

**By** the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources; and Senator Brodeur

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30 recreation plan; requiring the department to implement  
31 the plan by a specified date; requiring the department  
32 to complete projects on state-owned lands in the  
33 outdoor recreation plan by a specified date, subject  
34 to certain funding; requiring the department to  
35 develop a grant program for a specified purpose;  
36 requiring that the grant program be compatible with  
37 certain plans; requiring the department to implement  
38 the grant program by a specified date; requiring the  
39 Department of Commerce to develop guidelines and  
40 processes for and implement an economic development  
41 program for Marion and Putnam Counties for a specified  
42 purpose by a specified date; requiring that the  
43 economic development plan be compatible with certain  
44 plans and programs; requiring the Department of  
45 Commerce to implement the economic development program  
46 by a specified date; providing an effective date.

47  
48 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

49  
50 Section 1. This act may be cited as the "Northeast Florida  
51 Rivers, Springs, and Community Investment Act."

52 Section 2. Section 373.464, Florida Statutes, is created to  
53 read:

54 373.464 Ocklawaha River restoration, recreation, and  
55 economic development.—

56 (1) PROJECT LEAD.—The department shall, no later than  
57 August 31, 2026, hire a full-time equivalent contractor or  
58 employee, whose position title will be project lead, to oversee

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59 the implementation of this act. The project lead must have  
60 subject matter expertise in conservation and recreation  
61 planning.

62 (2) PROJECT PLAN.—

63 (a) By July 1, 2027, the department shall develop a project  
64 plan for the restoration of the Ocklawaha River. The project  
65 plan must provide for restoration and increased resiliency and  
66 recreation benefits of the Ocklawaha and St. Johns Rivers and  
67 Silver Springs. The project plan must be consistent with the  
68 partial restoration plan described in the 2001 Final  
69 Environmental Impact Statement prepared by the United States  
70 Department of Agriculture Forest Service for the department's  
71 Ocklawaha River Restoration Project, as described in the  
72 department's Joint Application for Environmental Resource Permit  
73 and Federal Dredge and Fill Permit, dated November 24, 1997. The  
74 project plan must include engineering and design updates,  
75 including topographic and bathymetric surveys, and precise  
76 estimates of material to be dredged or excavated. In addition,  
77 the project plan must provide recommendations for road and  
78 bridge construction that is compatible with the partial  
79 restoration plan and ensures continued access for the  
80 communities west of the project. The project plan must include  
81 estimates by fiscal year of the cost of implementing the project  
82 plan and potential sources of funding for such costs.

83 (b) Notwithstanding any law or rule, the project plan for  
84 the restoration of the Ocklawaha River is an environmental  
85 restoration or enhancement project subject to a general permit  
86 from the department and water management districts for  
87 environmental restoration or enhancement pursuant to rule 62-

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88 330.405, Florida Administrative Code, and rule 62-330.485,  
89 Florida Administrative Code.

90 (c) Subject to the provision of state, federal, or other  
91 funds, the department shall complete the restoration project by  
92 December 31, 2032.

93 (3) NORTHEAST FLORIDA RIVER AND SPRINGS RECREATION AND  
94 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL.-

95 (a) Establishment of the council.-  
96 1. The Northeast Florida River and Springs Recreation and  
97 Economic Development Advisory Council, an advisory council as  
98 defined in s. 20.03(7), is established and assigned to the  
99 department. The council shall be administratively housed within  
100 the department. The project lead shall serve as the council  
101 chair, and the members shall meet at the call of the project  
102 lead. Members shall serve without compensation but are entitled  
103 to reimbursement for per diem and travel expenses pursuant to s.  
104 112.061. Council members shall serve 4-year terms, except that  
105 the initial terms shall be staggered.

106 2. The council shall be composed of the following 16  
107 members:

108 a. Nine members of the council shall be appointed by and  
109 serve at the pleasure of the Governor and shall include:

110 (I) Two representatives of river recreation-related  
111 businesses local to Marion or Putnam County.

