

# REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

A Quarterly Publication of the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council

First Quarter 2006



## Focus on Economic Development

The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council's Economic Development staff assist local governments in three separate areas:

### 1. The Original Florida Tourism Task Force

The Original Florida is a tourism marketing and educational group that supports nature tourism as a means of sustainable economic development for the region. Major projects for the year also include the completion of the Natural North Florida Visitor's Guide and the opening of a new welcome center on I-75 near the state line. By working closely with the area's state parks, heritage attractions and hospitality industry, the group generated over \$850,000 in advertising equivalency for the region in the last year. The group also welcomed Levy and Gadsden Counties as members.

### 2. Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern

The North Florida Economic Development Partnership includes 10 of the 11 counties in the Planning Council region. The newly re-organized group is working on a regional basis to provide opportunities to identify assets, share resources and implement a coordinated strategic effort to protect and expand the economic health of the region. The group is currently working with Enterprise Florida to identify the appropriate industry clusters for the creation of catalyst projects for the region. Council staff is writing a staffing grant for the Partnership and working to help incorporate the organization.

### 3. Technical Assistance

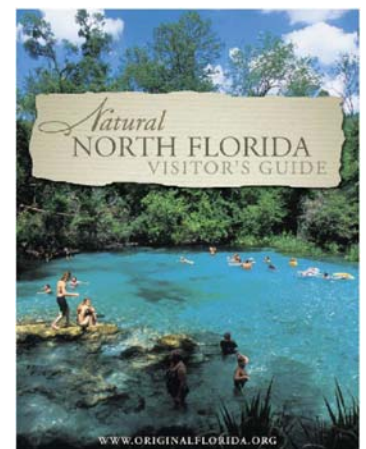
Technical assistance in the form of grant writing, economic development planning, and economic impact modeling is available for area governments as well. In the last year, the economic development staff wrote or provided assistance with grants for major philanthropic foundations, state tourism and infrastructure, (Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program or FRDAP grants), and Economic Development Administration grants.

Economic impact modeling using Regional Economic Modeling, Inc. (REMI) software was also completed for several development projects. This important tool allows local decision makers to determine the number of jobs, potential population and overall economic benefits for potential projects. This in turn can help determine the amount of incentives or impact fees a community might use.



Left: Harvey Campbell, Marketing Director for The Original Florida Tourism Task Force, holds a baby gator at the August grand opening of the VISIT FLORIDA welcome center on I-75 in Jennings, Florida.

Right: The Natural North Florida Visitor's Guide is now available and has been used as a recruiting tool for several area chambers and businesses. The guide will have a distribution of 100,000 copies.



## GOVERNOR BUSH AWARDS RURAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT TO REGIONAL TOURISM MARKETING ORGANIZATION

TALLAHASSEE – December 20, 2005

Governor Jeb Bush today awarded a \$35,000 Regional Rural Development Grant to The Original Florida, Inc., a regional tourism marketing company. The grant will assist Columbia, Dixie, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor and Union counties. In 2003, Governor Bush declared much of the north central region one of Florida's three Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern.

"The Original Florida, Inc. has achieved remarkable success in promoting tourism and recreation in the region," said Governor Bush. The expansion of nature-based and heritage tourism is an important component of the region's strategic economic plan, and this grant will serve as a strategic tool to help them meet their goals."

Since 1998, The Original Florida, Inc. has served as a regional tourism development organization, developing and promoting tourism opportunities throughout the 12 county rural region. The initiative highlights the region's pristine lakes, creeks and rivers, forests and wildlife, as well as many heritage events, small towns and landmarks.

"The Original Florida is extremely proud to have been awarded this staffing grant," said Harvey Campbell, Marketing Director of The Original Florida. "It will greatly assist our rural region in new tourism marketing initiatives as an economic development tool. We are especially grateful to Governor Bush and the Legislature for recognizing the challenges facing rural counties to create jobs and participate in the economic prosperity currently being enjoyed in Florida."

## Suwannee River Wilderness Trail

WHITE SPRINGS—May 18, 2005

The Department of Environmental Protection and the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) and local business owners gathered May 18, 2005 to open five new cabins at Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park, the gateway to the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail. Stretching 207 miles from rural north Florida to the emerald waters of the Gulf of Mexico, the Trail offers canoeing, camping, boating, hiking, biking, birding and horseback riding.

"The Suwannee River Wilderness Trail offers a one-of-a-kind outdoor recreational experience that will draw thousands of people to boost this rich community of natural and cultural heritage," said Secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Colleen Castille.



New cabins have 2 bedrooms, a full kitchen and a screened porch.

Initiated by Governor Jeb Bush in 2002, the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail is a five-year, \$10 million partnership between DEP, the SRWMD, businesses and communities along the river. The trail provides visitors an opportunity to navigate the entire length of the world-famous Suwannee with convenient rest stops located at one-day intervals. From tents and cabins to motels, hotels and bed & breakfast inns, eight regional "hubs" with existing infrastructure and recreational opportunities offer various resting and lodging choices along the way.

The Wilderness Trail is more than just a unique eco-tourism spot. It is helping to grow the economy in rural counties that have for years relied solely on the agriculture and timber industries. It exemplifies what shared commitment can accomplish. To plan a stay along the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail, visit [www.suwanneeriver.com](http://www.suwanneeriver.com) or call (800) 868-9914.

## SAVE THE DATE!

1<sup>ST</sup> STATEWIDE

# RURAL TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

MAY 15-16, 2006 - LAKE CITY, FLORIDA



WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

### Rural Tourism & Economic Development Summit - May 15-16, 2006 Lake City, Florida Quality Inn

Successful rural leaders share ways to improve tourism and economic development. From creating a plan with affordable research, to creating events or finding new grants, this educational conference will provide real world examples that can get results!

This event is hosted by The Original Florida and North Central Florida Regional Planning Council and is sponsored by VISIT FLORIDA and Enterprise Florida.

Topics include:

- ▶ Got Technology? Why RURAL Florida needs to jump into the 21st century
- ▶ Creating the Leaders of Tomorrow
- ▶ Show Me the Money! Thinking beyond your usual grants
- ▶ Starting an Agritourism Business

**For more information, go to [www.ncfrpc.org](http://www.ncfrpc.org)**

[Click on "Upcoming Events" and then "Rural Tourism and Economic Development Summit May 2006"]

Or please call Jayne Moraski 352-955-2200 x.106  
email: [moraski@ncfrpc.org](mailto:moraski@ncfrpc.org)

### Web Pages of Interest for the North Central Florida Planning Council Region

North Central Florida Regional Planning Council—<http://ncfrpc.org>

The Original Florida—  
<http://originalflorida.org>

North Central Florida Local Emergency Planning Committee—  
<http://ncflepc.org>

The Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization—  
<http://ncfrpc.org/mpto/index.html>

Plan East Gainesville—  
[www.planeastgainesville.org](http://www.planeastgainesville.org)

Florida Scenic Highway—  
[www.scenicus441.com](http://www.scenicus441.com)

State of Florida—  
<http://myflorida.com/>



Explore The Original Florida—find local events in your area at: [www.OriginalFlorida.org](http://www.OriginalFlorida.org) under “Calendar of Events”

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