

EVALUATION AND APPRAISAL REPORT

NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA STRATEGIC REGIONAL POLICY PLAN



December 2, 2010

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INTRODUCTION

Section 186.511, Florida Statutes, requires the Council to prepare an assessment of the regional plan once every five years. The purpose of the assessment is to evaluate the successes and failures of the plan and the preparation of necessary amendments, revisions or updates to the plan based upon the assessment. The assessment report is to be primarily based on the progress of the region toward attainment of strategic regional policy plan goals using the regional indicators contained in the plan. Rule 27E-5.008, Florida Administrative Code, notes that the assessment shall identify plan amendments which may be necessary as a result of changing regional conditions, changes to the State Comprehensive Plan, or other statutory changes.

This assessment is organized around the reporting requirements of Section 186.511, Florida Statutes, and Rule 27E-5, Florida Administrative Code. The five strategic regional subject areas, Affordable Housing, Economic Development, Emergency Preparedness, Natural Resources of Regional Significance, and Regional Transportation, are assessed separately. The assessments conclude with the identification of recommended plan amendments, if any, and new actions necessary to address issues identified herein.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

An update of regional indicators suggests that housing affordability for north central Florida very low-, low-, and moderate-income households declined between 1990 and 2000.

REGIONAL GOAL 1.1. REDUCE THE PERCENTAGE OF THE REGION'S VERY LOW-, LOW-, AND MODERATE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS SPENDING 30.0 PERCENT OR MORE OF THEIR ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME ON HOUSING.

REGIONAL INDICATORS

Table I-1 contains a comparison of regional indicators listed in the regional plan for Regional Goal 1.1 for the years 1990 and 2000 based on decennial census data. With one notable exception, the updated regional indicators suggests that housing affordability for households earning less than \$20,000 per year declined slightly between 1990 and 2000.

TABLE I-1

A COMPARISON OF REGIONAL GOAL 1.1 INDICATORS, 1990 AND 2000

Regional Indicator	Year	
	1990	2000
1. Percentage of the households of the region with annual incomes of less than \$20,000 spending 30.0 percent or more of their annual income on housing.	62.3	66.2
2. Percentage of the renter households of the region with annual incomes of less than \$10,000 spending 30.0 percent or more of their annual income on gross rent.	87.6	72.6
3. Percentage of the renter households of the region with 1989 annual incomes between \$10,000 and \$19,999 spending 30.0 percent or more of their annual income on gross rent.	54.6	68.9
4. Percentage of the homeowner households of the region with annual incomes of less than \$10,000 per year spending 30.0 percent or more of their annual income on housing.	53.4	64.0
5. Percentage of the homeowner households of the region with annual incomes between \$10,000 and \$19,999 per year spending 30.0 percent or more of their annual income on gross rent.	32.9	48.4

Source: North Central Florida Regional Planning Council, November 2010.

During the 1990s, north central Florida housing costs increased and, with one notable exception, with an increasingly larger percentage of the lower-income households of the region spending 30 percent or more of their annual incomes on housing costs. The one notable exception, as indicated in Table I-1, was a decrease in the percentage percent of the renter households of the region with 1989 annual incomes of less than \$10,000 spending 30 percent or more of their annual incomes on rent. In 1990, 87.6 percent of the 1990 renter households of the region earning less than \$10,000 per year were so classified. In 2000, the percentage had declined to 72.6. However, all of the other regional indicators indicate a general increase in the percentage of the lower-income households of the region paying more than 30 percent on housing.

Tables I-2 and I-3 identify the percentage of north central Florida households spending 30 percent or more of their annual household incomes on housing cross-tabulated by household income range. Historically, Alachua County has had the highest rates in the region of lower income households paying 30 percent or more of their annual incomes on housing costs. However, in the case of renter households earning less than \$10,000 as indicated in Table I-2, Lafayette County had the highest percentage of any north central Florida county at 82.1 percent in 2000. Alachua County still retains the highest percentage of homeowners earning under \$20,000 per year and renters earning between \$10,000 and 19,999 per year. In 1999, 78.5 percent of Alachua County renter households with incomes between and \$10,000 and \$19,999 per year paid 30 percent or more of their annual incomes for rent and utilities. The Alachua County rate was roughly the same as the statewide average of 78.3 percent. When Alachua County is removed from consideration, Table I-2 reveals substantially lower percentage of lower-income north central Florida households paying 30 percent or more of their annual incomes for housing than statewide.

TABLE 1-2

**PERCENTAGE OF 2000 RENTER HOUSEHOLDS BY
PERCENTAGE OF 1999 HOUSEHOLD INCOME SPENT ON GROSS RENT**

Area	Percentage of Rental Households by Annual Income											
	Less than \$10,000		\$10,000 to \$19,999		\$20,000 to \$34,999		\$35,000 to \$49,999		\$50,000 to \$74,999		\$75,000 and Over	
	0 to 29%	30% +	0 to 29%	30% +	0 to 29%	30% +	0 to 29%	30% +	0 to 29%	30%+	0 to 29%	30%+
Alachua	5.1	75.6	18.1	78.5	61.5	35.5	86.8	8.7	95.2	0.7	95.3	0.8
Bradford	10.7	74.6	37.1	44.7	72.7	10.8	80.4	6.7	86.2	0.0	94.3	0.0
Columbia	5.8	63.6	31.2	59.2	84.5	7.1	91.1	0.0	92.1	0.0	83.7	0.0
Dixie	16.6	61.5	39.9	46.4	83.4	2.0	75.0	0.0	63.5	0.0	72.1	0.0
Gilchrist	7.6	50.7	36.4	44.9	72.8	9.9	96.3	0.0	93.3	0.0	83.3	0.0
Hamilton	9.6	54.9	28.4	34.2	66.1	6.6	69.7	0.0	72.2	0.0	97.4	0.0
Lafayette	14.1	82.1	25.4	46.6	67.9	3.8	100.0	0.0	88.5	0.0	100.0	0.0
Madison	14.0	55.4	50.2	33.9	75.5	3.7	42.9	0.0	80.7	0.0	100.0	0.0
Suwannee	12.0	63.1	30.5	42.7	70.2	10.5	90.2	0.0	80.8	0.0	94.6	0.0
Taylor	20.9	60.8	40.2	40.4	72.3	9.4	84.0	0.0	74.8	0.0	100.0	0.0
Union	32.6	49.2	43.8	43.1	83.5	4.2	78.4	0.0	91.4	0.0	87.3	0.0
Region	6.8	72.6	23.3	68.9	66.1	27.4	85.8	6.3	92.2	0.5	93.8	0.6
w/o Alachua	12.5	62.7	24.9	47.4	77.3	7.6	83.7	0.8	84.9	0.0	89.1	0.0
Florida	9.0	68.7	16.5	78.3	52.6	43.0	85.3	10.7	92.4	3.9	94.6	1.3

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 as data was unavailable for all surveyed occupied housing units. Alachua County data may be skewed due to students attending the University of Florida. Further analysis may be warranted to determine the exact impact and need for affordable housing in Alachua County.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3, Florida, Table H73. Washington, D.C. 2002.

TABLE I-3

**PERCENTAGE OF 2000 HOMEOWNER HOUSEHOLDS BY SELECTED
MONTHLY OWNER COSTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF 1999 HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

Area	Percentage of Homeowner Households by Annual Income											
	Less than \$10,000		\$10,000 to \$19,999		\$20,000 to \$34,999		\$35,000 to \$49,999		\$50,000 to \$74,999		\$75,000 and Over	
	0 to 29%	30% +	0 to 29%	30% +	0 to 29%	30% +	0 to 29%	30% +	0 to 29%	30%+	0 to 29%	30%+
Alachua	10.7	71.5	43.1	56.9	61.5	38.5	84.1	15.9	91.8	8.2	97.6	2.2
Bradford	20.9	64.4	54.7	45.3	78.0	22.0	88.6	11.4	91.9	8.1	99.4	0.0
Columbia	25.0	59.1	57.0	43.0	77.0	23.0	90.3	9.7	94.1	5.9	97.8	2.2
Dixie	24.4	60.2	53.3	46.7	83.7	26.3	91.4	8.6	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
Gilchrist	22.3	64.9	52.6	47.4	75.9	24.1	89.8	10.2	94.8	5.2	98.9	0.0
Hamilton	19.8	55.4	55.6	44.4	82.1	17.9	97.0	3.0	97.8	2.2	93.9	6.1
Lafayette	35.1	55.3	71.6	28.4	89.0	11.0	98.1	1.9	95.6	4.4	100.0	0.0
Madison	25.1	61.9	51.8	48.2	80.7	19.3	91.7	8.3	95.7	4.3	98.6	0.0
Suwannee	19.7	58.7	70.0	30.0	74.4	25.6	88.2	11.8	98.7	1.3	98.5	1.5
Taylor	27.0	54.7	64.4	35.6	76.8	23.2	87.4	12.6	97.8	2.2	100.0	0.0
Union	22.6	60.4	46.7	53.3	76.9	23.1	87.5	12.5	95.8	4.2	100.0	0.0
Region	18.7	64.0	51.6	48.4	69.8	30.2	86.7	13.3	93.3	6.7	97.8	1.9
w/o Alachua	23.7	59.4	58.2	41.8	78.0	22.0	90.0	10.0	95.5	4.5	98.6	1.2
Florida	11.3	70.0	41.0	59.0	56.6	43.4	75.0	25.0	88.0	12.0	95.5	3.9

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 as data was unavailable for all surveyed occupied housing units.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3, Florida, Table H97. Washington, D.C. 2002.

RECOMMENDED MODIFICATIONS TO
THE NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA STRATEGIC REGIONAL POLICY PLAN

The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council completed an Evaluation and Appraisal Report of its regional plan on October 23, 2008. The Council is in the process of amending its regional plan to reflect the recommendations contained in the October 28, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report. Therefore, it is recommended that no changes be made to the regional plan except for those recommendations contained in the Council October 28, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report. The Council is anticipated to adopt amendments to its regional plan based on the recommendations of the October 28, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report during 2011.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

AN ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL INDICATORS

A comparison of regional indicators with the latest available data suggests that the regional economy has seen improvements in incomes and number of employees, but has been challenged by a significant increase in unemployment rates. The number of employers and number of employed persons has increased. However, unemployment rates have significantly increased, rising from 2.8 percent in 1999 to 8.2 percent in 2009. In 1999, the unemployment rates in Dixie, Hamilton and Taylor Counties, the three north central Florida counties with the highest unemployment rates, were 5.1, 6.5, and 7.1 percent, respectively. In 2009, the unemployment rates for Dixie, Hamilton and Taylor were 11.4, 11.1 and 10.9 percent, respectively.

REGIONAL GOAL 2.1. ATTRACT NEW HIGH-PAYING, VALUE-ADDED INDUSTRIES AND EXPAND EXISTING BUSINESSES IN THE REGION.

Regional Indicator

- 2.1.1. In 1999, the average number of monthly employment reporting units located within the region was 9,127.

Regional indicator 2.1.1 measures the number of new reporting units within the region. Reporting units are individual employment locations which are subject to the state unemployment compensation law. For example, each supermarket in a supermarket chain is considered a separate reporting unit. An increase in the number of reporting units indicates an increase in the number of businesses. In 2008, the average number of monthly public and private employment reporting units located in the region was 11,028.¹ Between 1999 and 2009, the number of reporting units in the region increased to 12,120, or 9.9 percent.

REGIONAL GOAL 2.2. RAISE THE MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME OF NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA HOUSEHOLDS.

Regional Indicators

- 2.2.1. The 1989 median household income for north central Florida residents was \$21,489.
- 2.2.2. The 1989 per capita income of north central Florida residents was \$11,083.

¹ A reporting unit is an employer (business). Some large employers may be comprised of multiple reporting units. Derived from Florida Statistical Abstract, 2000 and 2009.

The regional plan contains two regional indicators by which to measure achievement of Regional Goal 2.2. Regional Indicator 2.2.1 measures median household income while Regional Indicator 2.2.2 measures the per capita income of the region. The data source for both indicators is the decennial census. Regional Indicator 2.2.1 notes that the 1989 north central Florida median household income was \$21,489. The 2000 Census indicates that the 1999 north central Florida median household income was \$30,771, an increase of 43.2 percent. Regional Indicator 2.2.2 states that the 1989 per capita income of north central Florida residents was \$11,083. The 2000 Census indicates that the 1999 north central Florida per capita income was \$16,187, an increase of 46.1 percent.

REGIONAL GOAL 2.3. EXPAND NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA FOOD, AGRICULTURE, AQUACULTURE, FORESTRY AND RELATED INDUSTRIES IN ORDER TO BE A COMPETITIVE FORCE IN STATE, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETPLACES.

Regional Indicators

- 2.3.1. In 1990, 6,259 north central Florida residents were employed in Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing.
- 2.3.2. In 1990, 4.1 percent of all north central Florida employed residents were employed in Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing.

Due to data limitations, measuring achievement of Regional Goal 2.3 is difficult. The regional plan contains two regional indicators for the goal. Regional Indicator 2.3.1 notes that in 1990, 6,914 north central Florida residents were employed in Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing. The data was derived from the 1990 Census. Inter-census year data is available from the State of Florida, Bureau of Labor Market Information employment and wage reports. Unfortunately, data is suppressed for this employment category for some north central Florida counties, rendering the Bureau of Labor Market Information employment and wages report data unusable as a proxy measure. The Year 2000 Census reports that in 2000, 3,186 north central Florida residents were employed in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing. This represents an employment decrease of 49.1 percent in the industry.

