



2025-2026

Northeast Florida Regional Council

ANNUAL REPORT



NORTHEAST FLORIDA
REGIONAL COUNCIL



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

It is an honor to serve as President of the Northeast Florida Regional Council and to help lead an organization that has spent nearly five decades bringing communities together to address regional challenges and create opportunities for future generations. Northeast Florida's greatest strength has always been our ability to work across county lines, communities, and sectors to address the issues that matter most to the people we serve.

Throughout the past year, the Council continued to demonstrate the value of regional collaboration through planning, technical assistance, economic development, resilience, emergency preparedness, and community engagement. NEFRC advanced several efforts that will have a lasting impact, including a \$1.5 million EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant to support redevelopment opportunities and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation-funded Aquatic Connectivity Project, which is evaluating more than 2,300 sites to improve connectivity, strengthen infrastructure resilience, and protect natural resources. Programs such as Community Visioning, the Regional Leadership Academy, Resilient First Coast, the Military Installation Resilience Review, the Healthcare Coalition, and the Local Emergency Planning Committee further strengthened our region's capacity to prepare for the future.

These accomplishments reflect what is possible when local governments, state and federal agencies, educational institutions, nonprofits, businesses, and residents come together around shared priorities. NEFRC's role is to connect those partners, provide expertise and resources, and help turn regional challenges into opportunities for meaningful progress.

As we look ahead, I am confident that the Northeast Florida Regional Council is well positioned to build on this momentum. We will continue supporting local leadership, strengthening partnerships, protecting the resources that make our region unique, and ensuring every community—large or small—has a voice in the regional conversation. I am proud of what we have accomplished together and grateful to our Council members, staff, partners, and stakeholders as we continue moving Northeast Florida forward.

Commissioner Jimmy Anderson
NEFRC Board President
Baker County

IN MEMORIAM

James G Bennett



The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) remembers the life and service of Commissioner James G. Bennett. Commissioner Bennett served with distinction as a Baker County Commissioner and as a long-standing member of the NEFRC Board of Directors, most recently serving as President. His leadership, deep commitment to public service, and other noteworthy achievements have left a lasting impact on our region. Beyond his professional accomplishments, he was respected and admired for his integrity, vision, and genuine care for the community he served. His legacy and service will continue to inspire us.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



BOARD OFFICERS

**Honorable
Jimmy Anderson
President
Baker County**

**Honorable
Andy Dance
1st Vice President
Flagler County**

**Honorable
Ken Amaro
2nd Vice President
Duval County**

**Honorable
Betsy Condon
Secretary/Treasurer
Clay County**

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Hon. Blake Iverson
Mr. Michael Griffis

CLAY COUNTY

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Hon. Brandon Ludwig
Mr. Michael Bourre

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Members

Hon. Ann Taylor
Hon. Christian Whitehurst
Hon. Virginia Morgan

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Members

Mr. Curtis Hart
Florida Commerce
Ms. Laurie Santana
Department of Transportation
Mr. Douglas Conkey
St. Johns River Water Management District
Ms. Shannon Gore
Florida Department of Environmental Protection

MEET OUR STAFF



Elizabeth Payne, AICP
Chief Executive Officer



Eric Anderson, AICP
Deputy CEO



Donna Starling
Chief Financial Officer



Sheron Forde
Executive Assistant



Jennifer Bryla, AICP, CFM
Community 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



