

Board of County Commission Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: March 15, 2016

Date Submitted: March 1, 2016

To: Honorable Chairperson and Members of the Board

From: Robert M. Presnell, County Administrator
Allara Mills Gutcher, Planning and Community Development Director

Subject: Consideration of Transmittal of a Support Letter to the Apalachee Regional Planning Council for the Application of a Grant to study the Feasibility of a Trail in Western Gadsden County

Statement of Issue:

Authorization for the Chairperson to sign a letter of support to the Apalachee Regional Planning Council (APRC) for application of a grant which they are seeking from the Department of Economic Opportunity, to study the feasibility of a trail along the eastern edge of the Apalachicola River extending from Chattahoochee to Bristol, currently referred to as the C2B Trail.

Background:

In 2014, the County was a recipient of the Competitive Florida Partnership Program. The award of this program was financial and technical assistance to study assets within our jurisdiction. As a result of the asset mapping exercise, and the community conversations, the asset identified as the highest ranking was the Apalachicola River.

Staff has been working to move the progress of the Competitive Florida Partnership Program forward. Staff, in conjunction with the ARPC, Department of Economic Opportunity, U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (Florida National Scenic Trail), Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation, Northwest Florida Water Management District, FDEP Office of Greenways and Trails, FDEP Office of Park Planning and Torreya State Park have met several times over the past several weeks to learn of the opportunities and constraints of the development of this project.

After the first few meetings, the ARPC was identified as the ideal host agency to apply for and manage the grant as this project traverses multiple counties, and has a regional impact on economic development to include counties to the west of the river. Gadsden County staff has been coordinating with the ARPC on seeking support letters from local organizations.

To date, the ARPC has received support letters from the Chattahoochee Main Street, RiverWay South, and Torreya State Park. The Tourist Development Council will consider this request at

their March 21 meeting. Other local governments and organizations will also be approached for support.

Options:

1. Authorize the Chairperson to sign the letter and submit to the ARPC.
2. Do not authorize the Chairperson to sign the letter and submit to the ARPC.
3. Board direction.

Count Administrator's Recommendation:

Option 1

Attachments:

1. Support letter to the ARPC.
2. Trail vicinity map

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Planning and Community Development

Robert Presnell
County Administrator

David Weiss
County Attorney

Chris Rietow
Executive Director
Apalachee Regional Planning Council
2507 Callaway Road, Suite 200
Tallahassee, FL 32303

Dear Mr. Rietow:

As a recipient of the Competitive Florida Partnership Program beginning in the 2015 fiscal year, Gadsden County was fortunate to receive technical assistance from DEO and other state agencies, and held two community conversations in support of this program. As a result of both of these exercises, the overwhelming asset identified in Gadsden County is the Apalachicola River. The potential now for a trail developed along this unique topographic section of our state, is a project we welcome.

Gadsden County recognizes that the proposed C2B Trail represents the opportunity to develop a unique Florida hiking experience in an area with significant topographic relief offering bluffs and vistas overlooking the Apalachicola River. The forests, streams and ravines contain interesting biota and micro-climates along with various historic and cultural features that link to the region's long-standing ties to the Apalachicola, Flint and Chattahoochee rivers basin.