Regional Indicator 2.3.2 notes that in 1990, 4.1 percent of all north central Florida employed residents were employed in Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing. As suggested by the decline in employment within the industry, with Regional Indicator 2.3.1 the percentage of regional employment within this industry fell to 1.7 percent in 2000.

REGIONAL GOAL 2.4. EXPAND THE REGIONAL TOURISM INDUSTRY.

Regional Indicators

- 2.4.1. In 1993, there were 7,315 licensed hotel and motel rooms in the region.
- 2.4.2. In 1993, the licensed seating capacity of all north central Florida restaurants was 51,563.
- 2.4.3. In Fiscal Year 1993-94, total annual attendance at state parks, preserves, and other state-owned areas located in north central Florida was 530,626.

Regional indicators 2.4.1, 2.4.2 and 2.4.3 seek to measure change in the north central Florida tourism and eco-tourism industry. They measure licensed restaurant seats, hotel rooms, and attendance at state parks and preserves. Restaurants, hotel rooms, and parks are used by both local residents and tourists. Therefore, the rate of increase in these measures should be greater than the underlying regional population growth rate if the region is successful in expanding its tourism industry.

Regional Indicator 2.4.1 identifies 7,315 licensed north central Florida hotel and motel rooms in Fiscal Year 1993-94. By Fiscal Year 2009-10, there were 8,684 licensed hotel and motel rooms in the region, representing an annual average growth rate of 1.1 percent during this period. Regional Indicator 2.4.2 identifies the Fiscal Year 1993-94 licensed seating capacity of north central Florida restaurants was 51,563. In Fiscal Year 2009-10 there were 64,607 licensed restaurant seats in the region, representing an average annual increase of 1.5 percent. Regional Indicator 2.4.3 notes that Fiscal Year 1993-94 total annual attendance at state parks, preserves, and other state-owned areas located in north central Florida was 530,626. In Fiscal Year 2008-09, annual attendance increased to 859,475, representing an annual average increase of 3.9 percent between Fiscal Year 1993-94 and Fiscal Year 2008-09.

REGIONAL GOAL 2.5. REDUCE THE REGIONAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE.

Regional Indicators

- 2.5.1. The 1999 regional unemployment rate was 3.1 percent.
- 2.5.2. The 1999 unemployment Rate in Dixie County was 5.1 percent.
- 2.5.3. The 1999 Taylor County unemployment rate was 7.7 percent.
- 2.5.4. The 1999 Hamilton County unemployment rate was 6.5 percent.
- 2.5.5. In 1999, the regional labor force consisted of 184,231 persons.
- 2.5.6. In 1999, 5,680 north central Florida residents were classified as unemployed by the Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security.

Regional unemployment rates have increased since 1999. Regional Indicator 2.5.1 identifies the north central Florida January 1999 unemployment rate as 3.1 percent. In 2009, the average annual regional unemployment rate was 9.6 percent. Regional Indicator 2.5.2 notes the 1999 Dixie County unemployment rate as 5.1 percent. In 2009, the Dixie County unemployment rate had risen to 11.4 percent. Regional Indicator 2.5.3 indicates that the 1999 Taylor County unemployment rate was 7.7 percent. In 2009, the Taylor County unemployment had increased to 10.9 percent. Regional Indicator 2.5.4 identifies the 1999 Hamilton County unemployment rate at 6.5 percent. By 2009, the Hamilton County unemployment rate had risen to 11.1 percent.

The regional labor force grew by approximately 27.8 percent between 1999 and 2009. Regional Indicator 2.5.4 notes that in 1999, the regional labor force consisted of 184,231 persons. By 2009, the labor force had grown to 235,219. At the same time, the number of unemployed persons in the region increased by 2,837 persons. Regional Indicator 2.5.6 states that in 1999, 5,680 north central Florida residents were unemployed. By 2009, the number of unemployed north central Florida residents had increased to 19,337.

REGIONAL GOAL 2.6. ENSURE ADEQUATE PUBLIC UTILITIES AND FACILITIES TO SERVE BUSINESS AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE REGION.

Regional Indicator

2.6.1. In 2000, 26 of the region's 33 incorporated municipalities had centralized water and 20 (plus one unincorporated community) had centralized sewer.

Regional Indicator 2.6.1 identifies 26 of the 33 north central Florida incorporated municipalities with centralized water and 19 with centralized sewer. As of 2010, one municipality, the Town of Fort White, has installed new centralized wastewater treatment systems. The unincorporated community of Dekle/Keaton Beach has a centralized sewer system which was not identified in the regional indicator. Additionally, the unincorporated communities of Dekle/Keaton Beach, Dowling Park, Steinhatchee and Wellborn have centralized water systems not identified in the Regional Indicator.

**NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT
AND THE COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES REPORT**

In support of Regional Goals 2.1 and 2.6, the Council continued activities to maintain its designation as the North Central Florida Economic Development District. Designation as an Economic Development District allows north central Florida local governments to receive financial assistance from the federal Economic Development Administration. In order to receive and maintain Economic Development District designation, the Council maintains and annually reports on its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is a replacement document for the Overall Economic Development Program, which also served as the annual report of the Economic Development District.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy represents a significant change from past reports. It reviews the accomplishments of the past year, describes regional economic conditions, including extensive data analysis of demographic information, business clusters and other pertinent material. The document also includes a list of priority projects eligible for funding by the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

The report then lists goals and objectives and priority projects that the region will pursue in the coming years. As part of its goals and objectives, the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy identifies opportunities and constraints faced by the region in reaching its goals. The goals, opportunities and constraints, objectives, and tactics (policies) of the report are, as follows:

GOAL 1: Diversify the economy of the District and thereby increase the level of employment opportunities and decrease out-migration of productive members of the labor force. This includes non-traditional job sectors and high-skill, high-wage job sectors.

Opportunity(ies):

Utilizing its location and natural resources and current labor force, the area possesses many opportunities for tourism development. Currently this area receives a smaller share of tourism than many similar sized land areas in the rest of the state. Thus there is significant opportunity for expansion of its tourism market share.

Constraint(s):

The region is predominantly rural with a relatively small population base. There is a lack of a skilled labor force in the area which may be needed to attract a more diverse set of industries, and may also preclude entrepreneurial development.

OBJECTIVE 1.1. Increase the number of jobs in the tourism industry by increasing the number of tourists visiting the region by 50 percent over 7 years. This is a change from the base year of 2003 of 1,641,000 visitors to the 2,461,635 visitors in 2010.

OBJECTIVE 1.2. Using 2003 as a base year, increase by 15 % by the Year 2010 the number of professional and high-technical jobs in region, from 20,363 to 22,400.

This can be achieved by supporting the efforts of programs such as the Economic Development Administration, University Center and the Florida IT Centers of Excellence, CHOICES academies in high schools, community college banner programs and similar programs.

Tactic 1.1. Encourage completion of necessary market analyses and feasibility studies to attract compatible development in an area to prevent expensive misuse of capital and resources. Provide technical assistance through the use of Regional Economic Modeling, Inc. (REMI) as a tool in economic development decision-making.

TACTIC 1.2. Identify area workforce needs by conducting a business survey of the region every other year.

OBJECTIVE 1.4. Promote business incubator programs throughout the region which will create more skilled workforce, opportunities for self employment or entrepreneurship, and higher paying jobs from these grass-roots initiatives. Facilitate the expansion of at least one incubator, and add one incubator to the region by 2010.

GOAL 2. Encourage and guide infrastructure development into those areas where needed, and where development would not place undue strain on those aspects of the District that are already overloaded.

Opportunity(ies):

The region and the state have an established growth management process which directs growth and development to urban areas that have the capacity to accommodate new development.

Constraint(s):

a. There are few locations in the region that have excess capacity. In addition, not all the urban areas in the region have municipal water and sewer systems.

b. Growth management laws and rural sprawl reduction must be considered in prioritizing infrastructure projects.

OBJECTIVE 2.1. There are 33 incorporated municipalities in the Economic Development District. Twelve (12) of the 33 do not have a municipal wastewater treatment facility. Increase by three the number of communities in the region with centralized sanitary sewer systems by the Year 2010.

TACTIC 2.1. Provide technical assistance for government units desiring the addition of economic development elements to their comprehensive plans. Constraint: Economic development elements are not required by the state. Of the 11 counties and 33 incorporated municipalities in the region, currently only three municipalities and three counties have economic development elements in their comprehensive plans.

GOAL 3. Encourage District or multi-county cooperation wherever possible to avoid unnecessary and expensive duplication and to lower cost for each party involved.

Opportunity(ies):

a. Counties are increasingly developing regional efforts to provide public services, such a system of state-of-the-art sub-regional landfills that have recently become established throughout the District.

b. The District is currently leading an effort to promote a regional tourism program which focuses on multi-county attraction zones.

c. Furthermore, regional and sub-regional alliances are being fostered by the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee process, the North Florida Economic Development Partnership program, as well as regional transportation organizations.

Constraint(s): Cooperative efforts are often difficult because of parochialism on the part of local citizens and officials; however, as more regional "successes" are achieved, this aspect is easier to overcome.

OBJECTIVE 3.1. Continue to assist in the establishment regional and sub-regional tourist attractions and regional economic development initiatives.

GOAL 4. Support educational and leadership capacity building programs for economic development and tourism industry within the region.

Opportunity: The North Florida Economic Development Partnership has named leadership capacity improvement as one of its primary objectives in its early years of formation. Constraint: Rural economic developers and tourism officials often lack the resources and time to attend educational offerings.

Opportunity: Educational conferences and similar programs of the Florida Economic Development Council provide technical assistance for area economic developers. VISIT FLORIDA and Florida Association of Convention and Visitor's Bureau and similar organizations provide educational opportunities for tourism professionals.

OBJECTIVE 4.1. Continue to support regional educational and capacity building workshops for economic development and hospitality industries through sponsoring at least one educational/entrepreneurial workshop annually.

OBJECTIVE 4.2. Graduate 25 persons from economic development leadership academy annually.

The priority projects chosen by the 2007 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee include:

1. Support the catalyst sites for the North Central Florida Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern
2. Support Original Florida Tourism Task Force
3. Create a strategy to increase labor force in healthcare and life science industries
4. Expand and support regional business incubators and research parks
5. Improve infrastructure near I-75 and I-10 interchanges

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy identifies a regional plan of action to improve economic development conditions in the region and to implement programs to support its priority projects.

**RECOMMENDED MODIFICATIONS TO
THE NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA STRATEGIC REGIONAL POLICY PLAN**

The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council completed an Evaluation and Appraisal Report of its regional plan on October 23, 2008. The Council is in the process of amending its regional plan to reflect the recommendations contained in the October 28, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report. Therefore, it is recommended that Regional Indicators for Regional Goal 2.2 of the proposed October 23, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report-based proposed amendments reflect the construction of a wastewater treatment plant in the Town of Fort White during 2010.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

AN ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL INDICATORS

Progress has been made with regards to the preparedness of the region for coastal storms since 2003. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radio coverage has been expanded. A majority of the coastal communities in the region have warning sirens. Both the quantity and quality of public emergency shelters is improving through the implementation of American Red Cross guidelines which establish minimum structural requirements for emergency shelters. The ability of local governments to receive emergency assistance has increased with all but one north central Florida local government becoming signatories to the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement for Catastrophic Disaster Response and Recovery.

With regards to longer-term planning issues, an additional three north central Florida local governments have become participants in the National Flood Insurance Program since 2003. Furthermore, the two coastal counties in the region have revised the geographic extent of their coastal High Hazard Areas as designated in their local government comprehensive plans. Seven counties and three municipalities in north central Florida have banded together to create a regional hazmat team. However, certain areas of the region remain beyond a 60-minute response time of the nearest available local hazmat team.

REGIONAL GOAL 3.1. IMPROVE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR COASTAL STORMS IN THE REGION.

Regional Indicators

- 3.1.1. As of January 1, 2001, one coastal weather buoy exists in the Gulf of Mexico located approximately 100 miles southwest of Horseshoe Beach.
- 3.1.2. As of January 1, 2000, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radio transmissions covered approximately 70 percent of the region.
- 3.1.3. As of January 1, 2000, four north central Florida coastal communities (Horseshoe Beach, Dekle Beach, Keaton Beach, & Steinhatchee) had emergency warning sirens.
- 3.1.4. As of January 1, 1996, Dixie County had a Long Response clearance time of 9.00 hours.
- 3.1.5. As of January 1, 1996, Taylor County had a Long Response clearance time of 9.25 hours.
- 3.1.6. As of January 1, 2000, 19 of the region's 153 public shelters had been surveyed for compliance with American Red Cross 4496 guidelines.
- 3.1.7. As of January 1, 2000, the region's American Red Cross 4496-Compliant Risk Public Shelter Capacity was 7,100.

Regional Indicator 3.1.1 notes that as of January 1, 2001, one coastal weather buoy existed in the Gulf of Mexico located approximately 100 miles southwest of Horseshoe Beach. As of November 2010, one Coastal-Marine Automated Network coastal weather station is located in Keaton Beach, no weather buoys are located in the Gulf of Mexico between 0 and 50 miles of Steinhatchee, three weather buoys are located between 51 and 100 miles of Steinhatchee, two weather buoys are located between 101 and 150 miles of

Steinhatchee, and four weather buoys are located in the Gulf of Mexico between 151 to 175 miles of Steinhatchee. Weather buoys provide valuable information regarding temperature, wind speed, wind direction, and barometric pressure. Using this information, meteorologists can predict storm surge height and issue appropriate weather warnings. The regional plan notes a need for one additional weather buoy located at 10 and 50 miles off-shore from Steinhatchee to help meteorologists predict storm surges as coastal storms move inland.