Benjamin Bennett
Senior Regional Planner



Annie Sieger
Senior Regional Planner



Andrew Prokopiak
Senior Regional Planner



Kenajawa Woody
Communication Specialist



Carol Main
Administrative Assistant

2025-2026 INTERNS



Arani Cooray
Jacksonville University



Kaitlyn Williams
University of North Florida



Eleonore Burns
Jacksonville University



Gary Minar
Jacksonville University

FY 2025-2026

PROJECTS, PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

**Military
Installation
Readiness
Review**

**COAD/VOAD
Community
Outreach Funding
Initiative**

**Emergency
Preparedness
Exercises**

**Community
Paramedicine
Program
Evaluator**

**Local Emergency
Planning
Committee**

**Regional
Leadership
Academy**

**South Atlantic
Salt Marsh
Initiative**

**NFWF Aquatic
Connectivity
Initiative**

**Regional
Healthcare
Coalition Funding**

**Baker County &
Town of Baldwin
Vulnerability
Assessments**

**Evaluation &
Appraisal Review
Updates**

**Palm Coast
Economic
Prosperity
Outreach**

**Economic
Development
District for EDA**

**Local Mitigation
Strategies**

**Planning
Technical
Assistance**

**Flagler County
Compound
Flooding &
Adaptation Plan**

**Community
Visioning
Program**

**Transportation
Disadvantaged
Program**

**Black History
Museum Visioning
Planning**

**Data Center Fact
Finding
Committee
Support**

**Resilient First
Coast
Collaborative**

**Economic
Impact
Modeling (REMI)**

**Collaboration
with National
Park Service**

**City of
Fernandina
Beach Vision
Plan**

**Regional
Resiliency
Action Plan
Implementation**

**Shrimping
Industry
Marketing
Development**

**Brownfields
Assessment
Coalition
Grant**



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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.



FERNANDINA BEACH VISIONING WORK



The Northeast Florida Regional Council supported the City of Fernandina Beach in completing the initial planning and evaluation process for a comprehensive update to the City's long-range planning framework. Building upon the Fernandina Beach 2045 Vision Plan, the Council facilitated community engagement workshops that incorporated updated community priorities and emerging considerations related to resilience, transportation and mobility, and community character. The effort also helped prepare the City for future Comprehensive Plan updates by evaluating existing policies, incorporating new data and planning requirements, and establishing a foundation to guide thoughtful growth and decision-making in the years ahead.

PLANNING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Town of Baldwin

Completed an Evaluation and Appraisal Review (EAR)-based update to the Comprehensive Plan, provided technical assistance to ensure the plan reflects current conditions, complies with state planning requirements, and supports the Town's long-term vision for growth and resiliency.

Town of Interlachen

Provided technical planning assistance for Future Land Use Map amendments and rezoning applications, helping ensure land use and zoning decisions support responsible growth, community priorities, and the Town's long-term vision for development.

Town of Beverly Beach

Completed a review of Planned Unit Development (PUD) standards, guiding the Town through the evaluation of a complex development proposal and formalizing PUD standards within its Land Development Regulations. This work provided the Town with clear tools and expectations for informed planning for future growth.

Florida Commission for the



TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED PROGRAM

Reliable transportation is essential to independence, access to opportunity, and connection to critical services. The Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program helps ensure older adults, individuals with disabilities, people with limited incomes, and other eligible residents can access medical appointments, employment, education, shopping, and other daily needs.

As the designated planning agency for the Transportation Disadvantaged Program in all seven counties of Northeast Florida, the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) has supported regional transportation coordination and oversight for more than 40 years. In partnership with the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, Community Transportation Coordinators (CTCs), Local Coordinating Boards, and local stakeholders, NEFRC helps strengthen mobility through transportation planning, coordinating services, conducting CTC evaluations and procurements, and identifying opportunities to improve access for residents throughout the Region.

RIDE-ALONG EVALUATIONS



NEFRC conducts Ride Along Evaluations to assess the safety, reliability, and quality of transportation services provided throughout Northeast Florida. These evaluations, completed in coordination with Community Transportation Coordinators serving Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam, and St. Johns counties, allow staff to observe operations firsthand and gather feedback directly from riders.

During each evaluation, NEFRC staff review route operations, vehicle safety practices, required policies and procedures, and rider access to important resources, including grievance information. The evaluations also highlight the dedication of transportation providers and drivers who work each day to ensure riders are safely and reliably connected to essential destinations.

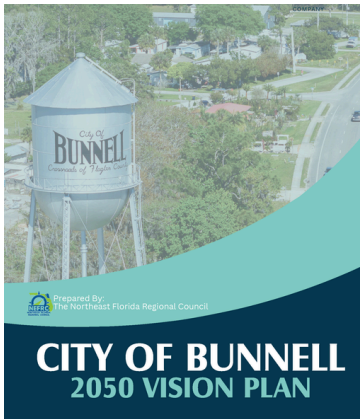
Following completion of all ride along evaluations, only minor concerns were identified, with no significant issues reported. The results demonstrate the continued effectiveness of the Transportation Disadvantaged Program and the commitment of regional partners to maintaining safe, accessible transportation options for residents across Northeast Florida.

