

# STATE OF FLORIDA

## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 21-149

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 activity, or to generate revenues for education and other critical government services such as infrastructure, transportation, and safety; and

WHEREAS, the challenges faced by these rural communities threaten their well-being and viability; and

WHEREAS, the Governor is authorized in section 288.0656(7), Florida Statutes, to designate up to three "Rural Areas of Opportunity," formerly "rural areas of critical economic concern," under section 288.0656, Florida Statutes (2000-2013); and

WHEREAS, a rural area of opportunity is a rural community, or a region composed of rural communities, designated by the Governor, that has 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 DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee and the cities of Belle Glade, Pahokee, and South Bay in Palm Beach County, and the area around Immokalee included within the Round II Federal Rural Enterprise Community located in northeast Collier County were designated as a rural area of critical economic concern for a term of five years each by Executive Orders 01-26, 06-34, 11-81, and 16-150 and

WHEREAS, the designation expires on June 27, 2021, and the Rural Economic Development Initiative met on April 16, 2021, and agreed to recommend to the Governor to continue the designation of the counties of DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee and the cities of Belle Glade, Pahokee, and South Bay in Palm Beach County, and the area around Immokalee included within the Round II Federal Rural Enterprise Community located in northeast Collier County as a rural area of opportunity.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RON DESANTIS, as 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 DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee and the cities of Belle Glade, Pahokee, and South Bay in Palm Beach County, the area around Immokalee included within the Round II Federal Rural Enterprise Community located in northeast Collier County is designated as a rural area of opportunity.

Section 2. This area shall be a priority assignment for the Rural Economic Development Initiative.

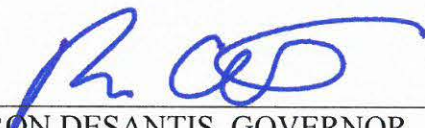
Section 3. On a case-by-case basis, the criteria, requirements or provisions of economic development incentives may be waived. Such incentives include, but shall not be limited to, the Qualified Target Industry Tax Refund Program under section 288.106, Florida Statutes, the Quick Response Training Program 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, 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. Pursuant to section 288.0656(7), access to the assistance available under this Designation as a rural area of opportunity shall be contingent upon the execution of memoranda of agreement between the Department of Economic Opportunity, the governing bodies of the counties, and the governing bodies of the municipalities included within the area. Such memoranda of agreement shall specify the terms and conditions of the designation, including, but not limited to, the duties and responsibilities of the counties and 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. This designation shall be in effect for five years and will expire on June 28, 2026. 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 memoranda of agreement.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Florida to be affixed at Tallahassee, this 28th day of June, 2021.



  
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RON DESANTIS, GOVERNOR

ATTEST:

  
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SECRETARY OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
TALLAHASSEE, FL

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