112 (II) Two representatives of outdoor recreation user groups,  
113 one of whom represents fishing interests local to Marion or  
114 Putnam County.

115 (III) One representative of the department's Office of  
116 Greenways and Trails.

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117        (IV) One representative of the Florida Fish and Wildlife  
118 Conservation Commission's Division of Freshwater Fisheries  
119 Management.

120        (V) One representative of the Florida Fish and Wildlife  
121 Conservation Commission's Imperiled Species Management Section.

122        (VI) One representative of the Department of Commerce.

123        (VII) One representative of an environmental community  
124 support organization who has subject matter expertise on springs  
125 or rivers.

126        b. Six members of the council shall be appointed by the  
127 boards of county commissioners for the following counties:

128        (I) Putnam County shall appoint two members, one of whom  
129 oversees parks and recreation for the county.

130        (II) Marion County shall appoint two members, one of whom  
131 oversees parks and recreation for the county.

132        (III) Clay County shall appoint one member.

133        (IV) St. Johns County shall appoint one member.

134        c. One member shall be the commanding officer of Naval Air  
135 Station Jacksonville or his or her designee.

136        (b) Report.—The council shall submit an advisory report to  
137 the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the  
138 House of Representatives, and the department by February 1,  
139 2027. The report must include all of the following:

140        1. Recommendations for projects to be included in the  
141 outdoor recreation plan created in subsection (4), including  
142 priorities for state-funded land projects.

143        2. Recommendations to the department for the creation of  
144 guidelines to govern the grant program created in subsection  
145 (5).

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146        3. Recommendations to the Department of Commerce for the  
147        creation of guidelines to administer the economic development  
148        program created in subsection (6).

149        4. Recommendations for measures to minimize the impact of  
150        the restoration plan on property owners or businesses directly  
151        affected by the restoration project.

152        (c) Repeal.—In accordance with s. 20.052(8), this  
153        subsection is repealed October 2, 2029, unless reviewed and  
154        saved from repeal through reenactment by the Legislature.

155        (4) OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN.—

156        (a) The department, in collaboration with the Fish and  
157        Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Northeast Florida River  
158        and Springs Recreation and Economic Development Advisory  
159        Council, and the local governments of river communities in Clay,  
160        Marion, Putnam, and St. Johns Counties, shall develop an outdoor  
161        recreation plan.

162        (b) The outdoor recreation plan must identify and implement  
163        projects for enhanced and expanded river and springs access for  
164        recreational activities, such as fishing, hunting, swimming,  
165        wildlife viewing, paddling, and hiking. Such projects must be  
166        compatible with the project plan and applicable statutes. The  
167        outdoor recreation plan must be made available for public  
168        comment before its implementation.

169        (c) The department shall implement the outdoor recreation  
170        plan by January 1, 2028.

171        (d) Subject to the provision of state, federal, or other  
172        funds, the department shall complete projects on state-owned  
173        lands identified in the outdoor recreation plan by December 31,  
174        2035.

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175        (5) GRANT PROGRAM.—

176        (a) By January 1, 2028, the department shall develop a  
177 grant program for river communities in Clay, Marion, Putnam, and  
178 St. Johns Counties to implement the outdoor recreation plan.

179        (b) The grant program must be compatible with the project  
180 plan and outdoor recreation plan.

181        (c) The department shall implement the grant program by  
182 January 1, 2028.

183        (6) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.—

184        (a) The Department of Commerce shall develop guidelines and  
185 processes for an economic development program for Marion and  
186 Putnam Counties. The economic development program must support  
187 projects that encourage job creation, capital investment, and  
188 strengthening and diversification of each county's economy.

189        (b) The economic development program must be compatible  
190 with the project plan, the outdoor recreation plan, and the  
191 grant program.

192        (c) The Department of Commerce shall implement the economic  
193 development program by January 1, 2028.

194        Section 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.