

# STATE OF FLORIDA

## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

### EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 18-158

WHEREAS, although economic progress has been made in many rural areas, Florida remains committed to creating private-sector jobs in every part of the state; and

WHEREAS, rural communities are stewards of the vast majority of Florida's land and natural resources, upon which the State's continued growth and prosperity depend; and

WHEREAS, successful rural communities are essential to the overall success of the State's economy and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, certain rural communities are struggling to maintain, support or enhance job creating activities or to generate revenues for education and other critical government services such as infrastructure, transportation and safety; and

WHEREAS, Section 288.0656(7), Florida Statutes, authorizes the Rural Economic Development Initiative to recommend to the Governor up to three areas for designation as rural areas of opportunity; and

WHEREAS, a rural area of opportunity is comprised of rural communities designated by the Governor that have been adversely affected by an extraordinary economic event, severe or chronic distress, or a natural disaster or that presents a unique economic development opportunity of regional impact; and

WHEREAS, the counties of Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor and Union were designated

on April 23, 2003, by Executive Order 03-74, as a Rural Area of Opportunity for a term of five years; and

WHEREAS, the counties of Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor and Union have been subsequently re-designated as a Rural Area of Opportunity by Executive Orders 08-132 and 13-151; and

WHEREAS, the re-designation will expire on June 12, 2018, and the Rural Economic Development Initiative met on March 16, 2018 and agreed to recommend the Governor continue the designation of the counties of Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor and Union as a Rural Area of Opportunity.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RICK SCOTT, Governor of Florida, by virtue of the authority vested in me by Article IV, Section 1(a), Florida Constitution, and Section 288.0656(7), Florida Statutes, do hereby issue the following Executive Order, effective immediately:

Section 1.

The area within the boundaries of the counties of Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor and Union is designated as a Rural Area of Opportunity.

Section 2.

This area shall be a priority assignment for the Rural Economic Development Initiative.

### Section 3.

On a case-by-case basis, the criteria, requirements or similar provisions of economic development incentives may be waived. Such incentives include, but shall not be limited to, the Qualified Target Industry Tax Refund Program under section 288.106, Florida Statutes, the Quick Response Training Program under section 288.047, Florida Statutes, the Quick Response Training Program for participants in the Welfare Transition Program under section 288.047(8), Florida Statutes, Economic Development Transportation projects under section 339.2821, Florida Statutes, the Brownfield Redevelopment Bonus Refund under section 288.107, Florida Statutes, and the Rural Job Tax Credit Program under sections 212.098 and 220.1895, Florida Statutes.

### Section 4.

Access to the assistance available under this designation as a Rural Area of Opportunity shall be contingent upon the execution of a memorandum of agreement between the Department of Economic Opportunity, the governing bodies of the counties, and the governing bodies of the municipalities including within the designated area. Such memorandum of agreement shall specify the terms and conditions of the designation, including, but not limited to, the duties and responsibilities of the counties and any participating municipalities to take actions designed to facilitate the retention and expansion of existing businesses in the area, as well as the recruitment of new businesses to the area.

### Section 5.

Pursuant to Section 288.0656(7)(c), all state agencies and departments shall use all available tools and resources to the extent permissible by law to promote the creation and development of any catalyst project designated by the Rural Area of Opportunity, that has

been recommended by the Department of Economic Opportunity and identified by Enterprise Florida, Inc.

Section 6.

This designation shall be in effect for five years and will expire on June 11, 2023. The Rural Economic Development Initiative may recommend the designation be terminated or continued based on economic development progress from current base lines or upon performance under the memorandum of agreement.



IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and have caused the Great Seal of the State of Florida to be affixed at Tallahassee, this 11th day of June, 2018.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rick Scott', is written over a horizontal line.

RICK SCOTT, GOVERNOR

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Ritzman', is written over a horizontal line.

SECRETARY OF STATE

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

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