COMMUNITY VISIONING PROGRAM



This year the Council's Community Visioning Program continued to engage communities in shaping shared visions for their future. 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. Funded through a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the Community Visioning Program focuses on providing the Region's small communities with these valuable services.

CITY OF BUNNELL VISION PLAN



The Council partnered with the City of Bunnell to engage residents and community stakeholders in shaping a shared vision for the City's future. Through two community workshops and an online survey, NEFRC gathered community responses and created opportunities for residents to identify priorities, share ideas, and establish themes to guide future growth and development. The resulting report provides a foundation for Bunnell's Vision Plan and future Comprehensive Plan updates, helping ensure the City's long-term planning reflects the priorities of its community.



Continuing its efforts to help communities shape their futures, the program kicked off its next project with the Town of Hilliard in August. This joint visioning effort between the Town and Nassau County, facilitated by NEFRC, will develop a 25-year community-wide vision for Hilliard through 2050 and provide a framework to guide the Town's future growth and direction.

SHRIMPING INDUSTRY MARKETING INITIATIVE

This year, the Northeast Florida Regional Council was awarded a \$100,000 grant through the USDA Local Food Promotion Program to support a two-year marketing initiative focused on strengthening the Region's shrimping industry. This project builds on previous work completed through the Northeast Florida Shrimping Market Study. The initiative will help develop a comprehensive marketing strategy designed to increase consumer awareness and expand market opportunities that support the long-term sustainability and economic vitality of Northeast Florida's shrimping communities. Through strategic marketing and regional collaboration, the project aims to enhance the visibility and competitiveness of one of the Region's most historic and important industries.

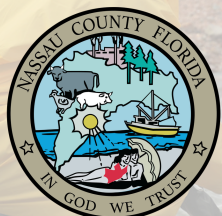


NEFRC RECEIVES \$1.5 MILLION DOLLAR BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENT GRANT

The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) was selected by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to receive a Brownfields Assessment Grant, providing new resources to help communities in the Region identify and prepare underutilized properties for future redevelopment. The NEFRC has formed a coalition with Nassau County and the City of Palatka for this initiative. This funding will support environmental site assessments, planning activities, and community engagement efforts throughout the Region that help transform vacant or underused sites into assets that promote economic growth and community revitalization.

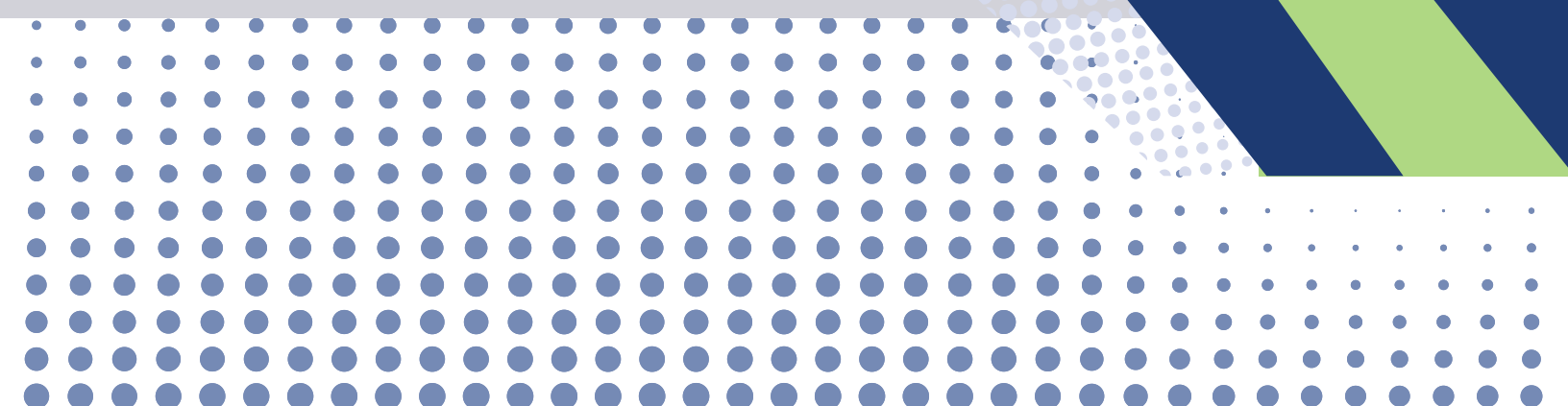
The NEFRC will work closely with local governments and regional partners to identify redevelopment opportunities that attract investment, create jobs, and improve quality of life throughout Northeast Florida. The grant reflects the Council's continued commitment to providing technical expertise and collaborative solutions that strengthen communities and support long-term economic development.