Regional Indicator 3.1.2 notes that as of January 1, 2000, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radio transmissions covered approximately 70.0 percent of the region. As of November 2010, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radio transmissions covered approximately 98 percent of the region. Computer-generated National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radio coverage maps developed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration suggest that, with the exception of a small parallel to Interstate Highway 10 in Madison County, all of north central Florida is covered by at least one of the weather radio stations identified in Table III-1, below.

TABLE III-1
NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
WEATHER RADIO COVERAGE

Location	Station	Broadcast Frequency	Counties Covered or Partially Covered
Lake City	KEB-97	162.400mHz	Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Suwannee, Union
Tallahassee	KIH-24	162.400mHz	Madison, Taylor
Palatka	WNG-522	162.425mHz	Alachua, Bradford
Salem (Taylor County)	WWF-88	162.425mHz	Dixie, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor
Morristown (Levy County)	KWN38	162.55mHz	Alachua, Bradford, Columbia Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Taylor, Union
Gainesville	WXJ-60	162.475mHz	Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Lafayette, Suwannee, Union
Valdosta, GA	WWH-31	162.500mHz	Hamilton, Madison, Suwannee
Ocala	WWF-85	162.525mHz	Alachua

Source: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/Maps/PHP/florida.php>, November 2010.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radio website notes that the coverage maps were calculated using a computer model and station data using ideal weather conditions. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration notes that coverage may be 5 to 10 percent less than indicated by the maps. Suwannee County Emergency Management personnel have noted that, since the Live Oak National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radio station was moved to Lake City in 2004, Suwannee County does not receive reliable coverage west of U.S. Highway 129, at least during periods of inclement weather. Upgrading the existing 300-watt National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radio station in Lake City to a 1,000-watt station may provide the necessary coverage for the remaining unserved areas of Suwannee County.

Regional Indicator 3.1.3 notes that as of January 1, 2000, four north central Florida coastal communities (Horseshoe Beach, Dekle Beach, Keaton Beach, & Steinhatchee) had emergency warning sirens. In 2000, the unincorporated communities of Suwannee and Jena in Dixie County did not have warning sirens. As of November 2010, Dixie County has installed a “Reverse 911” notification system which is capable of notifying Dixie County coastal residents who have telephone service of approaching coastal storms.

Regional Indicator 3.1.4 notes that as of January 1, 1996, Dixie County had a Long Response clearance time of 9.00 hours. Similarly, Regional Indicator 3.1.5 notes that, as of January 1, 1996, Taylor County had a Long Response clearance time of 9.25 hours. In 2010, the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council completed a hurricane evacuation study for the region. Clearance times identified in the study are not comparable to the clearance times identified in Regional Indicators 3.1.4 and 3.1.5. The 1996 Cedar Key Basin, Florida Hurricane Evacuation Study, Draft Technical Data Report identified “long” hurricane response times, which were used as regional indicators. Long response times referred to hurricane warnings issued in the middle of the night. The 2010 hurricane evacuation study dispensed with this concept, instead reporting average clearance times by “Level.” A “level” is comparable to the Category 1-5 Saffir-Simpson Hurricane classification system, with Level A comparable to a Category 1 hurricane and a Level E hurricane comparable to a Category 5 hurricane.

The 2010 hurricane evacuation study also identified clearance times to three separate destinations: Clearance Time to Shelter; In-County Clearance Time, and Out of County Clearance Time. Clearance Time to Shelter refers to the time necessary to safely evacuate vulnerable residents and visitors to a “point of safety” within the county based on a specific hazard, behavioral assumptions and evacuation scenario. Calculated from the point in time when the evacuation order is given to the point in time when the last vehicle reaches a point of safety within the county. In-County Clearance Time refers to the time required from the point an evacuation order is given until the last evacuee can either leave the evacuation zone or arrive at safe shelter within the county (excludes evacuees leaving the county, on their own). Out of County Clearance Time refers to the time necessary to safely evacuate vulnerable residents and visitors to a “point of safety” outside the county. It is calculated from the time an evacuation order is given to the time when the last vehicle assigned an external destination exits the county.

TABLE III-2

2010 CLEARANCE TIMES FOR BASE SCENARIO

County	Clearance Times by Level (in Minutes)				
	Level A	Level B	Level C	Level D	Level E
Clearance Time to Shelter					
Dixie	11.0	11.0	11.0	11.5	11.5
Taylor	11.5	11.5	12.5	12.5	12.0
In-County Clearance Time					
Dixie	11.5	11.5	11.5	12.5	12.5
Taylor	12.5	12.5	12.5	13.0	13.0
Out of County Clearance Time					
Dixie	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.5	13.0
Taylor	13.5	13.5	13.0	13.5	13.5

Source: 2010 Statewide Regional Evacuation Study for the North Central Florida Region, Volume 1: Technical Data Report, North Central Florida Regional Planning Council, June 2010.

Regional Indicator 3.1.6 notes that, as of January 1, 2000, 19 of the 153 public shelters in the region had been surveyed for compliance with American Red Cross 4496 guidelines. Similarly, Regional Indicator 3.1.7 notes that, as of January 1, 2000, the American Red Cross 4496-Compliant Risk Public Shelter Capacity for the region was 7,100. In 1993, the State of Florida began using American Red Cross guidelines to determine the fitness of public shelters and their capacities. The American Red Cross identifies two different types of shelters, Host and Risk, and correspondingly, two different county shelter capacities. Host shelters consist of buildings used in counties which are not experiencing a flood or weather emergency to house residents from counties experiencing a flood or weather emergency. Under American Red Cross guidelines, Host shelters are subject to less stringent standards than Risk shelters. Risk shelters are buildings used within a county experiencing a weather-related emergency such as a hurricane. Risk shelters must be able to withstand winds of 150 miles per hour, be located outside a flood hazard/storm surge area, and comply with the other provisions of American Red Cross document 4496, Guidelines for Shelter Survey.

Tables III-3 through III-5 examine changes in north central Florida public shelter capacity between January 2000 and November 2010. As indicated by the tables, the region has experienced a significant increase in both Host and Risk shelter capacity. In 2000, the region had a Risk shelter capacity of 7,100. As of November 2010, Risk shelter capacity increased to 36,680. Additionally, the number of shelters surveyed for compliance with American Red Cross 4496 guidelines increased from 19 in 2000 to 146 in 2010.

**TABLE III-3
2000 NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA PUBLIC SHELTER CAPACITY**

County	No. of Shelters	Host Capacity	No. Shelters Surveyed for ARC 4496 Compliance	Risk Capacity ARC 4496 Compliant	Risk Capacity ARC 4496 Non-compliant	PSN* Storm Capacity
Alachua	79	4,139	0	0	8,777	0
Bradford	6	0	0	0	0	0
Columbia	24	0	0	0	0	0
Dixie	3	384	0	0	0	0
Gilchrist	6	2,258	4	1,380	428	52
Hamilton	5	0	0	0	0	0
Lafayette	6	1,394	0	0	842	0
Madison	8	3,810	8	3,810	0	0
Suwannee	6	4,199	0	0	0	0
Taylor	7	2,590	7	1,910	0	0
Union	3	0	0	0	0	0
Region	153	18,774	19	7,100	10,047	52

*Persons with Special Needs.
ARC = American Red Cross.

Source: Florida Department of Community Affairs, Division of Emergency Management, January 3, 2000.

TABLE III-4

2010 NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA PUBLIC SHELTER CAPACITY

County	No. of Shelters	Risk Shelter Capacity ARC 4496 Compliant	Category 4/5 Shelter Demand	Category 4/5 Shelter Surplus/(Deficit)	PSN* Storm Capacity	PSN* Storm Demand	PSN* Surplus/(Deficit)
Alachua	24	6,451	9,576	(3,125)	534	2,450	(1,916)
Bradford	10	1,462	2,294	(832)	197	136	61
Columbia	21	4,661	6,337	(1,676)	0	76	(76)
Dixie	15	2,051	2,562	(511)	84	55	29
Gilchrist	9	3,243	2,170	1,073	102	52	50
Hamilton	12	1,397	1,537	(140)	101	10	91
Lafayette	8	570	1,185	(615)	60	1	59
Madison	21	4,487	1782	2,705	28	30	(2)
Suwannee	22	3484	5768	(2,284)	50	81	(31)
Taylor	17	3,623	2,576	1,050	0	142	(142)
Union	13	1,251	1,277	(26)	33	82	(49)
Region	172	32,680	37,064	(4,381)	1,189	3,115	(1,926)

ARC = American Red Cross.

*Persons with Special Needs.

Source: 2010 Statewide Emergency Shelter Plan, Florida Division of Emergency Management, January 31, 2010.

TABLE III-5**CHANGE IN NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA PUBLIC SHELTER CAPACITY
2000-2010**

County	Risk Capacity ARC 4496 Compliant	PSN* Storm Capacity
Alachua	6,451	534
Bradford	1,462	197
Columbia	4,661	0
Dixie	2,051	84
Gilchrist	1,863	50
Hamilton	1,397	101
Lafayette	570	60
Madison	677	28
Suwannee	3,484	50
Taylor	1,713	0
Union	1,251	33
Region	25,580	1,137

Source: North Central Florida Regional Planning Council, November 2010.

**REGIONAL GOAL 3.2. PARTICIPATION BY ALL NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA
LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE NATIONAL FLOOD
INSURANCE PROGRAM.**

Regional Indicators

- 3.2.1. As of January 1, 2000, 34 of the region's 35 local governments with mapped flood hazard areas within their jurisdiction participated in the National Flood Insurance Program.
- 3.2.2. As of January 1, 2000, National Flood Insurance Rate Maps are unavailable for eight north central Florida municipalities.

Regional Indicator 3.2.1 notes that as of January 1, 2000, 34 of the 35 north central Florida local governments with mapped flood hazard areas within their jurisdiction participated in the National Flood Insurance Program. As of November 11, 2010, 39 of the 42 north central Florida local governments with mapped flood hazard areas within their jurisdictions participated in the National Flood Insurance Program.

Regional Indicator 3.2.2 notes that as of January 1, 2000, National Flood Insurance Rate Maps are unavailable for eight north central Florida municipalities. As of November 2010, National Flood Insurance Rate Maps are available for all north central Florida municipalities.

REGIONAL GOAL 3.3. REDUCE RESPONSE TIMES OF REGIONAL HAZARDOUS MATERIALS RESPONSE TEAMS TO 60 MINUTES FOR HAZARDOUS MATERIALS EMERGENCIES IN PERRY, CROSS CITY, AND GREENVILLE.

Regional Indicator

- 3.3.1. As of January 1, 2000, no regional hazardous materials response team is located within a sixty minute response time of Perry, Cross City, or Greenville.

Regional Indicator 3.3.1 notes, that as of January 1, 2000, no regional hazardous materials response team is located within a 60-minute response time of Perry, Cross City, or Greenville. As of November 2010, six additional communities had joined the North Central Florida Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team. These are: City of Alachua, City of Lake City, City of Gainesville, City of Starke, City of Fanning Springs and Dixie County. The District 2 Regional Domestic Security Task Force has hazmat response capabilities located in Tallahassee that also provides coverage to the cities of Madison and Perry. While the response times to Perry and Greenville are still in excess of 60 minutes, the response time to Cross City has been reduced to under 60 minutes with the establishment of a hazmat response trailer in Fanning Springs.

There are areas of north central Florida where the closest hazardous materials response team is in either Valdosta, Georgia, or Dothan, Alabama. The Local Emergency Planning Committee has been working to establish a tri-state hazardous materials mutual aid agreement. As of November 2010, an agreement has not been adopted by all of the parties. Nevertheless, cross-state hazardous materials response is occurring without the guidance of an agreement.

REGIONAL GOAL 3.4. IMPROVE THE ABILITY OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS TO RESPOND TO HAZARDOUS MATERIALS EMERGENCES.

Regional Indicator

- 3.4.1. As of January 1, 2000, no commodity flow studies have been undertaken to determine the types and amounts of hazardous materials moving via railroads and highways in the region.

Regional Indicator 3.4.1 notes, that as of January 1, 2000, no commodity flow studies had been undertaken to determine the types and amounts of hazardous materials moving via railroads and highways in the region. In 2003, the Local Emergency Planning Committee conducted a hazardous materials commodity flow study. The study was used to identify the most common chemicals transported through the region. The information helps guide the selection of hazardous materials training classes as well as planning efforts by the LEPC. The commodity flow study looked at transportation on Interstate Highways 10 and 75, as well as U.S. Highways 19 and 301. The most common hazardous materials identified in the study included flammable liquids, toxic and corrosive noncombustible substances, water-miscible, flammable liquids and other toxic or corrosive substances.

REGIONAL GOAL 3.5. ALL NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ARE SIGNATORIES TO THE STATEWIDE MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT FOR CATASTROPHIC DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY.

Regional Indicator

- 3.5.1. As of January 6, 2000, 41 north central Florida local governments had adopted the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement for Catastrophic Disaster Response and Recovery.

Regional Indicator 3.5.1 notes, that as of January 6, 2000, 41 north central Florida local governments have adopted the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement for Catastrophic Disaster Response and Recovery. As of November 2010, 43 north central Florida local governments have adopted the agreement.

**RECOMMENDED MODIFICATIONS TO
THE NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA STRATEGIC REGIONAL POLICY PLAN**

The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council completed an Evaluation and Appraisal Report of its regional plan on October 23, 2008. The Council is in the process of amending its regional plan to reflect the recommendations contained in the October 28, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report. Therefore, it is recommended that changes be made to the background statement as well as the Regional Indicators for Regional Goal 3.1 to reflect the latest information included in this Evaluation and Appraisal Report regarding hurricane evacuation and sheltering.

