

RESOLUTION 2017-02-08

A RESOLUTION BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MADISON COUNTY, FLORIDA ASKING FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE HISTORIC SUWANNEE RIVER AND THE WITHLACOOCHEE RIVER IN NORTH FLORIDA.

WHEREAS, Madison County is located in North Central Florida and is bordered by the State of Georgia to the North and the Withlacoochee River and Historic Suwannee River to the East; and

WHEREAS, the Withlacoochee River starts its journey in Valdosta, Georgia and flows into the Historic Suwannee River on Madison County's eastern border, and from there flows 127 miles through the State of Florida to the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, Madison County and all Florida counties bordered by the Withlacoochee River and Historic Suwannee River share a great love for these rivers; and

WHEREAS, the Withlacoochee River and Historic Suwannee River is an vital economic engine for the Suwannee Valley Region and provides nature based recreation opportunities; including paddling, bike trails, hiking, hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing, provided local residents and visitors increased health benefits for participation in outdoor recreational activities; and

WHEREAS, Madison County has supported the State of Florida, by resolution 2016-10-12A, to designate the Historic Suwannee River as a National Water Trail being recognized nationally as a recreation destination and being promoted as such to increase tourism and revenue for local businesses; and

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

WHEREAS, the City of Valdosta, Georgia over the past several years has experienced numerous failures and spills with their wastewater treatment facility; which resulted in the construction of a new facility that was placed into service in 2016; and

WHEREAS, the City of Valdosta on January 22, 2017 had yet another failure which resulted in the release of 2.2 million gallons of raw sewage and stormwater into the Withlacoochee River; and

WHEREAS, on January 24 and 26, 2017, the Madison County Health Department issued 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, during this same event, the higher than normal river levels can cause many of the numerous springs to reverse flow and carry the river water polluted with raw sewage deep into the limestone aquifer, resulting in the possible contamination of residential wells and springs along the river; and

WHEREAS, Madison County has worked tirelessly with its municipalities to attract businesses and increase outdoor river based tourism to create jobs and grow our communities; and

WHEREAS, Madison County and the adjacent counties which border Georgia and Alabama are at a disadvantage in the fight to attract businesses to our area due to their available incentives and closing funds; and

WHEREAS, Madison County being a fiscally constrained county must rely on the Great 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 MADISON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:

Madison County is asking the Honorable Governor Rick Scott, elected Florida State leaders, and Florida's State agencies, to use the resources of the Great State of Florida to protect the Withlacoochee River and the Historic Suwannee River by ensuring that Valdosta, Georgia eliminates the dumping of raw sewage into our rivers and help provide Madison County the resources we so desperately need to restore the image of our rivers and our communities as a great place to visit, live and do business.

Adopted by the Board of County Commissioners of Madison County on this 8th day of February, 2017.

Alfred Martin, Chair

Attest:

William Washington, Clerk