Project Partners





EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

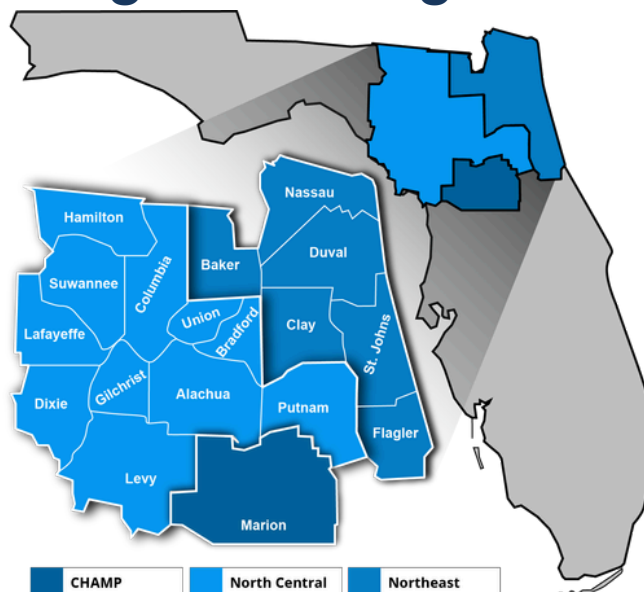




HEALTHCARE COALITION PROGRAM

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, the coalition includes 945 members from 600 organizations, agencies, and facilities across 22 business sectors. The Alliance provides training and exercises for all members on emergencies and dedicates a third of its annual budget to projects that fill regional gaps.

Program Coverage Area



IMPACT ACROSS THE REGION

\$215,000

in project funding across the Region

Long-Term Care



Evacuation Equipment
\$6,700

Hospitals



Evacuation Equipment
\$80,000
Disaster Stretchers
\$66,520

EMS



**Pediatric Restraint
Devices**
\$63,158

HCC PROJECT HIGHLIGHT



Utilizing the mitigation strategies identified in the Alliance's regional hazard vulnerability assessment, the Healthcare Coalition allocates a third of its annual budget to regional projects and equipment purchases. In fiscal year 2025-2026, the program provided equipment purchases across the Region. This included pediatric restraint devices for rescue units in member counties and municipalities, medical surge and evacuation equipment for hospitals, and evacuation equipment for long-term care facilities. These purchases ensure a more resilient regional healthcare system.

CROSS-PROGRAM COLLABORATION

Strengthening Hazardous Materials Preparedness Across North Florida

In 2026, the Northeast Florida Regional Council helped lead a major regional effort to strengthen preparedness for hazardous materials emergencies across North Florida. Through partnerships among four Regional Councils, four Local Emergency Planning Committees, two Healthcare Coalitions, and two Regional Domestic Security Task Forces, a Shelter-in-Place (SIP) Train-the-Trainer program was delivered across 26 counties. SIP procedures help protect people during chemical spills or other hazardous materials releases by limiting exposure to dangerous substances until the threat has passed.

The program culminated in a region-wide shelter-in-place exercise on April 28, 2026, giving organizations the opportunity to test plans, strengthen communication, and identify areas for improvement. This initiative demonstrates the power of regional collaboration. By sharing expertise, resources, and best practices, partners across North Florida expanded access to critical preparedness training and strengthened the Region's ability to respond to hazardous materials emergencies, helping make communities safer and more resilient.



9
Training Sessions
165
Training Participants

Regional Impact



500 +
Healthcare Professionals,
Emergency Responders,
& Community Partners
Impacted

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. Through these efforts the LEPC enhances community safety and strengthens the Region's ability to respond effectively to hazardous materials incidents.