NATURAL RESOURCES OF REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

INTRODUCTION

A review of regional indicators suggests that natural resources of regional significance are generally healthy, with a few, isolated areas of degradation. While a core monitoring network is in place, consideration should be given to expanding the network to include all waterbodies identified as natural resources of regional significance. Just as important, consideration should be given to improving the frequency of monitoring in order to assure the provision of historical data for trend analysis.

Local government comprehensive plans are generally consistent with the regional plan with regards to identifying and protecting Natural Resources of Regional Significance. This conclusion is based on a staff assessment of local government comprehensive plan, plan amendment, and Evaluation and Appraisal Report reviews made by the Council since adoption of the regional plan.

AN ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL INDICATORS

REGIONAL GOAL 4.1. PRESERVE BIG BEND COASTAL AND MARINE RESOURCES IDENTIFIED AS NATURAL RESOURCES OF REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS OF RESIDENTS IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE TO THE REGION.

Regional Indicators

- 4.1.1. As of January, 2000, the Big Bend Salt Marsh (Dixie and Taylor County) coastline comprised 48,190 acres.
- 4.1.2. In December, 1991, that portion of the Big Bend Seagrass Beds extending four miles seaward of the Dixie and Taylor County coastline, was comprised of 37,775.6 acres of continuous seagrass, 95,342.9 acres of open water, 150.1 acres of mollusk/oyster reefs/beds, 28,447.0 acres which were not mapped, 28,446.1 acres of very sparse patchy seagrass, 2,348.2 acres of sparse patchy seagrass, 10,424.1 acres of moderate patchy seagrass, and 20,906.3 acres of dense patchy seagrass.¹
- 4.1.3. In 1996, the Florida Middle Grounds comprised 132,000 acres.
- 4.1.4. As of January, 2002, a Florida Department of Health No-Fish-Consumption Advisory is in effect for the Fenholloway River due to elevated dioxin levels in the river's fish.
- 4.1.5. As of January, 2002, there was one National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System discharge permit within the Econfina-Fenholloway River watershed.
- 4.1.6. As of January, 2002, the communities of Fanning Springs and Old Town were not serviced by a centralized wastewater treatment system.

¹Florida Marine Research Institute, January, 2000.

- 4.1.7. As of January, 2002, no offshore oil or natural gas wells are located within 100 miles of the Dixie and Taylor counties coastline.
- 4.1.8. As of January, 2002, no offshore oil or natural gas wells are located within the Florida Middle Ground.

In 2006, there were 16 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System stormwater facility permits and 8 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System wastewater permits in Taylor County. Also in 2006, there were 4 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System stormwater facility permits and 2 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System wastewater permits in Dixie County.

In order to implement the regional goal, accurate information, compiled on a regular basis, on the health and areal extent of coastal natural resources of regional significance is necessary for trend analysis. However, for most of these regional indicators, updated information is either unavailable or is incompatible with older information due to differing methodologies used in its creation.

No new information is available on the extent of the Florida Middle Ground. The Suwannee River Water Management District, in conjunction with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, has prepared a new map of the Big Bend Seagrass Beds based on year 2001 aerial photography. The new data indicates that in 2001, that portion of the Big Bend Seagrass Beds extending 6 nautical miles seaward of the Dixie and Taylor County coastline was comprised of 102,530.5 acres of bays and estuaries, 63,992.3 acres of open water, 7,638.6 acres of tidal flats, 11,515.0 acres of patchy seagrass, 192,556.6 acres of continuous seagrass, and 108,423.7 acres which were unclassified.² However, the new map does not cover the same geographic area as their previous study, which served as the information source for Regional Indicator 4.1.2, nor does the mapped area cover all of the State jurisdictional waters off the Dixie and Taylor County coastline.

On December 31, 1997 the Florida Department of Environmental Protection reclassified the Fenholloway River to a Class III waterbody.³ As a result of the reclassification, the river must now meet the minimum Florida Department of Environmental Protection Class III water quality standards. Although not a Natural Resource of Regional Significance, the river flows into the Big Bed Seagrass Beds, which is a Natural Resource of Regional Significance as identified and mapped in the regional plan. A pulp mill has discharged its effluent into the Fenholloway River for many years and is the primary source of river pollution, consisting primarily of ammonia, chlorine, and dioxins, cancer-causing agents which can persist in the environment for generations. A No-Fish-Consumption Advisory has been in effect since September 1990, for the Fenholloway River due to elevated dioxin levels of fish found in the river.⁴

²North Central Florida Regional Planning Council, March 2007. Derived from Seagrass Habitat and Monitoring in Florida's Big Bend, Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute and Suwannee River Water Management District, 2006.

³All surfacewaters within the region are designated as Class III waters except most tidal creeks and coastal waters, which are designated as Class II. Class III provides for recreation and propagation and management of fish and wildlife; Class II, for shellfish propagation or harvesting.

⁴Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Environmental Toxicology, February, 2000.

The pulp mill is currently permitted to discharge up to 50 million gallons per day of effluent into the Fenholloway River. The pulp mill has since substituted chlorine dioxide as a bleaching agent. As a result, dioxide concentrations within fish tissue collected at key points along the river have been reduced. The Florida Department of Health has removed its Bowfin fish consumption advisory due to dioxin, but has retained its Bowfin fish consumption advisory for mercury. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Total Maximum Daily Load report for the Fenholloway River notes that, while dioxin levels are reduced, the river is still in violation of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency water quality standards for dioxin, as well as dissolved oxygen, biochemical oxygen demand, un-ionized ammonia, and fecal coliform.⁵

In order to meet Class III water quality standards, the pulp mill has proposed eliminating the discharge of effluent to the Fenholloway River by discharging to the Fenholloway River approximately 1.7 miles upstream of its estuary and restoring the headwater wetlands of the river. In May of 1995, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Florida Department of Environmental Protection granted authorization allowing Florida Department of Environmental Protection to issue a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit for the project while continuing requirements for U.S. Environmental Protection Agency oversight. The issuance of an National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit for the pipeline is currently the subject of court action. While not a direct measure of water quality, the number of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits is an indicator of the number of point-pollution sources which have the potential to adversely affect the health of coastal waters. Information is not readily available on the number of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System discharge permits by watershed. However, information is available on the number of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits by county.

The City of Fanning Springs and the unincorporated community of Old Town are located adjacent to, and separated by, the Suwannee River. Both communities are located approximately 30 miles upstream of the estuary. Unlike the community of Suwannee, neither Fanning Springs nor Old Town have centralized wastewater service. Given their distance from the estuary, it is unclear what impacts the wastewaters generated by these communities have on the estuary and the Gulf. Nevertheless, a 1998 study commissioned by the Suwannee River Water Management District which surveyed the needs of north central Florida communities for water, wastewater, and stormwater services identified a need for centralized wastewater service in these two communities.⁶ The two communities have yet to develop a centralized wastewater system, although Fanning Springs has begun the process of constructing a system.

Since the last update to the regional plan, the Council reviewed and commented on the U.S. Department of Interior's new Outer Continental Shelf 5-Year Oil and Gas Leasing Program for the period from July 2007 through June 2012. The proposed leasing program does not identify any areas for lease within 100 miles of the coastline of Dixie and Taylor Counties or within the Florida Middle Ground. As of January 2007, no off-shore oil or gas wells were located within 100 miles of the Dixie-Taylor County coast or the Florida Middle Ground.

⁵Final Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) in Fenholloway River, Bevins (Boggy) Creek, Econfinia River Basin, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, April 2007.

⁶Suwannee River Water Management District Quality Communities Needs Report, Suwannee River Water Management District, Live Oak, Florida. June, 1998.

REGIONAL GOAL 4.2. MAINTAIN AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF HIGH-QUALITY GROUNDWATER TO MEET THE NEEDS OF NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA RESIDENTS, IN RECOGNITION OF ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE CONTINUED GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION.

Regional Indicators

- 4.2.1. As of January 2002, the quantity of potable water contained in the Floridan Aquifer underlying the north central Florida region, it's average daily recharge and discharge, were unknown.
- 4.2.2. In 1995, an estimated 205.7 million gallons per day of water were withdrawn from north central Florida groundwater sources.
- 4.2.3. As of January, 2002, north central Florida contained 19 first-magnitude springs, 101 second-magnitude springs, and 70 third-magnitude springs.
- 4.2.4. As of January 1, 2000, the known Nitrate Nitrogen readings for north central Florida first magnitude springs, and their date of measure, were as indicated in Table IV-1, below.

**TABLE IV-1
WATER QUALITY OF FIRST-MAGNITUDE SPRINGS
OF NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA**

Spring Name	County	Nitrate Nitrogen (Milligrams per Liter)	Date of Measure
ALA 112971	Alachua	0.80	5/26/98
Alanaha Rise	Hamilton	0.24	9/25/97
Blue	Lafayette	1.87	7/16/97
Blue Hole	Columbia	0.04	6/17/98
Blue Spring	Madison	1.72	6/15/98
COL61981	Columbia	0.45	6/1/98
Columbia	Columbia	0.76	5/26/98
Devil's Ear	Gilchrist	1.47	11/4/97
Falmouth Spring	Suwannee	0.78	6/17/98
GIL1012973	Gilchrist	1.38	10/12/97
Holton Spring	Hamilton	0.40	9/25/97
Hornsby Spring	Alachua	1.07	4/27/98
Ichetucknee Group	Columbia	n/a	n/a
July	Columbia	1.55	11/4/97
Lime Run Sink	Suwannee	0.70	5/14/98
Nutall Rise	Taylor	0.08	7/6/99
Santa Fe Rise	Columbia	0.78	5/26/98
Steinhatchee Rise	Taylor	0.03	7/6/99
Troy Spring	Lafayette	2.68	7/7/99

n/a = not available.

Source: Springs of the Suwannee River Basin in Florida and Springs of the Aucilla, Coastal, and Waccasassa Basins in Florida, Suwannee River Water Management District, Live Oak, Florida. February, 2000.

While the amount of water flowing through the Floridan Aquifer is still unknown, information exists regarding annual withdrawals from the groundwater sources. Table IV-2 reports north central Florida water withdrawals by source for the year 2005, and is the latest data reported in the Florida Statistical Abstract. As can be seen in the table, 332.9 million gallons per day of water were withdrawn in the region during 2005. Approximately 75.5 percent of total north central Florida withdrawals were from groundwater sources, principally the Floridan Aquifer. The reliance of the region on groundwater sources is significantly higher than statewide. In 2005, approximately 23.1 percent of total water withdrawn statewide was from groundwater sources.

TABLE IV-2

**WATER WITHDRAWALS BY SOURCE, 2005
(MILLION GALLONS PER DAY)**

Area	Total Withdrawal	Withdrawal Source	
		Ground Water	Surface Water
Alachua	60.56	59.89	0.67
Bradford	7.86	7.8	0.06
Columbia	12.49	12.28	0.21
Dixie	3.75	3.72	0.03
Gilchrist	14.89	14.6	0.29
Hamilton	54.86	54.49	0.37
Lafayette	8.17	8.02	0.15
Madison	14.29	13.96	0.33
Suwannee	103.15	26.28	76.87
Taylor	49.24	46.75	2.49
Union	3.67	3.63	0.04
Region	332.93	251.42	81.51
Florida	20,146.40	4,245.69	14,108.06

Source: Florida Statistical Abstract, 2009, Table 8.41.

The 2010 Draft Water Supply Assessment for the Suwannee River Water Management District identifies four water supply planning areas in north central Florida for which projected available groundwater supplies are insufficient to meet projected year 2030 demand without causing significant adverse impacts to the minimum flows and levels of surfacewaters. Within one year of designating these areas as Regional Water Supply Planning areas, they will also be designated as Water Resource Caution Areas by the District. A Water Resource Caution Area is where existing sources of water will not be adequate to satisfy future water demands and sustain water resources. Water Supply Planning Areas have been identified for some or all of Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Suwannee and Union Counties by the Suwannee River Water Management District. Similarly, the St. Johns River Water Management District 2008 Draft Water Supply Assessment identifies all of its area of jurisdiction located within Bradford and Alachua Counties as Water Supply Planning Areas and Potential Water Resource Caution Areas. Areas so designated represent over 40 percent of the region.

Springs provide a useful measure of groundwater quality. The regional plan currently includes as a measure of groundwater quality the nitrate nitrogen value of all first magnitude springs.⁷ Nitrate nitrogen is a human-induced pollutant. High concentrations of nitrates may create an imbalance in a natural surfacewater system, causing algal blooms or other adverse effects. Nitrate nitrogen concentrations in excess of the state drinking water standard of 10 mg per liter of water can result in Methemoglobinemia (blue baby syndrome) in infants.

Table IV-3 indicates change in nitrate nitrogen over time for north central Florida first magnitude springs. It compares nitrate nitrogen data from Table 4.5 of the regional plan compared to the most recent samples. As can be seen, six springs have experienced an increase in nitrate nitrogen, while 17 springs have experienced a decrease in nitrate nitrogen. Perhaps most noteworthy is the frequency of the sampling. Of the 26 springs identified in Table IV-3, two have not been sampled since 2005, 7 have not been sampled since 2002 and an additional 7 have not been sampled since 2001.

