

RESOLUTION 2017- 26

A RESOLUTION BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SUWANNEE COUNTY, FLORIDA REQUESTING THE PROTECTION OF THE HISTORIC SUWANNEE RIVER IN NORTH FLORIDA.

WHEREAS, Suwannee County is located in North Central Florida and is bordered for 100 miles by the Historic Suwannee River on its north, west and south sides; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Suwannee River is one of the most widely known and recognized river system in the world; and

WHEREAS, the Withlacoochee River (North) begins at its headwaters in South Georgia, and flows into the Historic Suwannee River at Suwannee County's northwestern border area; and

WHEREAS, Suwannee County and each of the Florida counties bordered by the Historic Suwannee River share a great passion for the vitality and life of the river; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Suwannee River is a vital economic engine in the Suwannee River Valley Region providing nature based recreation opportunities; including numerous springs, paddling, swimming, fishing, bike trails, hiking, and wildlife viewing, all of which provide local residents and visitors increased health benefits for participation in outdoor recreational activities; and

WHEREAS, Suwannee County has passed Resolution 2017-16 supporting the State of Florida's efforts to designate the Historic Suwannee River as a National Water Trail for national recognition as a recreation destination to increase tourism and revenue for local businesses; and

WHEREAS, beginning in 2009 and continuing over the past several years, the City of Valdosta, Georgia has experienced numerous failures and spills at their wastewater treatment facilities resulting in the release of millions of gallons of raw sewage into the Withlacoochee River, which in turn, flows directly into the Historic Suwannee River; and

WHEREAS, these failures have resulted in numerous Florida Health Department advisories to the residents of and visitors to several North Florida counties, including Suwannee County, to avoid contact with the Withlacoochee River and the Historic

Suwannee River, and numerous residents along the rivers have reported positive tests of bacterial contamination of residential wells; and

WHEREAS, these failures also resulted in a 2013 consent decree between the City of Valdosta and Georgia's Environmental Protection Department regarding the construction of new wastewater treatment facilities and the institution of updated response and reporting procedures; and

WHEREAS, yet again, on January 22, 2017, the City of Valdosta had another failure resulting in the release of million gallons of raw sewage and contaminated stormwater into the Withlacoochee River which again resulted in the Florida Department of Health issuing public health advisories warning the public of wastewater contamination in the Withlacoochee River and portions of the Historic Suwannee River, which resulted in warnings being posted at all public access areas along the rivers stating that the rivers were not safe for recreational use and every precaution should be taken to avoid any contact with the river; and

WHEREAS, Suwannee County takes note of and supports the January 27, 2017 letter of District 10 Representative Elizabeth Porter to the US Environmental Protection Agency requesting that "...EPA take all necessary actions toward ensuring unauthorized and unlawful discharges from the City's wastewater treatment plant are prevented..." and fully pledges its support to Representative Porter's efforts; and

WHEREAS, Suwannee County has worked tirelessly with its municipalities and business community to attract businesses and increase outdoor river based eco-tourism to create jobs and grow the economies of our communities; and

WHEREAS, Suwannee County being a fiscally constrained county must rely on the State of Florida to help insure that Valdosta, Georgia eliminates the dumping of raw sewage into our rivers,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of County Commissioners, Suwannee County, Florida as follows:

Suwannee County requests the Honorable Governor Rick Scott, other elected Florida State leaders, and Florida's State agencies, to use the resources of the State of Florida to protect the Historic Suwannee River and the Withlacoochee River, to protect the personal health and business interests of the citizens of North Florida, including Suwannee County, to support the efforts of Representative Porter and to take appropriate aggressive and timely actions as are necessary to ensure that Valdosta, Georgia eliminates the dumping of raw sewage into our rivers and help provide Suwannee County the resources its citizens so desperately need to restore the image of

our rivers and our communities as a great place to live, visit, and do business.

PASSED, ADOPTED and APPROVED, this 21st day of February, 2017



RICHARD GAMBLE
Chairman

ATTEST:

By:

for

BARRY A. BAKER
Clerk