IMPROVING REGIONAL PREPAREDNESS FOR MARITIME INCIDENTS



The Northeast Florida Regional Council, through the LEPC, strengthened regional maritime emergency preparedness by supporting three specialized training opportunities for first responders. Two Maritime HazMat courses provided hands-on instruction in safely assessing and responding to hazardous materials incidents in a maritime environment, combining classroom learning with realistic response scenarios and water-based safety exercises. Complementing these operational trainings, a Maritime Incident Command and Control course in St. Augustine—held in partnership with the St. Augustine Fire Department and U.S. Coast Guard—focused on strengthening leadership, communication, and multi-agency coordination during complex maritime incidents. Together, these trainings enhanced both the operational and command-level capabilities needed to support a coordinated and effective regional response.

CHLORINE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TRAINING



In partnership with the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department, the Chlorine Institute, and TRANSCAER, the NEFRC supported a three-day Chlorine Emergency Response Training designed to strengthen hazardous materials response capabilities across Northeast Florida.

The hands-on training brought together emergency responders, regional partners, and local leadership to enhance coordination and preparedness for complex hazardous materials incidents. Trainings like these are critical to ensuring response teams have the knowledge, resources, and real-world experience needed to protect communities during high-risk emergencies.

As part of the training, participants engaged in practical response scenarios focused on chlorine-related incidents, helping reinforce regional collaboration and readiness among agencies that may respond together during an emergency.

"Our HazMat teams respond to some of the most complex and dangerous situations in emergency services. When an incident involves chlorine, there is no margin for error. This training gives our personnel the hands-on experience they need to walk into those situations with confidence to keep our community safe."

– JFRD Fire Chief Percy Golden II



ANNUAL EXERCISE SEASON

JEA Annual Hurricane Exercise

The 2026 JEA Hurricane Exercise brought together JEA leaders and key community partners, including the City of Jacksonville and the National Weather Service, for a three-day emergency preparedness exercise. Using a simulated storm called Hurricane Zora, participants worked through realistic challenges, including flooding, power outages, damaged infrastructure, communication disruptions, and the need to coordinate staff and resources.

The exercise provided an opportunity to test emergency plans, identify what worked well, and pinpoint areas for improvement. Lessons learned will help JEA strengthen its response capabilities and improve coordination with partner agencies before future storms occur.

NEFRC's continued support of this annual exercise helps build a more resilient region by strengthening partnerships, improving emergency preparedness, and supporting the reliable operation of critical infrastructure when communities need it most.



St. Johns County Annual Hurricane Exercise

The 2026 St. Johns County Hurricane Exercise brought together Emergency Operations Center staff and regional partners, including law enforcement, fire rescue, utility providers, and other key agencies, for a coordinated hurricane response exercise. Using a simulated storm called Hurricane Le'Quitia, participants worked through realistic emergency scenarios, practiced communication and coordination, and gained valuable experience using the County's emergency management systems. The exercise provided an opportunity to strengthen emergency response procedures and test plans that support hurricane operations.

NEFRC supported the exercise evaluation process and helped develop recommendations to strengthen future response efforts. The exercise highlighted strengths, identified opportunities for improvement, and reinforced coordination among agencies that would work together during an actual storm. By bringing partners together to train, plan, and learn from experience, this annual exercise helps St. Johns County build a more prepared and resilient community better equipped to respond when hurricanes threaten the Region.





RESILIENCY





MILITARY INSTALLATION READINESS REVIEW

Building Regional Resilience Beyond the Installation Fence Line

Phase 1 - Building the Foundation

Launched in 2025, the Northeast Florida Military Installation Readiness Review (MIRR) brought together four military installations in the Region – Blount Island Marine Corps Support Facility, Camp Blanding Joint Training Center, Naval Air Station Jacksonville, and Naval Station Mayport – with regional partners to identify challenges and opportunities that extend beyond installation boundaries.

Through installation site visits, stakeholder workshops, and coordination with Duval and Clay Counties, NEFRC established a Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee to bring together military, local government, infrastructure, emergency management, and community perspectives.