TABLE IV-3

**NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS WATER QUALITY
CHANGE OVER TIME**

Spring Name	County	Nitrate Nitrogen (Milligrams per Liter)	Date of Measure	Nitrate Nitrogen (Milligrams per Liter)	Date of Measure	Percent Change
ALA 112971	Alachua	0.80	5/26/98	.53	6/8/06	(33.75)
Alapaha Rise	Hamilton	0.24	9/25/97	.26	11/21/06	8.33
Blue	Lafayette	1.87	7/16/97	2.35	7/18/06	25.67
Blue Hole	Columbia	0.04	6/17/98	.74	7/31/05	1,750.00
Blue Spring	Madison	1.72	6/15/98	1.53	6/1/06	(11.05)
COL61981	Columbia	0.45	6/1/98	.25	6/8/06	(44.44)
Columbia	Columbia	0.76	5/26/98	.39	6/8/06	(48.68)
Devil's Ear	Gilchrist	1.47	11/4/97	2.0	7/14/05	36.05
Falmouth Spring	Suwannee	0.78	6/17/98	1.14	6/28/06	46.15
GIL1012973	Gilchrist	1.38	10/12/97	0.69	8/22/01	(50.00)
Holton Spring	Hamilton	0.40	9/25/97		no new data	n/a

⁷First magnitude springs are those springs which discharge in excess of 100 cubic feet of water per second.

TABLE IV-3

**NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS WATER QUALITY
CHANGE OVER TIME**

Spring Name	County	Nitrate Nitrogen (Milligrams per Liter)	Date of Measure	Nitrate Nitrogen (Milligrams per Liter)	Date of Measure	Percent Change
Hornsby Spring	Alachua	1.07	4/27/98	0.72	4/27/06	(32.71)
Ichetucknee Group	Columbia					
ICH001C1	Ichetucknee Springs Group	0.67	10/16/91	0.83	9/16/02	23.88
ICH001C2	Ichetucknee Springs Group	.85	6/10/92	0.70	6/25/02	(17.65)
ICH001C3	Ichetucknee Springs Group	.59	6/10/92	0.49	6/25/02	(16.95)
ICH001C4	Ichetucknee Springs Group	0.57	6/10/92	0.45	6/25/02	(21.05)
ICH001C5	Ichetucknee Springs Group	0.46	6/10/92	0.32	6/25/02	(30.43)
ICH001C6	Ichetucknee Springs Group	1.45	6/17/98	0.88	6/25/02	(39.31)
ICH001C7	Ichetucknee Springs Group	0.50	6/16/98	0.40	6/25/02	(20.00)
ICH001C8	Ichetucknee Springs Group	0.71	6/16/98	0.57	6/25/07	(19.72)
July	Columbia	1.55	11/4/97	1.43	6/7/00	(7.74)
Lime Run Sink	Suwannee	0.70	5/14/98	0.48	7/19/00	(31.43)
Nutall Rise	Taylor	0.08	7/6/99		no new	n/a

TABLE IV-3

**NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS WATER QUALITY
CHANGE OVER TIME**

Spring Name	County	Nitrate Nitrogen (Milligrams per Liter)	Date of Measure	Nitrate Nitrogen (Milligrams per Liter)	Date of Measure	Percent Change
					information available	
Santa Fe Rise	Columbia	0.78	5/26/98	0.25	5/22/00	(67.95)
Steinhatchee Rise	Taylor	0.03	7/6/99		no new information available	n/a
Troy Spring	Lafayette	2.68	7/7/99	2.36	7/16/06	(11.94)

n/a = not available.

Sources: Springs of the Suwannee River Basin in Florida and Springs of the Aucilla, Coastal, and Waccasassa Basins in Florida, Suwannee River Water Management District, Live Oak, Florida. February, 2000; Suwannee River Water Management District unpublished data, May 2007; and Florida Department of Environmental Protection, May 2007.

In December of 2003, the Council issued a document entitled, A Review of the Florida Council of 100 Report Entitled, "Improving Florida's Water Supply Management Infrastructure". The Council document was a rebuttal to a series of recommendations calling for the development of a statewide water authority with the power to transfer surface and groundwater across regional planning council and water management district boundaries. The Council rebuttal noted that the referenced report provided insufficient information to substantiate its conclusions and recommendations. The Council report noted,

The Planning Council views water conservation, re-use, and construction of desalination plants under the current water supply planning process as better alternatives than statewide transfer of water. The Planning Council also views additional funding to accelerate the process of establishing minimum flows and levels combined with clearer legislative direction to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection with regard to its responsibility in ensuring an adequate water supply statewide as better alternatives than the establishment of a statewide water commission. Furthermore, the Planning Council continues to find the existing state policy of "local sources first" combined with the protection of minimum flows and levels for natural resource protection and future growth and economic development as the most appropriate approach to statewide water supply planning and consumption.

In January of 2010, the Council passed Resolution 2010-01 opposing interbasin transfer of water and the establishment of a central regulatory commission for water resources and supply development. In the resolution, the Council relied on various Natural Resources of Regional Significant Element Goal 4.2 and its associated policies for guidance in drafting the Resolution.

REGIONAL GOAL 4.3. PROTECT ALL SOURCES OF RECHARGE TO THE FLORIDAN AQUIFER FROM ALL ACTIVITIES WHICH WOULD IMPAIR THESE FUNCTIONS OR CAUSE A DEGRADATION IN THE QUALITY OF THE WATER BEING RECHARGED IN RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING ADEQUATE SUPPLIES OF HIGH-QUALITY GROUNDWATER FOR THE REGION.

Regional Indicators

- 4.3.1. As of January, 2000, the St. Johns River and Suwannee River Water Management Districts had identified and mapped 1,141,028 acres of areas of high recharge potential to the Floridan Aquifer within north central Florida.
- 4.3.2. In fiscal year 1996-97, there were 170,890 visitors to Ichetucknee Springs State Park.⁸
- 4.3.4. As of January, 2000, the Suwannee River Water Management District had identified and mapped 158,585 acres of stream-to-sink watersheds located within both its jurisdictional boundaries and within north central Florida.
- 4.3.5. In 2001, eight sinks were delineated as natural resources of regional significance in the North Central Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan.

The regional plan incorporates maps of high aquifer recharge areas and stream-to-sink watersheds prepared by the water management districts. The District maps are subject to change as they receive updated information or are otherwise better able to define these areas. As indicated by the regional measures, the districts have identified additional stream-to-sink watershed acreage and additional areas of high aquifer recharge potential to the Floridan Aquifer.

The number of annual visitors to Ichetucknee Springs State Park is an indirect measure of the health of the Ichetucknee River and its associated springs. The park limits the number of visitors to prevent adverse impacts to the Ichetucknee River. A large increase in the number of visitors could have adverse impacts on the Ichetucknee River. Therefore, annual park attendance is included as a regional indicator. In Fiscal Year 2005-06, attendance was 167,629, roughly the same as in Fiscal Year 1996-97.

The regional plan high aquifer recharge map is based on areas identified as having high aquifer recharge potential to the Floridan Aquifer by the Suwannee River Water Management District and areas identified as contributing 12 inches or more of recharge annually to the Floridan Aquifer within the St. Johns River Water Management District. The St. Johns River Water Management District has revised its recharge area map since 2003. As a result, the total acreage of high aquifer recharge area within the region has decreased to 1,111,112 acres.

⁸1998 Florida Statistical Abstract, Table 19.52.

Subsequent to the 2003 amendments to the regional plan, Alachua County has recently adopted as part of its Comprehensive Plan a more accurate map of high aquifer recharge areas. In its review of County Comprehensive Plan amendments in 2010, the Council accepted the County high aquifer recharge map in lieu of the high aquifer recharge map included in the regional plan.

REGIONAL GOAL 4.4. PROTECT ALL LISTED SPECIES LOCATED IN NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA.

Regional Indicators

4.4.1. As of February, 2000, the Florida Natural Areas Inventory Element Occurrence Database contains 769 locations within the region of sightings of listed plant and animal species.

4.4.2. As of February, 2000, 78 listed species exist in north central Florida.

As of March 2007, the Florida Natural Areas Inventory Element Occurrence Database contains the location of 1,315 entries of species of interest in north central Florida, 768 of which are listed species.⁹ Of these, 67 are unduplicated occurrences of different listed species.

Since February 2000, changes have occurred in the Florida Natural Areas Inventory database. New entries have been added while others have been removed. New plants and animals have been listed while the protected status of others has been removed. Table IV-4 identifies occurrences of listed species which were not identified in the region in 2000. Table IV-5 identifies species which were in the year 2000 edition of the Florida Natural Areas Inventory database but for various reasons were deleted from the March 2007 edition of the database.

⁹The Florida Natural Areas Inventory database also includes 81 occurrences of data sensitive species for which data is omitted. Therefore the listing status of these occurrences could not be determined.

TABLE IV-4

**STATE AND FEDERALLY LISTED SPECIES KNOWN TO OCCUR IN
NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA REGION WHICH HAVE BEEN ADDED TO
THE FLORIDA NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY
ELEMENT OCCURRENCE DATABASE SINCE 1997**

Common Name	Scientific Name
American Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus palliatus</i>
Beaked Spikerush	<i>Eleocharis rostellata</i>
Buckthorn	<i>Sideroxylon lycioides</i>
Chapman's Sedge	<i>Carex chapmanii</i>
Florida Mountain-mint	<i>Pycnanthemum floridanum</i>
Florida toothache-grass	<i>Ctenium floridanum</i>
Frosted Flatwoods Salamander	<i>Ambystoma cingulatum</i>
Giant Orchid	<i>Pteroglossaspis ecristata</i>
Godfrey's Swamp privet	<i>Forestiera godfreyi</i>
Incised Groove-bur	<i>Agrimonia incisa</i>
Least Tern	<i>Sterna antillarum</i>
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Piedmont Jointgrass	<i>Coelorachis tuberculosa</i>
Silver Buckthorn	<i>Sideroxylon alachuense</i>
Southern Lip Fern	<i>Cheilanthes microphylla</i>
Spoon-leaved Sundew	<i>Drosera intermedia</i>

Source: Florida Natural Areas Inventory, March 2007.

**TABLE IV-5
1997 NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA STATE AND FEDERALLY LISTED SPECIES
REMOVED FROM THE FLORIDA NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY
ELEMENT OCCURRENCE DATABASE**

Common Name(s)	Scientific Name	Notes
-	<i>Polygonum meisnerianum</i> var. <i>beyrichianum</i>	Still a listed species but removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database.
Catesby's lily, Southern Red Lily	<i>Lillium catesbaei</i>	Removed from state listed species list & removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database
Dwarf Spleenwort	<i>Asplenium pumilum</i>	Still a listed species but removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database
Gray Bat	<i>Myotis grisescens</i>	Still a listed species but removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database
Green Turtle	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>	Removed from state listed species list & removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database
Hartwrightia	<i>Hartwrightia floridana</i>	Removed from state listed species list & removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database
Kemp's Ridley Turtle, Atlantic Ridley Turtle	<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>	Still a listed species but removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database
Leatherback Turtle	<i>Demochelys coriacea</i>	Still a listed species but removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database
Loggerhead Turtle	<i>Caretta caretta</i>	Still a listed species but removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database
Mountain Laurel	<i>Kalmia latifolia</i>	Removed from state listed species list & removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database
Non-crested Coco, Wild Coco	<i>Pteroglossaspis ecristata</i>	Removed from state listed species list & removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Still a listed species but removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database
Rain lily	<i>Zephyranthes simpsonii</i>	Still a listed species but removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database
St. Johns Susan	<i>Rubdeckia nitida</i>	Removed from state listed species list & removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database
Sinkhole Fern	<i>Blechnum occidentale</i>	Still a listed species but removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database
Southern Milkweed	<i>Asclepias viridula</i>	Removed from state listed species list & removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database
West Indian Manatee	<i>Trichechus manatus</i>	Still a listed species but removed from FNAI Element Occurrence Database

Sources: Florida Natural Areas Element Occurrence Database, March 2007, Florida's Endangered Species, Threatened Species, and Species of Special Concern, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, January 29, 2004, and Notes on Florida's Endangered and Threatened Plants, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, 2003.

REGIONAL GOAL 4.5. PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES OF REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE IDENTIFIED IN THIS PLAN AS "PLANNING AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AREAS."

Regional Indicators

- 4.5.1. As of January, 2000, north central Florida contained 32,095 acres of private conservation lands.
- 4.5.2. As of January, 2000, north central Florida contained approximately 125,834 acres of federally-owned conservation lands.
- 4.5.3. As of January, 2000, north central Florida contained 156,687 acres of state-owned conservation and recreation lands.
- 4.5.4. As of January, 2000, north central Florida contained approximately 142,363 acres of water management District-owned conservation lands (including less than fee simple ownership).
- 4.5.5. In January, 2000, north central Florida had 18 waterbodies identified as SWIM waterbodies

Since the adoption of the 2003 amendments to the regional plan, additional conservation lands have been acquired in the region. Acquisitions have been made by all levels of government as well as by the private sector. In total, conservation lands (including state parks) increased from 391,000 acres in 2000 to 567,953 acres by 2007, representing a 45.3 percent increase. Federal government land holdings increased by 9.7 percent to 138,012 acres by 2007. State lands increased to 159,339 acres by 2007, representing a 1.7 percent increase. Water management district lands in 2007 totaled 250,063 acres, representing an 11.9 percent increase since 2000, state lands increased by 8.0 percent. Privately-owned conservation lands decreased to 20,540 acres by January 2007, representing a 36.0 percent decline during this period.

