis
Amy Bell
Angela McGuire
Cassidy Taylor
Charlie Picano
Hon. Cori Bylund
Deb Durbec
Derek Dixon
Ellie McComas
Fedir Tikhonov
Gabrielle Gunn
Julie Hindall
Katherine Monroy
Ladonna Combs
Mark Zimmerman
Matt Rivera
Nidhi Gangan
Raymond Deschler
Sarah Daugherty
Soraya Aidinejad



Trails & Eco-Tourism Initiative



In 2024, the Council launched a regional initiative to expand trail access and promote outdoor recreation across Northeast Florida. Seven trail itinerary workshops were held in seven counties, where participants designed draft itineraries for hikers, paddlers, residents, and visitors; complete with details on parking, restrooms, restaurants, and camping.

The Council also shared its regional trail work at the Bartram Trail National Conference in St. Augustine and partnered with the National Park Service (NPS) Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program to support Baker County in developing a water trail along the St. Marys River. This included site visits to Shoals Park and a design charrette to explore river access improvements, with NPS now developing a conceptual plan for both Shoals Park and the St. Mary's paddling trail.

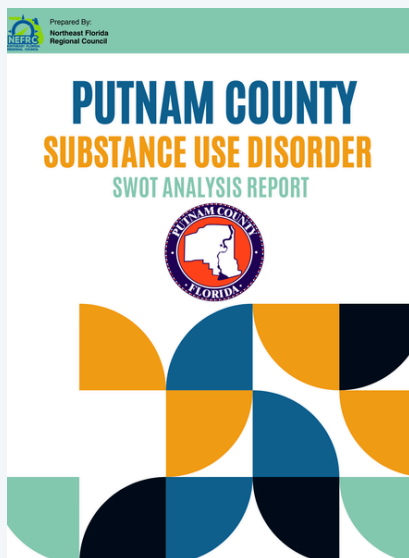
Looking ahead, the Council is advancing a Youth Stewardship Program and a Trail Signage Guide, both set to be completed by year's end, further enhancing access, connectivity, and appreciation of our region's natural assets.



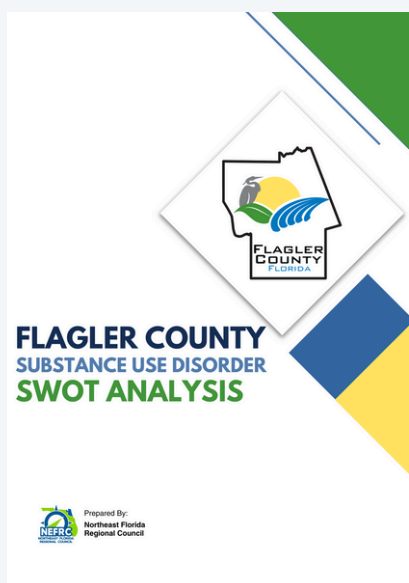
NEFRC Substance Use Disorder Initiative



Over the last 2 years, staff has completed a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis specific to substance use disorders for each county in the Region. Putnam and Flagler counties were completed this year. The Council is currently focused on completing a comprehensive report that will aggregate findings regionally.



By understanding the unique challenges and solutions emerging within each county, NEFRC staff can provide valuable insights and foster collaboration across the Region. This interconnected approach ensures that all seven counties in Northeast Florida benefit from shared knowledge, best practices, and coordinated efforts to combat the opioid crisis and improve public health outcomes.



- ✓ **Served as Evaluator for Community Paramedicine Program in Clay County**
- ✓ **Provided Administrative Support to Clay and Nassau Counties Opioid Abatement Task Force**
- ✓ **Supported 12-month Opioid and Substance Use Awareness Campaign for Town of Baldwin**

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 in January 2025, honored the 2024 Northeast Florida Regional Leadership Award 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.



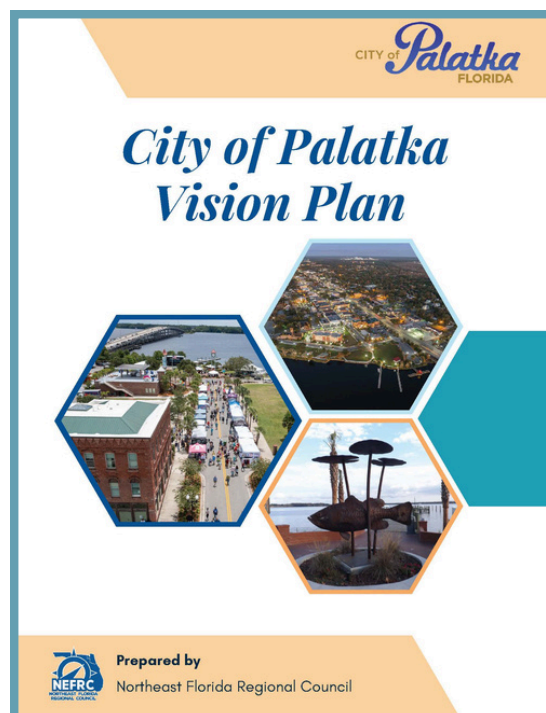
Other award winners included:

- **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

AWARDS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS



This Fiscal Year the Northeast Florida Regional Council was honored with the 2025 Impact Award from the National Association of Development Organizations for the City of Palatka Vision Plan.