Phase 2 - Understanding Regional Risks

The MIRR examined the shared challenges that can affect both military installations and the communities that support them. Partners worked together to identify regional risks, infrastructure needs, and opportunities for collaboration, with a focus on issues such as transportation, utilities, flooding, wildfire, development pressures, and emergency response. This process helped identify priority projects that could strengthen military mission readiness while also improving the resilience of the surrounding communities.

Phase 3 - From Analysis to Action

The final phase of MIRR focused on turning identified needs into actionable projects and funding opportunities. Through the Facility Installation Readiness Exercise (FIRE), military representatives and regional partners worked through a complex scenario to strengthen relationships and identify opportunities for coordinated action.

The culmination of the MIRR is a portfolio of grant-ready project packets for projects across the Region's military installations. Each packet brings together the key information needed to pursue grant funding, creating a practical resource that can be used by military installations, local governments, and regional partners to advance projects that support military mission readiness and regional resilience.



STRENGTHENING AQUATIC CONNECTIVITY & RESILIENCE

Through a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant, the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC), in partnership with the University of North Florida (UNF) Institute for Environmental Research & Education and Jacksonville University (JU), is advancing a regional effort to improve aquatic connectivity and strengthen resilience across Northeast Florida. The project is evaluating more than 2,300 sites across 12 Florida counties to identify aquatic barriers, infrastructure needs, and opportunities for nature-based solutions. In June 2026, the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership provided a two-day field training at Lake George Conservation Area and Bulow Creek State Park, giving JU and UNF students hands-on experience surveying road-stream crossings in both tidal and non-tidal environments and strengthening their understanding of aquatic connectivity challenges and restoration strategies.

Fieldwork began in July 2026, with JU and UNF students collecting data through site visits and assessments. The students have made tremendous progress in advancing the regional assessment and building a comprehensive dataset that can help communities better understand where infrastructure and aquatic systems intersect. The information gathered will support future infrastructure investments, resilience planning, aquatic restoration, and identification of nature-based solutions, while helping communities prioritize projects and coordinate investments across jurisdictional boundaries.

Project Partners



REGIONAL RESILIENCY ACTION PLAN

Implementation by Resilient First Coast Collaborative

The Resilient First Coast Collaborative brings together regional partners across sectors to coordinate resilience efforts, share resources, and advance shared priorities across Northeast Florida. Phase III of the Regional Resilience Action Plan (RRAP) launched in early 2026, marking an important transition from planning to implementation. NEFRC convened the RRAP Implementation Partner Kick-Off Meeting on January 21, bringing together organizations responsible for advancing the plan's near-term actions, followed by the Resilient First Coast Full Collaborative, which formally initiated implementation at its February meeting. NEFRC then worked directly with implementation partners to establish success metrics, clarify roles, and identify potential funding opportunities for the plan's 15 goal areas and 34 specific actions.

NEFRC also provided direct technical assistance to local governments through Geographic Information System work sessions with Flagler County, Baker County, and the City of Neptune Beach, while integrating RRAP priorities into complementary regional initiatives; including the Military Installation Readiness Review. These efforts demonstrate how the Collaborative is moving resilience planning beyond strategy development and into coordinated action, ensuring the RRAP's goals continue to inform projects and investments across Northeast Florida.



SPECIAL PROJECTS



STRENGTHENING COORDINATION ACROSS NORTHEAST FLORIDA



THE COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
— FOR NORTHEAST FLORIDA —

The Northeast Florida Regional Council was honored to receive a grant from The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida to support disaster preparedness and community resilience initiatives throughout Northeast Florida. Through this funding, NEFRC partnered with local COADs/VOADs and community organizations to enhance coordination, outreach, and preparedness activities in communities across the region, including Baker, Nassau, and Duval counties. Additional regional efforts supported public engagement opportunities such as JaxReady Fest. Below are examples of how these funds were put to work across the region:

Baker COAD

Performed a Rural Community Unmet Needs Assessment and Community Outreach. Through this effort, residents from rural and underserved communities were connected with case management, legal services, disaster recovery resources, and referrals for additional assistance.

Nassau COAD

Created two emergency preparedness education programs to engage community members and encourage volunteerism. The Community Preparedness program offered monthly educational opportunities; which included TEAM for GIRLS (Training, Education, Activities, and Mentorship) for Girls Interested in Response, Leadership, and Safety.

