

**RESOLUTION 2020 - 03**

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF DEFUNIAK SPRINGS, FLORIDA, EXPRESSING ITS SUPPORT THAT THE DESIGNATION OF RURAL AREA OF OPPORTUNITY (RAO), CONTINUE TO APPLY TO THE NORTHWEST FLORIDA REGION INCORPORATING THE AREA WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE COUNTIES OF CALHOUN, FRANKLIN, GADSDEN, GULF, HOLMES, JACKSON, LIBERTY, WAKULLA AND WASHINGTON, THE AREA WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS OF FREEPORT AND WALTON COUNTY NORTH OF THE CHOCTAWHATCHEE BAY AND THE INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY; AND THE CONTINUATION OF ALL REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT FUNDING FOR THE NORTHWEST FLORIDA BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, INCORPORATED, D/B/A OPPORTUNITY FLORIDA, THROUGH FUNDS APPROPRIATED BY THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE AND ADMINISTERED THROUGH FLORIDA'S DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE NO LATER THAN JULY 8, 2020

**WHEREAS**, in 1999 Governor Bush, by executive order, identified eight counties (Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty and Washington) as Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern, and that this designation was renewed in 2004 and added the area within the city limits of Freeport to this designation;

**WHEREAS**, in 2000 Opportunity Florida was created to promote and improve economic development in the eight counties designated as Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern;

**WHEREAS**, the counties of Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Washington and the area within the city limits of Freeport were re-designated in 2009, as a Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern for a period of five years;

**WHEREAS**, Executive Order 11-103 added Wakulla County to the Northwest Florida Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern;

**WHEREAS**, Executive Order 17-212 added Walton County, north of Choctawhatchee Bay and the intercoastal waterway, to the Northwest Florida Rural Area of Opportunity;

**WHEREAS**, the various counties and municipalities in the Opportunity Florida region request that Governor Ron DeSantis renew the designation as a Rural Area of Opportunity;

**WHEREAS**, the Northwest Florida Business Development Council, Inc., in cooperation with and through the support of the nine counties, all municipalities within the nine counties, the area within the city limits of the City of Freeport and Walton County north of the Choctawhatchee Bay and the intercoastal waterway, all CareerSource Centers serving the region and corporate sector partners, has made great strides in improving the economic outlook for the Northwest Florida RAO by assisting with recruiting new industries, supporting infrastructure projects and working together with local communities and other organizations such as the Department of Economic Opportunity and Enterprise Florida, FDOT and the Governor's Office; and

**WHEREAS**, notwithstanding the progress that has been made since the original designation in 2009, there is still much work that needs to be done to help these nine counties compete economically with other parts of the state;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the DeFuniak Springs City Council does hereby express its support of the following:

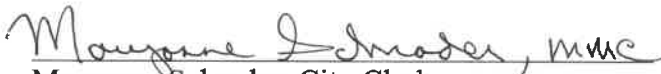
1. That the designation of "Rural Area of Opportunity," continues to apply to Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla, Washington and the area within the city limits of the City of Freeport and Walton County north of Choctawhatchee Bay and the intercoastal waterway;
2. That all Regional Rural Development grant funding for Opportunity Florida be continued and expanded for the Northwest Florida Business Development Council, Inc. through funds appropriated by the Florida Legislature and administered through Florida's Department of Economic Opportunity, Enterprise Florida, Inc., and other designated agencies.

Duly adopted this 13th day of April 2020.

APPROVED:

  
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Robert "Bob" Campbell, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Maryanne Schrader, City Clerk

