

Emerald Coast Resilience Collaborative
Memorandum of Understanding

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is entered into on this _____ of _____ 2021, among the undersigned members of the Emerald Coast Region. All Parties are collectively referred to as the Members or Collaborative Members.

Recalling the Emerald Coast Regional Council's (ECRC) resolution of April 12, 2021, in which the unanimous decision was made by the ECRC Board to support a program to convene stakeholders across disciplines and the Emerald Coast region to develop the framework for a regional resilience collaborative, herein including the undersigned Members that make up the seven counties of Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Holmes, Washington, Bay, and their municipalities:

1-Express gratitude to the Emerald Coast Regional Council, and its governing Board, who have underscored the importance of creating a collaborative framework for action and are committed to implementing resilience measures to guide and support the efforts of our local jurisdictions, individually and collectively; and

2-Endorse the Emerald Coast Resilience Collaborative and the aforementioned Resolution, which is contained in the minutes from previous meeting.

WHEREAS, the Emerald Coast Resilience Collaborative has been formed to coordinate climate adaptation and mitigation activities across county lines, to advance local and regional responses to and preparations for economic and social disruptions caused by natural and man-made events, and to provide state and local agencies with access to technical assistance and support in addressing these events; and

WHEREAS, the Counties of Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Holmes, Washington, and Bay and the municipalities within (the "Collaborative Members"), are a unique and extraordinary area, sharing a sense of community, economy, and critically important environmental resources; and

WHEREAS, the Emerald Coast Region is home to more than an estimated 1 million residents as of 2020, approximately 4.66% of the population of the State of Florida, includes 7 military installations, and several recreational spaces, including state parks and forest, a national seashore, natural springs; and

WHEREAS, the resiliency of the Emerald Coast Region's economic, environmental, and social health relies on crucial coastal transportation infrastructure, including seaports, rail systems, road, and airports; and

WHEREAS, the Emerald Coast region is vulnerable to the impacts of a changing climate, which includes, rainfall, flooding, rising sea-levels, heat events, droughts, and wildfires, which threaten current community priorities, human wellbeing, and natural resources; and

WHEREAS, rising sea levels, intense rainfall and other climatic stresses will compromise crucial drainage infrastructure and drinking water supplies (through saltwater intrusion into rivers and aquifers); and

WHEREAS, extreme weather events can impact the lives of residents, damage property and disrupt businesses; and

WHEREAS, natural areas including forests, beaches with dunes, and wetlands can provide valuable flood risk reduction and water quality benefits and may be compromised by changing climate conditions; and

WHEREAS, climate resiliency is the planning for and implementation of activities to reduce the Emerald Coast region's vulnerability to a changing climate, and is amongst the most consequential actions the Emerald Coast Region could pursue; and

WHEREAS, the Collaborative Members are committed to resiliency and will consider adaptation and risk reductions strategies intended to ensure public safety and safeguarding infrastructure, property, environmental assets, and basic quality of life for current residents and future generations; and

WHEREAS, many of the activities undertaken to enhance resiliency will be concurrent with existing local efforts and objectives addressing aging infrastructure, emergency management, and public health; and

WHEREAS, while counties and cities in the Emerald Coast region have independently identified and undertaken activities to address vulnerabilities, a collaborative commitment of working together to build the regions; resiliency will best serve the Emerald Coast Region; and

WHEREAS, proactively preparing for a changing climate will be less costly and enhance the major sectors of the regional economy, maintaining and growing manufacturing, health care, tourism agriculture and other economic segments; and

WHEREAS, measures to mitigate hazard risks provide a significant return on investment because resilient communities and regions support a thriving economy and create opportunities to attract new businesses and economic investments; and

WHEREAS, several of our jurisdictions and agencies have taken steps to become more resilient while continuing to grow and support local economies, and a collaborative approach, while supporting current efforts, will best serve the Region; and

WHEREAS, to support efforts that continue to mitigate the increasing impacts of hazards and their complexity in the Region, we must elevate ways to work cooperatively across disciplines to identify issues, using existing mitigation strategy research with additional technical expertise to identify ways to improve resiliency, while supporting local mitigation strategies and post- disaster recovery planning to include input to measure continual improvement in the process; and

WHEREAS, this collaborative approach will position the Region, jurisdictions, and agencies to plan better for resilience, meet state and federal regulations and guidelines, and enable greater access to long-term financing sources; and

WHEREAS, the Collaborative Members have joined in formation of the Emerald Coast Resilience Collaborative to coordinate their efforts and enhance their abilities to prepare, adapt and mitigate for the afore-mentioned stressors and hazards; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GOVERNING BOARDS OF THE COALITION MEMBERS THAT:

Section 1 Regional Cooperation - The Members shall work together to maximize mitigation and adaptation effects of sea level rise by identifying vulnerabilities of the effects of stronger storms and increased rainfall in their communities; identifying common vulnerability assessment methodologies; planning for mitigation and adaptation actions that will enhance the resiliency of their communities; leveraging their resources; and pursuing public/private partnerships.

Section 2 Regional Resiliency Action Plan - The Members shall work collaboratively to develop a Regional Resilience Action Plan that will identify specific initiatives with supportive and actionable data.

Section 3 Legislative Strategy – The Members shall develop a legislative strategy that includes a joint position statement recognizing the vulnerabilities of the Emerald Coast region to the impacts of sea-level rise and include recommendations for the allocation of state and federal resources, which may include designation of the Emerald Coast region as uniquely vulnerable for the purpose of securing enhanced levels of federal participation and funding in regional adaptation and mitigation programs.

Section 4 Community Involvement - The Members shall work collaboratively to recognize and engage the regional community, involving a diverse stakeholder representation in developing policies and recommendations for implementation of the Regional Resilience Action Plan.

Section 5 Intent - By joining as a Member, it expresses intent of the municipality/entity to work together on a regional level to identify and address challenges due to sea level rise

and flooding, but by joining, Members do not hereby commit local resources or staffing and acknowledge that the authority of each Member remains.

Section 6 This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) shall take effect on_____.

[Signature Blocks to Follow]