Duval COAD

Hosted JaxReady Fest with over 3,000 participants. JaxReady Fest benefited individuals and families across Northeast Florida by increasing awareness of disaster preparedness. Through outreach, education, and engagement activities to help strengthen community resilience.

REGIONAL ISSUE FOCUS

Supporting Nassau County Data Center Fact-Finding Committee

As local governments across Northeast Florida considered data center moratoriums, the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) Board of Directors identified data center development as a regionally significant issue. This designation enabled NEFRC staff to support member governments as they navigated this complex, emerging issue. This includes Nassau County's Data Center Fact-Finding Committee, where NEFRC provided staff assistance and facilitation for public engagement and discussions with subject matter experts on conservation, water, power, infrastructure, economic impacts, and community planning.

This work demonstrates NEFRC's role in helping member governments address issues that extend beyond individual jurisdictions. By providing staff support and facilitation, NEFRC helped Nassau County gather information, engage the community, and inform future discussions about data center development. For more information, visit Nassau County's Data Center Fact-Finding Committee page.

Visit Their
Website For More
Information On
This Project



2025 REGIONAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

Regional Leadership Award Recipient



The prestigious Regional Leadership Award was presented to Reverend Allison DeFoor, who exemplifies dedication to regional collaboration and coordination. He is a transformational conservation leader whose work has made a lasting impact across North Florida. A lifelong public servant, he has served as a prosecutor, public defender, attorney, judge, sheriff, law professor, and Episcopal priest. Since joining the North Florida Land Trust Board in 2018—and later becoming its President and CEO—his leadership has strengthened conservation efforts across Northeast Florida, supported successful local initiatives, and helped advance statewide funding that dedicated \$400 million to land conservation, establishing him as an influential advocate for preserving Florida's natural lands.

Regional Award Winners:

Special Recognition

Jessica Beach & Anne Coglianse
Resilient First Coast Collaborative

Healthcare Emergency Preparedness

Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville Flood
Mitigation Project

Cultural & Historic Preservation

Durkeeville Revitalization Study Community
Planning Collaborative

Planning & Growth Management

Nassau County Vision 2050 Plan

Economic Development

Putnam County Chamber of Commerce

Public Safety

St. Johns County Sheriff's Office Tactical
Training Facility

Environmental Stewardship

Flagler County Acquisition & Management of
Environmentally Sensitive Lands

Resiliency

City of Fernandina Beach Adaptation Plan

Tourism

Clay County Tourism Department -
Wheel the World

2025 REGIONAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

Photos from the event:





REGIONAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The Regional Leadership Academy (RLA) is an NEFRC program that fosters a commitment to regionalism and empowers leaders to shape the Region's success. Over the past 20 years, the program has graduated more than 360 local leaders. Over an eight-month period, the program covers each county in the Northeast Region; this experience prepares graduates to actively engage in regional collaboration.



RLA ALUMNI NETWORKING EVENT

The Northeast Florida Regional Leadership Academy hosted its first Alumni Networking Event, bringing together graduates from across the Academy's history for an afternoon of coffee, connection, and conversation. The gathering marked the beginning of what NEFRC hopes will become a lasting tradition—bringing RLA alumni together and continuing to grow a regional network of leaders committed to collaboration and service across Northeast Florida.





CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2026 RLA GRADUATES

Tywan Arrington

Alicia Pressel

Rene Atayan

Gene Price

John Brewer

Annie Sieger

Karen Callahan

Roy Sieger

Brittany Costello

Karen Smith

Jacqueline Cox

Denis Sousa

Candi Donaldson

Terry Suggs

Savannah Evans

Gloria Teague

Dr. Yvette Jones

Zoe Waldron

Josh Macbeth

Richard Zion

Mike McGothlin



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

- >>> AdventHealth Palm Coast
- >>> Apalachee Local Emergency Planning Committee
- >>> Apalachee Regional Planning Council
- >>> Apalachee Strong
- >>> Ascension St. Vincent's Clay
- >>> Ascension St. Vincent's Riverside
- >>> Ascension St. Vincent's Southside
- >>> Ascension St. Vincent's St. Johns
- >>> Baker Community Organizations Active in Disaster Program
- >>> Baker County Council on Aging
- >>> Baker County Emergency Management
- >>> Baptist Medical Center Beaches
- >>> Baptist Medical Center Clay
- >>> Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville - Downtown
- >>> Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville - South
- >>> Baptist Medical Center Nassau
- >>> Bartram Trail Society
- >>> Big Bend Healthcare Coalition
- >>> Brooks Rehabilitation
- >>> Camp Blanding Joint Training Center
- >>> Career Source Northeast Florida
- >>> Central Florida Regional Planning Council
- >>> City of Jacksonville Emergency Preparedness Division
- >>> Clay Community Organization Active in Disaster Program
- >>> Clay County Emergency Management
- >>> Climate Central
- >>> Department of Health - Baker County
- >>> Department of Health - Clay County
- >>> Department of Health - Duval County
- >>> Department of Health - Flagler County
- >>> Department of Health - Naasau County
- >>> Department of Health - Putnam County
- >>> Department of Health - St. Johns County
- >>> Duval Community Organizations Active in Disaster Program
- >>> East Central Local Emergency Planning Committee
- >>> East Central Florida Regional Planning Council
- >>> Ecoperserve
- >>> Emerald Coast Regional Planning Council
- >>> First Coast Disaster Council
- >>> Flagler Community Organization Active in Disaster Program
- >>> Flagler County Emergency Management
- >>> Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- >>> Florida Department of Health Bureau of Preparedness
- >>> Florida Department of Law Enforcement
- >>> Florida Department of Transportation
- >>> Florida Division of Emergency Management
- >>> Florida Economic Dvelopment Council
- >>> Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- >>> Florida Hospital Association
- >>> Florida Regional Councils Association
- >>> Florida Sea Grant
- >>> Florida State College at Jacksonville
- >>> Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reseve
- >>> Gullah Geechee Culture Community Trust
- >>> HCA Florida Memorial Hospital
- >>> HCA florida Orange Park Hospital
- >>> HCA Florida Putnam Hospital
- >>> Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

- »» Jacksonville Aviation Authority
- »» Jacksonville Sheriff's Office
- »» Jacksonville Transportation Authority
- »» Jacksonville University
- »» Jax Chamber
- »» JAXUSA
- »» JEA
- »» Legacy Works
- »» Marine Corps Support Facility Blount Island
- »» Mayo Clinic
- »» Mayport Waterfront Partnership
- »» Nassau Community Organization Active in Disaster Program
- »» Nassau County Emergency Management
- »» National Park Service - RTCA
- »» Naval Air Station Jacksonville
- »» Naval Station Mayport
- »» Naval Hospital Jacksonville
- »» North Central Local Emergency Planning Committee
- »» North Central Regional Planning Council
- »» North Florida Land Trust
- »» North Florida Transportation Planning Organization
- »» Northeast Florida Estuarine Restoration Team
- »» Pew Charitable Trusts
- »» Putnam Community Organization Active in Disaster Program
- »» Putnam County Emergency Management
- »» Regional Domestic Security Task Force
- »» Ride Solutions
- »» Smart North Florida
- »» Smart Surfaces Coalition
- »» South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative
- »» South Florida Regional Council
- »» Southeast Regional Partnership
- »» Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council
- »» St. Johns Council on Aging
- »» St. Johns County Community Organization Active in Disaster Program
- »» St. Johns County Emergency Management
- »» St. Johns River Water Management District
- »» St. Johns Riverkeeper
- »» St. Marys Riverkeeper
- »» Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council
- »» The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida
- »» The Nature Conservancy
- »» Tourist Development Council
- »» Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council
- »» UF Health Jacksonville - Downtown
- »» UF Health Jacksonville - North
- »» UF Health St. Johns - Flagler Hospital
- »» University of North Florida
- »» US Army Corps of Engineers - Silver Jackets
- »» USDA
- »» US Economic Development Administration
- »» Wolfson Children's Hospital

AWARDS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS



This year, the Northeast Florida Regional Council was honored with the 2025 Impact Award from the National Association of Development Organizations for:

The Northeast Florida Regional Resilience Action Plan (RRAP)

Phase 2

Northeast Florida Shrimping Industry Market Study

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