

STATE OF FLORIDA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 17-212 (Amending Executive Order 15-133)

WHEREAS on July 8, 2015, Executive Order 15-133 was issued designating the area within the boundaries of the counties of Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla, and Washington, and the area within the city limits of Freeport, as a Rural Area of Opportunity; and

WHEREAS, these communities are stewards of the vast majority of Florida's land and natural resources, upon which the State's continued growth and prosperity depend; and

WHEREAS, successful rural communities are essential to the overall success of the State's economy and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, certain rural communities are struggling to maintain, support, or enhance job-creating activity, or to generate revenues for education and other critical government services, such as infrastructure, transportation, and safety; and

WHEREAS, the challenges faced by these rural communities threaten their well-being and viability; and

WHEREAS, the Governor is authorized under Section 288.0656(7), Florida Statutes, to designate up to three Rural Areas of Opportunity upon the recommendation of the Rural Economic Development Initiative; and

WHEREAS, a Rural Area of Opportunity, formerly known as a rural area of critical economic concern, is a rural community, or a region composed of rural communities, designated by the Governor, that has been adversely affected by an extraordinary economic event, severe or

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WHEREAS, the counties of Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, and Washington, and the area within the city limits of Freeport, were designated as a Rural Area of Opportunity for a period of five years by Executive Order 10-22, dated January 25, 2010. Executive Order 10-22 was amended on May 5, 2011, by Executive Order 11-103, to add Wakulla County to the designated Rural Area of Opportunity; and

WHEREAS, after the re-designation expired on January 8, 2015, the Rural Economic Development Initiative met on January 16, 2015, and recommended the Governor re-designate the counties of Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla, and Washington, and the area within the city limits of Freeport, as a Rural Area of Opportunity.

WHEREAS, the Walton County Economic Alliance is a public/private organization that partners with other area organizations to facilitate growth and expansion by supporting current and new businesses; and

WHEREAS, the Alliance requests that the area in Walton County north of the Chotawhatchee Bay and intercoastal waterway should be added the Northwest Rural Area of Economic Opportunity.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RICK SCOTT, as Governor of Florida, by virtue of the authority vested in me by Article IV, Section 1(a), Florida Constitution, and Section 288.0656(7), Florida Statutes, issue the following Executive Order, effective immediately:

Section 1. The area within the boundaries of the counties of Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla, and Washington, the area within the city limits of Freeport and Walton County north of the Chotawhatchee Bay and intercoastal waterway, is designated as a Rural Area of Opportunity.