



NEFRC

NEWSLETTER

May 2025 - Bringing Communities Together Since 1977



Group Photo from NEFRC MIRR Kickoff Event

THE COUNCIL KICKS OFF THE NORTHEAST FLORIDA MILITARY INSTALLATION READINESS REVIEW

The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) has been awarded a grant from the Department of Defense's Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC). This funding supports the development of a Military Installation Readiness Review (MIRR) and Implementation Plan, a collaborative planning initiative focused on a multi-hazards approach to identify risks and vulnerabilities beyond the fence line of our military installations, and key factors that impact mission readiness in Northeast Florida. The project team, in partnership with key stakeholders, is dedicated to identifying natural hazards that affect military readiness and proposing innovative solutions that enhance mission assurance and build community resilience. The installations included in this study are: **Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Naval Station Mayport, Blount Island Marine Corps Support Facility, Camp Blanding Joint Training Facility in Clay County.** [Click here to learn more.](#)



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.

THE REGIONAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY EXPLORES GROWTH, INNOVATION, AND RESILIENCE ACROSS NORTHEAST FLORIDA



Another exciting year is underway for the Regional Leadership Academy (RLA), a program of the Northeast Florida Regional Council through the Regional Community Institute. RLA offers participants the opportunity to explore the unique assets, challenges, and opportunities across our Region's counties—fostering collaboration, leadership, and a shared commitment to regional growth. The 2025 Regional Leadership Academy kicked off its first three program days with immersive experiences across Baker, Putnam, and Flagler counties.



In Baker County, participants heard from Daryl Register of the Baker County Chamber of Commerce about exciting economic developments and new businesses on the horizon. The group toured a local manufacturing company that specializes in custom trailers, including food trucks and mobile medical units, and learned about the county's innovative paramedicine program improving emergency medical care.



Next, the group visited Putnam County, where they were welcomed by City of Palatka Mayor Robbie Correa and guided through a walking tour of historic Palatka by Rob Mattson of the Putnam Historical Society. Presentations from Bartram Trail Society President Sam Carr and Azalea City Brewing Company owner Andrea Conover highlighted local entrepreneurship and cultural preservation. The day wrapped up with a scenic tour of Ravine Gardens State Park.

The third program day took place at the UF Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience, where participants toured the Sea Turtle Hospital and learned about regional marine research and conservation efforts. Ashley Lein of Taylor Engineering presented on compound flooding research in the region, and presentations from Jonathan Lord of Flagler County Emergency Management and Amy Lukasik of Palm Coast and Flagler Beach Tourism rounded out the day with insights into disaster preparedness and tourism development.

PROJECT & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Building coastal resilience through Nature-Based Solutions



The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) is proud to partner with the North Florida Land Trust, the Gullah Geechee Cultural Community Trust, and other regional collaborators through the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative (SASMI) to advance coastal resilience across the Southeast. With support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's National Coastal Resilience Fund, the project focuses on strengthening community capacity and planning for long-term conservation.

The goal is to identify 20–25 sites across the SASMI region for future design and implementation of nature-based solutions, set site-specific resilience goals, and ensure that all solutions are culturally informed and community-driven.

NEFRC is leading Florida's outreach and engagement strategy, working closely with local leaders, planners, and cultural communities who live, work, and play near vital salt marsh habitat. Upcoming engagement sessions will center on the experiences of vulnerable populations, exploring how environmental challenges affect health, lifestyle, and recreation—and how communities can shape a more resilient future together. The next phase will involve evaluating identified sites to determine their potential for implementing nature-based solutions.



St. Augustine Vision Plan Update Approved by City Commission

On May 12, 2025, the St. Augustine City Commission unanimously approved the updated Vision Plan, marking a major milestone in the city's long-term planning efforts. Developed in partnership with the Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC), the plan reflects months of public engagement and collaboration.

In fall 2024, NEFRC and city staff hosted six public meetings to gather community input. The updated plan was also presented to the Planning and Zoning Board, the Historic Architectural Review Board, and the Corridor Review Committee. Public feedback affirmed that the original themes, Livability, Authentic Character, and Vitality, remain central to residents' priorities, while also highlighting the need to elevate Resiliency in light of growing climate challenges.

The updated Vision Plan ensures St. Augustine continues to grow thoughtfully, protect its unique identity, and strengthen its ability to adapt to future conditions. We look forward to continuing these visioning initiatives with other communities in our region.

PROJECT & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



NEFL LEPC Hosts Weeklong Hazmat Rail Safety Training with CSX

From February 11–14, 2025, the Northeast Florida Local Emergency Planning Committee (NEFL LEPC), in partnership with CSX and the Region's three hazardous materials teams, conducted a hands-on training seminar using CSX's Responder Incident Training Train.

Over the course of the week, certified Hazmat Technicians received advanced instruction, while non-hazmat responders participated in awareness-level training. Attendees engaged in practical exercises with multiple railcar types—including pressure and general service tank cars (DOT 105, 111, 112, and 117)—and received detailed instruction on tank car components, emergency capping kits, and rail-specific safety protocols.

The training also included a tour of a CSX training locomotive, where participants learned leak control methods for fuel, oil, and hydraulic fluids in emergency scenarios. This collaborative effort strengthened preparedness and response capacity across Northeast Florida's emergency response community.

Staff Anniversary Highlights



Here at the Council, the amazing work that we do would not be possible without our amazing staff. This quarter we are taking time to recognize those that do the work to help push our mission forward.

This year our Deputy CEO celebrates 15 years with the Council, thank you Eric for your dedication and commitment over the years. We would also like to take time to recognize these staff members who celebrate anniversaries this quarter:

- Carol – Accounting/Administrative Assistant – **11 Years**
- Leigh – Healthcare Coalition Manager – **7 Years**
- Jack – Economic Development Project Manager – **5 Years**
- Annie – Senior Regional Planner – **3 Years**
- Kenajawa – Communication Specialist – **1 Year**

