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March 19, 2026

TO: Council Members

FROM: Scott R. Koons, AICP, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Middle and Lower Suwannee River and Withlacoochee River Update

BACKGROUND:

Pursuant to a request by the Madison County Board of County Commissioners, the Council authorized the Executive Director to convene and facilitate a meeting with representatives from Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Madison and Suwannee Counties to develop a plan to promote our area and help restore the reputation of the Middle and Lower Suwannee River and Withlacoochee River as a result of raw sewage spills from the City of Valdosta, Georgia. On September 19, 2018, Council staff convened and facilitated a meeting of county commissioners, and county administrators, coordinators and managers at the Madison County Agricultural Extension office in Madison. Representatives from Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy and Madison Counties were in attendance at the meeting.

By consensus, the county commissioners present requested the Council to establish a task force comprised of a county commissioner from each of the following counties, Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Suwannee and Union Counties, in the Suwannee River Basin, including the Santa Fe River Basin, to address the issues of raw sewage spills by the City of Valdosta, Georgia. The county commissioners present also requested that the Council authorize its Executive Director to provide administrative support to the Task Force and to develop, in conjunction with county administrators, coordinators and managers, a strategic action plan to address the issue of raw sewage spills by the City of Valdosta, Georgia.

Pursuant to the request, at the Council meeting on September 27, 2018, the Council established the Middle Lower Suwannee River and Withlacoochee River Task Force to be comprised of Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Suwannee, Taylor and Union Counties.

UPDATE:

The River Task Force met virtually on March 18, 2026 and received a report on activities conducted during 2025 concerning the Task Force's purpose and discussed the Water First North Florida Aquifer Water Recharge Project. In addition, the Task Force unanimously adopted a resolution opposing the Water First North Florida Aquifer Water Recharge Project and recommending the implementation of the alternative desalinization project to contribute towards achieving minimum flows and levels in the Ichetucknee River Basin and Lower Santa Fe River Basin.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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