REGIONAL GOAL 4.6. MAINTAIN THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF THE REGION'S SURFACEWATER SYSTEMS IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR IMPORTANCE TO THE CONTINUED GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION.

Regional Indicators

- 4.6.1. As of January, 2000, the water management districts had identified 1,109,868 acres of fresh water wetlands within the region.
- 4.6.2. As of January, 2002, 10 north central Florida lakes were identified as natural resources of regional significance in the North Central Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan.
- 4.6.3. As of January, 2002, 11 river corridors were designated as natural resources of regional significance in the North Central Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan.

- 4.6.4. As of January, 2002, 202,152 acres of river corridor were designated as natural resources of regional significance in the North Central Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan.
- 4.6.5. As of January, 2000, 103 north central Florida springs were listed as Natural Resources of Regional Significance in the North Central Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan.
- 4.6.6. In January, 2002, five north central Florida Natural Resources of Regional Significance were under an Unrestricted Consumption advisory for Large-mouth bass, Bowfin, and Gar.
- 4.6.7. In January, 2002, five north central Florida Natural Resources of Regional Significance were under a Limited Consumption advisory for Large-mouth bass, Bowfin, and Gar.
- 4.6.8. In January, 2002, no north central Florida Natural Resources of Regional Significance were under a No Consumption advisory for Large-mouth bass, Bowfin, and Gar.
- 4.6.9. As of January, 2002, neither Fanning Springs - Old Town, Archer, Lee, Steinhatchee, or the Dekle Beach - Keaton Beach area were serviced by centralized wastewater treatment systems.
- 4.6.10. As of January, 2002, 23 north central Florida communities were in need of stormwater management retrofit projects and/or a stormwater management plan.

Due to revisions made by the Florida Department of Health to its fish consumption advisory system, the new system is no longer comparable to the system in place in 2002. The former system consisted of no consumption, restricted consumption, limited consumption, and unrestricted consumption categories. In its place, the new system instead identifies number of times per month a particular fish species can be safely consumed by the general public. The new advisory system also identifies the number of times per month the fish species can be eaten by children or women of childbearing age. Finally, the new system has been expanded and includes additional waterbodies for which data was either unavailable or not published in 2002.

Table IV- 6 below identifies 14 surfacewater Natural Resources of Regional Significance for which a fish consumption advisory has been issued by the Florida Department of Health. All of the fish consumption advisories are due to excessive levels of mercury in the identified fish species. No fish consumption advisories are in effect in north central Florida due to dioxin, pesticide, or saxitoxin contamination.¹⁰ Although not included as a regional indicator in 2002, a No Consumption Advisory was in effect for all fish caught in the Fenholloway River due to dioxin contamination. As of 2006, the Fenholloway River fish consumption advisory had been limited to Bowfin fish for mercury contamination. Additionally, the 2006 advisory recommends limiting the consumption of Bowfin fish from the Fenholloway River to no more than 1 fish per month for women of childbearing age and children.

¹⁰Saxitoxin is a neurotoxin found in algae. It is also found in Puffer fish caught in Indian River Lagoons and from waterbodies in Volusia, Brevard, Indian River, St. Lucie and Martin Counties. None of these waterbodies are located in north central Florida.

New criteria for fish advisories for the general population were adopted in 2006. The Florida Department of Health also started listing information for any waterbody that had been tested and no longer included "Unrestricted Consumption" as a recommendation. The highest rate of consumption included in the recommendations is "two meals per week". The two meals per week limitation is used since it meets the American Heart Association recommendation in the Healthy Heart Diet and there was growing evidence that people who consumed excessive amounts of seafood, some as high as 21 meals per week, could result in mercury poisoning in adults.

TABLE IV-6

2006 FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORIES

Location	Largemouth Bass	Women of Childbearing Age and Children - No. of Meals per Month	Black Crappie	Women of Childbearing Age and Children - No. of Meals per Month	Bluegill	Women of Childbearing Age and Children - No. of Meals per Month	Brown Bullhead	Women of Childbearing Age and Children - No. of Meals per Month
Alapaha River	yes	1					yes	1
Aucilla River	yes	1						
Econfina River								
Fenholloway River								
Lake Butler			yes	4	yes	4		
Lake Lochloosa	yes	1						
Lake Sampson	yes	1	yes	1	yes	4		
Lake Santa Fe	yes	1						
Newnans Lake	yes	1	yes	4	yes	4	yes	4
Orange Lake	yes	1	yes	4	yes	8		
Santa Fe	yes	1					yes	1
Steinhatchee River	yes	1						
Suwannee River	yes	1					yes	1
Withlacoochee River	yes	1					yes	1
Total	11		4		4		5	

See note at end of table.

TABLE IV-6

2006 FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORIES

Location	Bowfin	Women of Childbearing Age and Children - No. of Meals per Month	Chain Pickerel	Women of Childbearing Age and Children - No. of Meals per Month	Channel Catfish	Women of Childbearing Age and Children - No. of Meals per Month	White Catfish	Women of Childbearing Age and Children - No. of Meals per Month
Alapaha River	yes	1			yes	1	yes	4
Aucilla River	yes	1						
Econfina River								
Fenholloway River	yes	1						
Lake Butler								
Lake Lochloosa	yes	1						
Lake Sampson	yes	1	yes	1				
Lake Santa Fe	yes	1						
Newnans Lake	yes	1						
Orange Lake	yes	1						
Santa Fe	yes	1			yes	1	yes	4
Steinhatchee River	yes	1						
Suwannee River	yes	1			yes	1	yes	4
Withlacoochee River	yes	1			yes	1	yes	8
Total	12		1		4		4	

See note at end of table.

TABLE IV-6

2006 FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORIES

Location	Gar	Women of Childbearing Age and Children - No. of Meals per Month	Redbreast Sunfish	Women of Childbearing Age and Children - No. of Meals per Month	Redear Sunfish	Women of Childbearing Age and Children - No. of Meals per Month	Spotted Sunfish	Women of Childbearing Age and Children - No. of Meals per Month	Warmouth	Women of Childbearing Age and Children - No. of Meals per Month
Alapaha River	yes	1	yes	4	yes	4				
Aucilla River	yes	1	yes	1			yes	1		
Econfina River			yes	1			yes	1		
Fenholloway River										
Lake Butler					yes	4				
Lake Lochloosa	yes	1								
Lake Sampson	yes	1			yes	4				
Lake Santa Fe	yes	1								
Newnans Lake	yes	1								
Orange Lake	yes	1			yes	8			yes	4
Santa Fe	yes	1	yes	4	yes	4				
Steinhatchee River	yes	1	yes	1			yes	1		
Suwannee River	yes	1	yes	4	yes	4				
Withlacoochee River	yes	1	yes	4	yes	4				
Total	11		7		7		3		1	

Note: yes= Fish consumption advisory issued.

Source: Your Guide to Eating Fish Caught in Florida, Florida Department of Health, 2006.

DIOXIN

Dioxin is the common name for the group of compounds classified as polychlorinated dibenzodioxins. This class of chemicals have been shown to accumulate in the fatty tissues of humans, domestic animals and wildlife, are known to cause gene mutation and are suspected human carcinogens.

Dioxins are produced in small concentrations when organic material is burned in the presence of chlorine. Approximately 74 percent of dioxin emissions are from backyard barrel burning, medical waste incineration, and municipal waste combustion. Approximately 4.9 percent of all dioxins are generated in reactions that involve bleaching fibers for paper or textiles.¹¹

MERCURY

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection notes that mercury is a naturally-occurring toxic trace element which has a complex cycle between the crust, atmosphere and oceans of the Earth. Unlike other metals, it is a liquid at normal temperatures and is easily transformed into a gas. Some mercury is released by natural processes but most emissions to the atmosphere result principally from mining and smelting of mineral ores, combustion of fossil fuels, and the use of mercury itself. Mercury released to the atmosphere is the thought to be the source of most broad-scale mercury emissions. The gaseous form of mercury can travel long distances through atmosphere, ultimately depositing from the air into Florida wetlands and surfacewaters. Mercury deposited in this manner can be converted by natural bacteria into methylmercury, a toxic form that is accumulated and magnified at each link in the food chain. In some circumstances, the result is fish that is toxic if eaten by humans.¹²

TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOADS

Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires states to submit lists of surfacewaters that do not meet applicable water quality standards (impaired waters) after implementation of technology-based effluent limitations, and establish Total Maximum Daily Loads for these waters on a prioritized schedule. Total Maximum Daily Loads establish the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can assimilate without causing violations of water quality standards. Florida submitted a list of Total Maximum Daily Load waterbodies to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4, in 1998. The list was prepared by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection with input from the water management districts. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued its final list of north central Florida Total Maximum Daily Load waterbodies in 2003.

¹¹U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, An inventory of sources and environmental releases of dioxin-like compounds in the United States for the years 1987, 1995, and 2000. National Center for Environmental Assessment, Washington, DC; EPA/600/P-03/002F. (<http://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/cfm/recordisplay.cfm?deid=159286>)

¹²<http://www.dep.state.fl.us/labs/mercury/index.htm> and <http://myfwc.com/marine/Pubs/mercury.htm>

Natural Resources of Regional Significance Element Table 4.8 presents a list of proposed north central Florida surfacewaters which do not meet applicable water quality standards. The proposed list was submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1998 for approval. Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to establish an approved list of waters and to establish Total Maximum Daily Loads for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved list of waters on a prioritized schedule. Table IV-7, below, presents the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved list and the water quality parameters to be addressed through the development of Total Maximum Daily Loads.

As of June 2007, Total Maximum Daily Loads have been finalized for only one north central Florida watershed; the Fenholloway River (including Bevins/Boggy Creek). The Total Maximum Daily Load report includes a map of the waterbody and its watershed. It also identifies the sources of the pollutants. In the case of the Fenholloway River, the Total Maximum Daily Load report notes that discharge from the Buckeye Cellulose pulp mill may move its discharge point from its current location to 1.7 miles upstream from the Fenholloway River estuary. Such an approach is anticipated to meet the established Total Maximum Daily Loads for dissolved oxygen and un-ionized ammonia for the river. The Total Maximum Daily Load report notes, however, that moving the discharge point may increase chlorophyll concentrations to levels in the estuary that would cause a water quality standard violation. To address this issue, Buckeye Cellulose has undertaken additional monitoring and modeling activities. Buckeye Cellulose will also conduct additional nutrient modeling analysis to assess the possible effluent nutrient reductions that might be required to prevent harmful chlorophyll concentrations.

The Total Maximum Daily Load for the Bevins/Boggy Creek portion of the watershed suggests that rural farms with animals with access to streams as a possible source of fecal coliform.

**TABLE IV-7
THE VERIFIED LIST OF IMPAIRED NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA WATERS
(AS APPROVED BY THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY)**

WBID	Waterbody Segment	Waterbody Type	Parameter of Concern	Priority	Projected Year of TMDL Development	Comments
Fenholloway						
3473A	Fenholloway at Mouth	Stream	Total Coliforms, Dissolved Oxygen, Biochemical Oxygen Demand	High	2002	TMDLs Finalized by U.S. EPA, May 2007
3473B	Fenholloway Below Pulp Mill	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen, Biochemical Oxygen Demand, Un-ionized Ammonia, Conductivity	High	2002	TMDLs Finalized by U.S. EPA, May 2007
3603	Bevins/Boggy Creek	Stream	Fecal Coliform	-	2002	TMDLs Finalized by U.S. EPA, May 2007. Although not listed in <u>Water Quality Assessment Report: Suwannee</u> , Fecal Coliform TMDLs were nevertheless established by EPA for this waterbody.
Lower Suwannee						
3422A	Suwannee River, Lower	Stream	Mercury - Fish	Low	2011	Mercury concentrations for 1995, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 exceeded 0.5 mg/kg.
3422D	Suwannee Estuary	Estuary	Coliforms - Shellfish	Medium	2007	Listed due to downgrade in shellfish classification.
3422B	Suwannee River, Lower	Stream	Mercury - Fish	Low	2011	Mercury concentrations for 1995-2002 exceeded 0.5 mg/kg.
Other Coastal						
8032A	Dekle Beach	Estuary	Coliforms - Beach Advisory	Medium	2007	Has advisories for more than 21 days in 2001.

**TABLE IV-7
THE VERIFIED LIST OF IMPAIRED NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA WATERS
(AS APPROVED BY THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY)**

WBID	Waterbody Segment	Waterbody Type	Parameter of Concern	Priority	Projected Year of TMDL Development	Comments
8032B	Keaton Beach	Estuary	Coliforms - Beach Advisory	Medium	2007	Has advisories for more than 21 days in 2001.
8032C	Cedar Beach	Estuary	Coliforms - Beach Advisory	Medium	2007	Has advisories for more than 21 days in 2001.
8035	Suwannee Gulf 7	Estuary	Coliforms - Beach Advisory	Medium	2007	Has advisories for more than 21 days in 2001.
Santa Fe						
3516	Alligator Lake Outlet	Lake	Nutrients	Medium	2007	Linked to nutrients, and BOD. Nitrogen limited.
3516	Alligator Lake Outlet	Lake	Dissolved Oxygen	Medium	2007	Linked to nutrients. Nitrogen limited.
3516A	Alligator Lake	Lake	Nutrients	Medium	2007	Linked to nutrients and BOD. Nitrogen limited.
3516A	Alligator Lake	Lake	Dissolved Oxygen	Medium	2007	Linked to nutrients. Nitrogen limited.
3605A	Santa Fe River	Stream	Nutrients (Algal Mats and Historical Chlorophyll)	Medium	2007	Total Nitrogen is limiting nutrient.
3605C	Santa Fe River	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen	Medium	2007	Linked to nutrients.
3520	Cannon Creek	Stream	Fecal Coliforms	Medium	2007	
3626	Pareners Branch	Stream	Fecal Coliforms	Medium	2007	

**TABLE IV-7
THE VERIFIED LIST OF IMPAIRED NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA WATERS
(AS APPROVED BY THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY)**

WBID	Waterbody Segment	Waterbody Type	Parameter of Concern	Priority	Projected Year of TMDL Development	Comments
Upper Suwannee						
3341	Suwannee River (Upper)	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen	High	2002	Linked to nutrients.
3375	Swift Creek	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen	High	2002	Linked to nutrients.
3477	Falling Creek	Stream	Dissolved Oxygen	High	2002	Linked to nutrients.