A Special Thank You To Our
Community Partners

- Apalachee Strong
- JEA
- Jacksonville Aviation Authority
- Florida Department of Law Enforcement
- Jacksonville Sheriff's Office
- Baker County Emergency Management
- Clay County Emergency Management
- Duval County Emergency Management
- Flagler County Emergency Management
- Nassau County Emergency Management
- Putnam County Emergency Management
- St. Johns County Emergency Management
- Regional Domestic Security Task Force
- Baker Community Organization Active in Disaster Program
- Clay Community Organization Active in Disaster Program
- Duval Community Organization Active in Disaster Program
- Flagler Community Organization Active in Disaster Program
- Nassau Community Organization Active in Disaster Program
- Putnam Community Organization Active in Disaster Program
- St. Johns Community Organization Active in Disaster Program
- Florida Division of Emergency Management
- First Coast Disaster Council
- Florida Department of Health Bureau of Preparedness
- Department of Health – Baker County
- Department of Health – Clay County
- Department of Health – Duval County
- Department of Health – Flagler County
- Department of Health – Nassau County
- Department of Health – Putnam County
- Department of Health – St. Johns County
- Florida Hospital Association
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- St. Johns Riverkeeper
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- North Florida Land Trust
- Northeast Florida Estuarine Restoration Team
- St. Marys Riverkeeper
- Florida Regional Councils Association
- AdventHealth Palm Coast
- AdventHealth Palm Coast Parkway
- Ascension St. Vincent's Riverside
- Ascension St. Vincent's Southside
- Ascension St. Vincent's Clay
- Ascension St. Vincent's St. Johns
- Ed Fraser Memorial Hospital
- Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville–South
- Baptist Medical Center Nassau
- Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville–Downtown
- Baptist Medical Center Beaches

- Baptist Medical Center Clay
- Brooks Rehabilitation
- HCA Florida Putnam Hospital
- HCA Florida Memorial Hospital
- HCA Florida Orange Park Hospital
- Mayo Clinic
- Naval Hospital Jacksonville
- UF Health Jacksonville–Downtown
- UF Health Jacksonville–North
- UF Health St. Johns–Flagler Hospital
- Wolfson Children's Hospital
- Emerald Coast Regional Planning Council
- Apalachee Regional Planning Council
- North Central Florida Regional Planning Council
- East Central Florida Regional Planning Council
- Central Florida Regional Planning Council
- Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council
- Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council
- Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council
- South Florida Regional Council
- Smart Surfaces Coalition
- Pew Charitable Trusts
- University of North Florida
- Jacksonville University
- St. Johns River Water Management District
- South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative
- Southeast Regional Partnership
- Ecoperserve
- Gullah Geechee Culture Community Trust
- Legacy Works
- Florida Sea Grant
- US Army Corps of Engineers – Silver Jackets
- Climate Central
- The Nature Conservancy
- Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Smart North Florida
- JAXUSA
- CareerSource Northeast Florida
- Florida Economic Development Council
- Putnam County Development Authority
- North Florida Economic Development Partnership
- US Economic Development Administration
- Florida Department of Transportation
- Jacksonville Transportation Authority
- Project Opioid
- Jax Chamber
- Tourist Development Council
- Florida State College at Jacksonville
- Bartram Trail Society
- Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation
- Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida
- North Florida Transportation Planning Organization
- LISC Jacksonville
- Non-Profit Center of Northeast Florida
- Mayport Waterfront Partnership

Reflecting On A Year of Collaboration and Accomplishment at the Council



STAFF CELEBRATIONS



SERVICE



PARTNERSHIPS



COLLABORATIONS



TEAMWORK

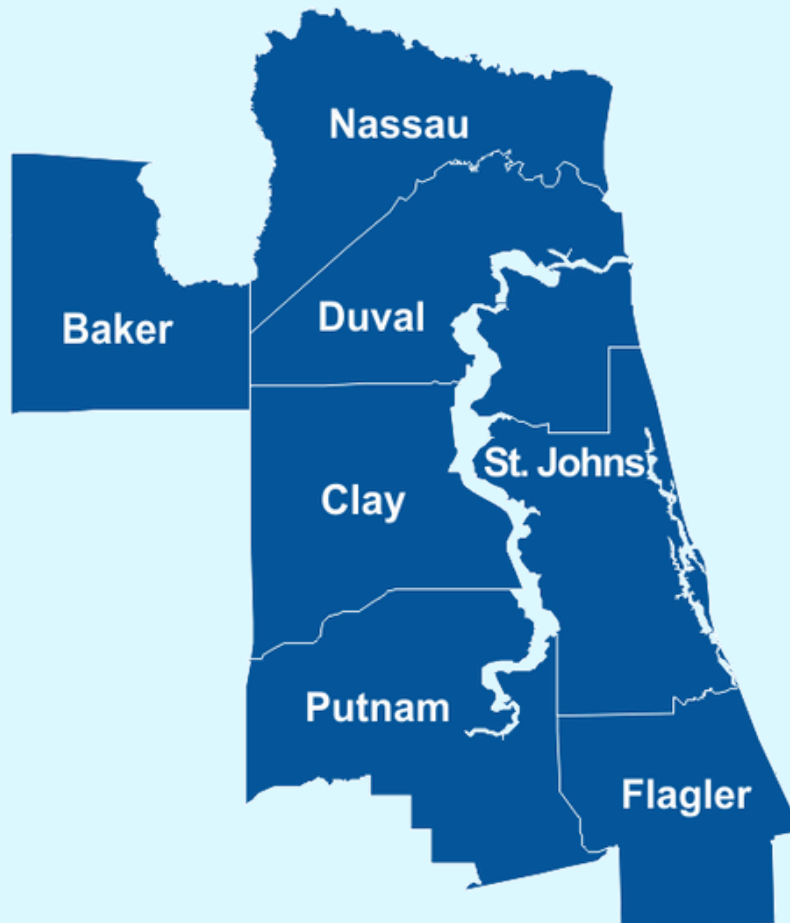


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