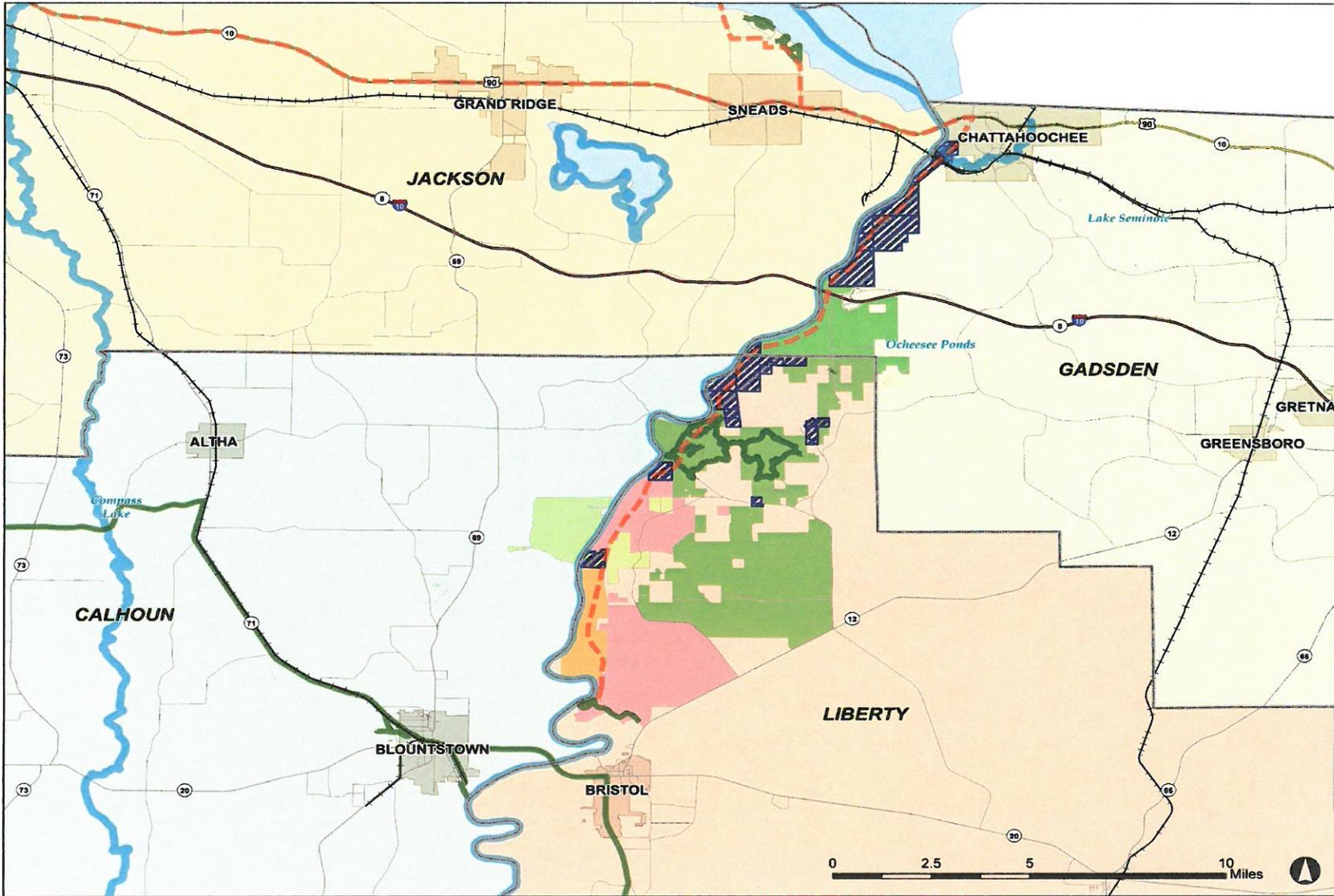
Development of this hiking trail as a regional nature-based asset will help our County and the anchoring city of Chattahoochee grow nature-based tourism. The trail's creation and use supports formation and framing of a greater regional network of natural and cultural assets for Apalachicola River counties such as Gadsden, Liberty, Calhoun and Jackson and northwest Florida in general. Important to the trail's likely development and success is the fact that many of the component pieces the trail network already exist and can be linked and benefit by such linkage, such as Torreya State Park, The Nature Conservancy's Garden of Eden Bluffs and Ravine Trail and the two anchoring towns of Chattahoochee and Bristol.

Gadsden County views development of this trail as economic development around an overall nature-based tourism theme for the Apalachicola River Basin and surrounding area. As a result, the Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners strongly support the ARPC, the planning for the C2B Trail, and future related implementing development projects.

Sincerely,

Brenda A. Holt, Chairperson
Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners

Private Parcels Highlight Map



- Legend**
- Proposed Trails
 - Existing Trails
 - Paddling Trails
 - ▨ Private Parcel Highlight
 - Northwest Florida Water Management District
 - Private Individual(s)
 - The Nature Conservancy
 - Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund
 - Rails
 - County Boundary
 - City Limits