¹Waterbody Identification.

TMDL = Total Maximum Daily Load.

Sources: Water Quality Assessment Report: Suwannee, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, September 2003, and TMDLs in Florida, <http://www.epa.gov/region4/water/tmdl/florida/#econ>.

MINIMUM FLOWS AND LEVELS

Subsection 373.042(2), Florida Statutes, requires water management districts to establish minimum flows and levels to protect surfacewaters. Minimum flows and levels represent the water level below which significant harm can occur to surfacewater bodies, be it to navigation, recreation, fish and wildlife, or fish and wildlife habitat. Once established, they are used as part of the water supply planning and permitting criteria for consumptive use permits issued by the districts. Essentially, water flows and levels which are above the minimum flow can be allocated for consumptive uses without significantly adversely impacting the waterbody from which the water is withdrawn.

As of October 2009, minimum flows and levels have been established for the lower Suwannee River, the upper Santa Fe River, Madison County Blue Spring, and Fanning Spring.

RECOMMENDED MODIFICATIONS TO THE NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA STRATEGIC REGIONAL POLICY PLAN

The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council completed an Evaluation and Appraisal Report of its regional plan on October 23, 2008. The Council is in the process of amending its regional plan to reflect the recommendations contained in the October 28, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report. Therefore, it is recommended that no changes be made to the regional plan except for those recommendations contained in the Council October 28, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report. The Council is anticipated to adopt amendments to its regional plan based on the recommendations of the October 28, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report during 2011.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

AN ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL INDICATORS

A comparison of regional indicators with the latest available data indicates a mixed situation regarding implementation of the transportation goals of the regional plan. On the one hand, progress has been made toward regional goals addressing the University of Florida, as well as increasing public transportation and transportation disabled paratransit ridership. However, concern exists regarding the ability of the region to maintain a regional road network which operates at or above the minimum level of service standards contained in local government comprehensive plans. The updated indicators suggest either a stable or improved regional road network for segments which are part of the Florida State Highway System. However, a significant decline has occurred to segments of the Regional Road Network which are part of the Florida Intrastate Highway System.¹

Along with increases in regional population, background traffic on the Regional Road Network has also increased since 2001. Despite the population increase, most north central Florida municipalities can be characterized as having a population of less than 10,000, centered around one or two regional roads which serve a significant amount of non-local traffic. Most development within north central Florida communities impacts these one or two regional roads.

The concurrency requirements of Section 163.3180, Florida Statutes, requires, with notable exceptions, that public facilities to accommodate future development either be in place or be planned to be in place prior to the issuance of building permits. However, there does not appear to be sufficient funds to bring the existing Regional Road Network backlog up to standards or to maintain the level of service standard in the future. Nor can local governments afford to pay for the modifications. As the remaining excess capacity of the Regional Road Network is absorbed by thru-traffic, north central Florida communities are finding it increasingly difficult to permit new development or to amend their comprehensive plans to accommodate future growth. Without sufficient capacity on segments of the Regional Road Network within incorporated municipalities and urban development areas, most new development will be likely to occur in rural areas where road capacity still exists, thus contributing to urban sprawl.

¹All segments of the Florida Intrastate Highway System located within north central Florida are part of the Strategic Intermodal System.

REGIONAL GOAL 5.1. MAINTAIN A REGIONAL ROAD NETWORK WHICH OPERATES AT OR ABOVE THE MINIMUM LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARD CONTAINED IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMPREHENSIVE PLANS FOR THOSE SEGMENTS LOCATED OUTSIDE TRANSPORTATION CONCURRENCY EXCEPTION AREAS.

Regional Indicators

- 5.1.1. As of January, 1999, 2.5 percent of the north central Florida regional road network, exclusive of FIHS-designated roads, operated below the minimum operating level of service standard identified in local government comprehensive plans.
- 5.1.2. As of January, 1999, 3.9 percent of that portion of the north central Florida regional road network comprised of FIHS-designated roads operated below the minimum operating level of service standard established by the Florida Department of Transportation.
- 5.1.3. As of January, 1999, 8.4 percent of the north central Florida regional road network, comprised of non-FIHS roads, are anticipated to drop below the minimum operating level of service standard identified in local government comprehensive plans by 2011.
- 5.1.4. As of January, 1999, 13.9 percent of that portion of the north central Florida regional road network comprised of FIHS-designated roads, are anticipated to drop below the minimum operating level of service standard established by the Florida Department of Transportation by 2011.

The region experienced a decrease in the percentage of State Highway System road miles, exclusive of Florida Intrastate Highway System road miles, meeting the adopted level of service standard. In 1999, the percentage of Florida State Highway System road miles within the region not meeting minimum level of service standards, exclusive of the Florida Intrastate Highway System, was 2.5 percent. In 2009, the percentage had dropped to 1.9 percent. However, at the same time, the region experienced an increase in the percentage of Florida Intrastate Highway System road miles not meeting the adopted level of service standard. In 1999, the percentage of north central Florida Intrastate Highway System miles not meeting minimum level of service standards was 3.9 percent. In 2009, the percentage had increased to 4.6 percent.

Regional Indicator 5.1.3 notes that 8.4 percent of the north central Florida Regional Road Network, exclusive of Florida Intrastate Highway System roads, were anticipated to drop below the minimum operating level of service standard identified in local government comprehensive plans by 2011. While new projections are not available from the Florida Department of Transportation for year 2011, the Department's projections indicate that only 4.6 percent of such roads are anticipated to operate below the minimum level of service standard by 2015.

Regional Indicator 5.1.4 notes that 13.9 percent of Florida Intrastate Highway System Roads located in the region were anticipated to drop below the minimum level of service standard by 2011. As with Regional Indicator 5.1.3, new projections are not available from the Florida Department of Transportation for year 2011. However, the Department projects 8.1 percent of such roads are anticipated to operate below the minimum level of service standard by 2015.

REGIONAL GOAL 5.2. MITIGATE ADVERSE IMPACTS TO REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH ENROLLMENT GROWTH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA.

Regional Indicators

- 5.2.1. During the 1999 - 2000 school year, the University of Florida had no off-campus parking areas.
- 5.2.2. During the fall, 1999 semester, the University of Florida offered 593 class sessions with a duplicated enrollment of 20,357 beginning after 5:00 pm on week nights.
- 5.2.3. During the 1999 - 2000 school year, 16.0 percent of University of Florida students lived in on-campus, non-fraternity/sorority, housing.

For Regional Indicator 5.2.1, no change has occurred since the last update to the regional plan. The University still has no off-campus parking areas. For Regional Indicators 5.2.2 and 5.2.3, the readily available data is not directly comparable. Therefore, progress towards goal implementation cannot be readily determined based on these two regional indicators. However, the data which is available suggests that progress has been made towards implementing the regional goal.

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA CAMPUS MASTER PLAN

Section 1013.30, Florida Statutes, requires State universities to prepare and regularly update a campus master plan to address, among other things, the impacts of campus development upon roads, sewer and water, solid waste, drainage, public transit, and parks and recreation of affected local governments. The data and analysis on which the plan is based must identify the projected impacts of campus development on off-site infrastructure. In addition, Section 1013.30(5), Florida Statutes, requires the campus master plan to be consistent with the State Comprehensive Plan and not in conflict with local government comprehensive plans. In 2006, the Council reviewed a proposed update to the plan, which covers the period between 2005 and 2015.

Section 1013.30, Florida Statutes, requires universities and applicable local governments to enter into Campus Development Agreements. The agreement must identify any deficiencies in service which the proposed campus development will create or to which it will contribute within a specifically defined area surrounding a university (i.e., the Context Area) and identify all modifications to facilities and services necessary to eliminate the identified deficiencies. Section 1013.30(13), Florida Statutes, states that the University of Florida Board of Trustees is responsible for paying its fair share of the costs for removing deficiencies to affected services and facilities. Identification of the fair share of the University must be included in the Campus Development Agreement. It is anticipated that the current Campus Development Agreement will be amended to address impacted facilities identified in the proposed Campus Master Plan. Once the Campus Development Agreement is completed, all campus development may proceed without further review by the host local government provided such development is consistent with the adopted campus master plan and associated campus development agreement.

Although the primary focus of campus master planning process is the relationship between the University and its host local government(s), regional planning councils are involved in the campus plan review process. Section 1013.30(6), Florida Statutes, requires the University to submit a copy of its draft master plan to the Council for review. Furthermore, Section 1013.30(1), Florida Statutes, identifies the Council as an affected person. Affected persons who comment on the draft plan can petition the Board of Trustees

if their concerns are not adequately addressed in the adopted version of the plan. Council review examines the effect and relationship of the Campus Master Plan on regional facilities as well as the goals and policies of the regional plan.

The University of Florida 2005 - 2015 Campus Master Plan forecasts a student enrollment increase of 4,374 students, from 45,126 students in 2004 to 49,500 in 2015. The plan similarly projects an increase of 2,443 faculty/staff employment, from 22,211 in 2004 to 24,654 in 2015. In conjunction with increased enrollment and faculty/staff employment, the number of on-campus parking spaces is expected to increase from 23,464 spaces in 2004 to 25,362 in 2015, a net increase of 1,898 spaces. Most of the new parking spaces are proposed to be constructed near Ben Hill Griffin, Jr., Stadium and the Stephen C. O'Connell Center adjacent to State Road 26, as well as along State Road 24 (Archer Road). In 2009, enrollment at the University of Florida main campus was 46,438 students.

TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Regional Plan Policy 5.2.5 seeks implementation of transportation demand management strategies such as carpools, vanpools, public transit, bicycling, incorporating public transit costs in University of Florida student activity fees, and walking to encourage use of the multimodal corridors for modes of travel other than single-occupant automobiles.

One of the most significant developments mitigating University-related transportation impacts in the last 10 years is the implementation of an agreement between the Gainesville Regional Transit System and the University to provide University students and employees with prepaid, unlimited access to transit service. The agreement has led to enhancements to the Gainesville Regional Transit System service, including an increase in number of buses, a decrease in headtimes (intervals between buses), and expanded hours of operation for certain bus routes heavily used by University students. A student transportation fee was added in 1998 at a rate of \$0.19 per credit hour to pay for the additional service. The fee has been increased over the years to a rate of \$7.88 per credit hour in the 2011-2012 school year. As a result, Gainesville Regional Transit System bus ridership has increased from 2.9 million passengers in 1998 to 9.0 million in 2009. The 2005 - 2015 Campus Master Plan Transportation Element contains a number of policies continuing the relationship between the University and Gainesville Regional Transit System. The Gainesville Regional Transit System-University of Florida agreement is consistent with Regional Plan Policy 5.2.5.

OFF-CAMPUS PARK-AND-RIDE

Regional Plan Policy 5.2.1 calls for the construction of off-campus parking lots/garages and the operation of shuttle buses between the off-campus parking and the University campus. The University operates two park-and-ride facilities on the western edge of its main campus (Park and Ride Lot #1, located near SW 34th Street at the Cultural Plaza, and Park and Ride Lot #2, located on Hull Road west of SW 34th Street). Furthermore, campus shuttle buses connect the park and ride lots, as well as other on-campus parking facilities, to the main campus. Additionally, 2005 - 2015 Campus Master Plan Transportation Element Policy 3.1 of Goal 2.0 calls for the University to participate with the City and the County and the Gainesville Regional Transit System to examine the feasibility of park and ride facility development and expanded transit service. While the 2005 - 2015 Campus Master Plan proposes the construction of an additional 1,000 parking space near the Ben Hill Griffin, Jr., Stadium and the Stephen C. O'Connell Center adjacent to State Road 26, it also proposes the construction of an additional 888 parking spaces in the western portion of the campus in areas which are currently used, essentially, as park and ride facilities.

Although the University has established and is proposing to expand its park and ride facilities, the current and proposed parking facilities continue to require automobile drivers to use roads which are, or are projected to be, operating below the minimum level of service standard contained in local government comprehensive plans by 2015. The intent of Regional Plan Policy 5.2.1 is to construct off-campus park-and-ride facilities located near the perimeter of the context area, or possibly further from campus, thereby reducing congestion on segments of the regional road network located near the University. Nevertheless, the 2005 - 2014 Campus Master Plan Transportation Element Data and Analysis Report notes a trend of student populations moving from west of Interstate Highway 75 to areas closer to campus in the downtown and the West 13th Street corridor. Such movement may make the establishment of park-and-ride facilities unfeasible if located a significant distance from student residences.

ON-CAMPUS HOUSING

Regional Plan Policy 5.2.2 calls for increasing the percentage of students living in on-campus dormitories from the 1999-2000 school year level of 16.0 percent. Information contained in the Campus Master Plan indicates that on-campus housing is currently available for approximately 22 percent of the student population. The Housing Data and Analysis Report notes that an additional 835 housing units are needed to maintain the current percent level. In conjunction with increased enrollment, the Capital Improvements Element of the Campus Master Plan calls for two on-campus housing construction projects with the intent of increasing the number of students residing on campus by approximately 800. One of the projects is only partially funded and the other project is completely unfunded. Nevertheless, should neither of these two on-campus housing projects be constructed, the percentage of students housed on-campus will be 20.3 percent in 2015, which is above the 16.0 percent level specified in Regional Plan Policy 5.2.2. However, Regional Policy 5.2.2 references students living in non-fraternity on-campus housing.

EVENING CLASSES

Regional Plan Policy 5.2.3 calls for an evening division of classes in order to reduce off-campus impacts on the regional road network during peak hour traffic periods. The 2005-2015 Campus Master Plan Transportation Element Policy 7.4 states that the University shall continue to expand, where appropriate, distance learning and evening class offerings to reduce the peak hour travel demand and its impact on roads and parking. Additionally, the University Campus Master Plan Data and Analysis report indicates that, during 2005, 642 class meetings occurred after 5:00 pm on weeknights. The report notes that this represents an increase of 49 class meetings since 1999, and that 274 more students were served by evening classes in 2005 compared to 1999.

THE LIVABLE COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT PLAN

Regional Plan Policy 5.5.3 calls for the Council to assist the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area in implementing the vision statement entitled, The Livable Community Reinvestment Plan. The plan serves as a policy and program guide for the development of the Gainesville Metropolitan Area transportation system over 25 years. The plan also guides the City of Gainesville and Alachua County in the update of their growth management plans and the Florida Department of Transportation in the preparation of its five-year work program. As such, the plan outlines the priority list of transportation projects which can be funded with available revenue sources over 25 years.

The Year 2035 Transportation Plan includes a strategic vision for integrating transportation and land use decisions in the Gainesville area. The vision statement states:

“The Gainesville Urbanized Area will have a multimodal transportation system that integrates land use and transportation planning and investments to promote community well-being through good healthy relations with the region’s other communities and natural systems. Specific outcomes will be:

- 1. sustainable, safe, secure, energy efficient and livable land use patterns and complementary context-sensitive transportation networks that provide mobility choices within and between compact, mixed-use, multimodal-supportive development;*
- 2. balanced east-west Gainesville Urbanized Area growth to reduce socioeconomic disparity through increased transportation mobility and accessibility;*
- 3. transportation infrastructure investments that direct growth to existing infill and redevelopment areas;*
- 4. greenbelts to preserve natural and agricultural lands between all municipalities in the Alachua County region through compact land use patterns served by express transit service and park-and-ride facilities; and*
- 5. a network of Rapid Transit Facilities connecting regional employment centers in order to enhance the economic competitiveness of the area.”*

The Livable Community Reinvestment Plan is the framework upon which the economic strength of the Gainesville Metropolitan Area, its development character, and its continued quality of life rests. Transportation decisions made in the past have shaped the way the area has developed and how it continues to grow today. Decisions made today will shape how the area grows and how its transportation system will function in the future. As the economic and institutional center of north central Florida, the successful implementation of The Livable Community Reinvestment Plan strategic vision statement is of regional importance.

The Year 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan of the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area includes recommended transportation modifications on or adjacent to the University of Florida campus. These include the construction of the Cross Campus (Bicycle and Pedestrian) Greenway from Archer Road to SW 34th Street; the Hull Road Parking Area Bicycle Pedestrian Facility from SW 34th Street to the end of the Hull Road Parking Area; the State Road 26 (University Avenue) Multimodal Emphasis Corridor Study from Gale Lemerand Drive to Waldo Road; and the US 441 Multimodal Emphasis Corridor Study from NW 33rd Avenue to Archer Road. Also included in this Plan are several projects to implement bus rapid transit service, including a proposed Bus Rapid Transit project on Archer Road that will serve portions of the University of Florida Campus and the Shands Teaching Hospital area. Policy 1.1.1 of the 2005 - 2015 Campus Master Plan Transportation Element states that the University will cooperate with Gainesville, Alachua County, the Florida Department of Transportation, and the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area in the planning, implementation, and updating of multimodal strategies and projects outlined in the Long Range Transportation Plan. Regional Policy 5.5.1 calls for the Council to coordinate with Gainesville Regional Transit System, the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area, the University, Gainesville, and Alachua County to assist in implementing the Livable Communities Reinvestment Plan.

REGIONAL GOAL 5.3. MAXIMIZE THE USE OF THE GAINESVILLE REGIONAL AIRPORT BEFORE DEVELOPING A NEW REGIONAL AIRPORT.

Regional Indicator

- 5.3.1. In 1999, Gainesville Regional Airport enplaned 308,263 passengers. In 1994, the airport enplaned 255 tons of cargo.²

New comparable data is not readily available for Regional Indicator 5.3.1. In 2000, Gainesville Regional Airport experienced 54,432 itinerant airport operations (non-local aircraft arrivals or departures). By 2008, the number of itinerant airport operations had increased by 9.2 percent, to 59,417.³

REGIONAL GOAL 5.4. REDUCE THE UNMET GENERAL TRIP DEMAND OF THE NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED POPULATION.

Regional Indicators

- 5.4.1. An estimated 807,917 general demand trips, 82.8 percent of total estimated transportation disadvantaged trips, were unmet in 1995.
- 5.4.2. In Fiscal Year 1998-99, 568,554 paratransit trips were made in the region.
- 5.4.3. In Fiscal Year 1998-99, north central Florida paratransit service providers reported annual operating revenues of \$4,404,914.

Regional Indicator 5.4.1 notes that an estimated 807,917 general demand trips for the transportation disadvantaged, 82.8 percent of total estimated demand, were unmet in 1995. Updated information suggests that in 2009, unmet general trip demand had dropped to 54,742, representing 8.1 percent of total estimated demand.⁴

As indicated in Table V-2, north central Florida paratransit ridership increased by 36.9 percent between 1999 and 2009, rising from 568,554 trips in 1999 to 778,348 trips in 2009. Additionally, Table V-3 indicates that paratransit funding for north central Florida transportation disabled service providers increased by 101.8 percent during this period, rising from \$5,404,914 in fiscal year 1999 to \$10,906,472 in 2009.

The primary reason for the increased funding is due to changes made at the state and federal levels in Medicaid reimbursement for Medicaid-eligible transportation services in 2003. In north central Florida, the primary beneficiaries of these changes were, as indicated in Table V-3, rural counties.

²“Gainesville Regional Airport Passengers Deplaned, Enplaned,” Gainesville Regional Airport Authority, July 2000, Gainesville, Florida, and 1997 Florida Statistical Abstract, Table 13.92.

³Florida Statistical Abstract 2000, University of Florida, Bureau of Economic and Business Research, 2001, Table 13.90, and 2009 Florida Statistical Abstract, University of Florida, Bureau of Economic and Business Research, 2010, Table 13.90.

⁴Estimated unmet trip demand for 2009 was determined by subtracting Fiscal Year 2008-09 total transportation disadvantaged trips provided by north central Florida paratransit ridership reported in Table V-2 from an estimated 2009 projected transportation disadvantaged trip demand (675,103) derived from Table V-1.

The North Central Florida Regional Council and the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area continues to serve as the planning agency for 10 of the 11 local transportation disadvantaged coordinating boards in the region.

TABLE V-1

PROJECTED TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED GENERAL TRIP DEMAND

AREA	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2023
Alachua	186,275	204,174	227,627	255,048	287,139	309,005
Bradford	43,992	45,662	47,318	49,032	50,832	51,941
Columbia	100,685	108,403	119,059	130,982	144,360	153,158
Dixie	21,902	24,120	26,539	29,246	32,242	34,200
Gilchrist	24,984	29,362	34,776	41,443	49,694	55,570
Hamilton	32,184	34,402	36,720	39,240	42,019	43,834
Lafayette	9,130	9,792	10,483	11,246	12,053	12,571
Madison	54,806	56,434	57,931	59,472	61,056	62,050
Suwannee	52,690	56,851	61,646	66,960	72,806	76,579
Taylor	32,501	33,077	33,941	34,862	35,842	36,475
Union	24,336	26,611	29,088	31,882	35,050	37,123
Region	583,484	628,887	685,129	749,414	823,092	872,506
State	17,166,861	18,854,037	20,986,511	23,449,309	26,302,457	28,231,244

Source: Center for Urban Transportation Research, T20YDMD.123, 2001.

TABLE V-2**NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA PARATRANSIT RIDERSHIP
FISCAL YEARS 1998-99 AND 2008-09**

AREA	FY 1998-99	FY 2008-09	PERCENT CHANGE
Alachua	176,078	157,997	(10.3)
Bradford	61,048	13,617	(77.7)
Columbia, Hamilton, Suwannee	201,169	515,415	156.2
Dixie	12,050	8,591	(28.7)
Gilchrist	6,056	4,892	(19.2)
Lafayette	12,282	4,485	(63.5)
Madison	36,296	24,232	(33.2)
Taylor	33,773	22,737	(32.7)
Union	29,802	26,382	(11.5)
Region	568,554	778,348	36.9
Region, less Alachua County	392,476	620,351	58.1

Sources: 1999 & 2009 Annual Performance Reports, Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, Tallahassee, Florida.

TABLE V-3**NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA PARATRANSIT FUNDING
FISCAL YEARS 1998-99 AND 2008-09**

AREA	FY 1998-99	FY 2008-09	PERCENT CHANGE
Alachua	\$2,192,689	3,183,962	45.2
Bradford	341,602	623,353	82.5
Columbia, Hamilton, Suwannee	836,887	4,233,836	405.9
Dixie	442,055	428,013	(3.2)
Gilchrist	137,976	237,581	72.2
Lafayette	152,952	335,578	119.4
Madison	617,026	684,942	11.0
Taylor	454,970	638,539	40.3
Union	228,757	540,668	136.4
Region	5,404,914	10,906,472	101.8
Region, less Alachua County	3,212,225	7,722,510	140.4

Sources: 1999 & 2009 Annual Performance Reports, Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, Tallahassee, Florida.

REGIONAL GOAL 5.5. INCREASE THE PERCENTAGE OF NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA RESIDENTS USING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AS A PRIMARY MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION.

Regional Indicators

5.5.1. In 1990, 1.2 percent of north central Florida residents used public transportation as a primary means of travel to work.⁵

Although the data source for Regional Indicator 5.5.1 is the 1995 Florida Statistical Abstract, the abstract obtains its data from the decennial census. Year 2010 Census data is not available as of the publication date. The year 2000 census data indicates that the percentage increased to 1.5 percent in 2000. Between 1999 and 2009 Gainesville Regional Transit System fixed route ridership increased by 173.2 percent, from 3,299,933 to 9,015,643.⁶ The growth in ridership was primarily due to the University of Florida student government providing a subsidy to the Gainesville Regional Transit System in exchange for allowing university students to ride the system free of charge.

**RECOMMENDED MODIFICATIONS TO
THE NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA STRATEGIC REGIONAL POLICY PLAN**

The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council completed an Evaluation and Appraisal Report of its regional plan on October 23, 2008. The Council is in the process of amending its regional plan to reflect the recommendations contained in the October 28, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report. Therefore, it is recommended that changes be made the Regional Indicators for Regional Goal 5.1 to reflect the latest information included in this Evaluation and Appraisal Report. It is further recommended that the background statement be amended to reflect the latest information included in this Evaluation and Appraisal Report regarding the University of Florida Campus Master Plan.

⁵Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida, 1995 Florida Statistical Abstract, Table 13.01, and U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3, Matrices P30, P31, P33 and P35.

⁶Gainesville Regional Transit System, June 2000, and Gainesville Regional Transit System, Fiscal Year 2009 Ridership by Route, (http://www.go-rts.com/pdf/FY09_Ridership.pdf)

REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

The list of regionally significant facilities and resources contained in the regional plan recognizes those regionally significant facilities and resources not identified in either the Affordable Housing, Economic Development, Emergency Preparedness, Natural Resources of Regional Significance or Regional Transportation Elements. The regional plan does not contain a map of these facilities and resources. Rather, a listing is included, base on type of facility and resource. Types of regionally significant facilities and resources consist of cultural facilities, educational institutions, electric power facilities, Florida greenways and trails, historical facilities, hospitals, landfills, natural gas transmission lines and state prisons.

RECOMMENDED MODIFICATIONS TO THE NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA STRATEGIC REGIONAL POLICY PLAN

The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council completed an Evaluation and Appraisal Report of its regional plan on October 23, 2008. The Council is in the process of amending its regional plan to reflect the recommendations contained in the October 28, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report. Therefore, it is recommended that no changes be made to the regional plan except for those recommendations contained in the Council October 28, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report. The Council is anticipated to adopt amendments to its regional plan based on the recommendations of the October 28, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report during 2011.

COORDINATION OUTLINE

The Coordination Outline of the regional plan provides an overview of the Council's cross acceptance, dispute resolution, public participation and related regional planning and coordination activities. No changes are deemed necessary to this section of the regional plan due to changes which have occurred in state law.

RECOMMENDED MODIFICATIONS TO THE NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA STRATEGIC REGIONAL POLICY PLAN

The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council completed an Evaluation and Appraisal Report of its regional plan on October 23, 2008. The Council is in the process of amending its regional plan to reflect the recommendations contained in the October 28, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report. Therefore, it is recommended that no changes be made to the regional plan except for those recommendations contained in the Council October 28, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report. The Council is anticipated to adopt amendments to its regional plan based on the recommendations of the October 28, 2008 Evaluation and Appraisal Report during 2011..

North Central Florida Regional Planning Council

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