

Introduced by Council Member Peluso:

RESOLUTION 2026-74

A RESOLUTION URGING THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE PASS HOUSE BILL 981 AND SENATE BILL 1066, ALSO KNOWN AS THE "NORTHEAST FLORIDA RIVERS, SPRINGS, AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACT," TO ADDRESS RESTORATION OF THE OCKLAWAHA RIVER AND CREATION OF RECREATIONAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SURROUNDING COUNTIES; DIRECTING LEGISLATIVE SERVICES TO TRANSMIT COPIES OF THIS RESOLUTION, ONCE ADOPTED, TO THE MEMBERS OF THE DUVAL COUNTY LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION, THE SENATE PRESIDENT, THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE, AND THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA; REQUESTING ONE CYCLE EMERGENCY PASSAGE; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, flowing north, the Ocklawaha River is the primary tributary for the St. Johns River, which flows through the heart of Jacksonville, Florida; and

WHEREAS, the Ocklawaha River has suffered severe ecological damage in the 20th century from impoundment, fertilizer runoff, dredging, pollution and rerouting, all of which has directly impacted recreational and economic development in the surrounding counties; and

WHEREAS, House Bill 981 and Senate Bill 1066, also known as the "Northeast Florida Rivers, Springs, and Community Investment Act" (the "Act"), create a new Section 373.464, *Florida Statutes*, to address restoration of the Ocklawaha River and creation of

1 recreational and economic development opportunities in the
2 surrounding areas; and

3 **WHEREAS**, in furtherance of the above, the Act, in part, requires:
4 (1) development of a project plan for the restoration of the Ocklawaha
5 River, (2) development of an outdoor recreation plan that identifies
6 and implements projects for enhanced and expanded river and springs
7 access for recreational activities, and (3) establishment of a
8 Northeast Florida River and Springs Recreation and Economic
9 Development Advisory Council (the "Advisory Council") to make
10 recommendations for projects to be included in the outdoor recreation
11 plan in addition to other responsibilities relative to recreational
12 and economic development in the counties surrounding the Ocklawaha
13 River; and

14 **WHEREAS**, the Jacksonville City Council supports the purpose and
15 intent of the Act, recognizing the restoration of the Ocklawaha River
16 will have a significant and positive impact on the St. Johns River
17 and its other tributaries, including increased resiliency and
18 recreational and economic benefits; and

19 **WHEREAS**, creation of the Advisory Council whose membership will
20 be comprised of individuals from river recreation-related businesses
21 local to the counties impacted, members of the Florida Fish and
22 Wildlife Conservation Commission, members of fishing groups, and
23 members working in parks and recreation, is vital to ensure the Act
24 is implemented appropriately in light of the distinct needs of the
25 communities in those counties that will be most directly impacted;
26 and

27 **WHEREAS**, the Jacksonville City Council also recognizes the
28 importance of the Act's requirement for creation of an outdoor
29 recreation plan which must identify and implement projects for
30 enhanced and expanded river and springs access for recreational
31 activities, such as fishing, hunting, swimming, wildlife viewing,

1 paddling, and hiking while also requiring public input prior to
2 implementation; and

3 **WHEREAS**, it is important for Marion and Putnam Counties, both
4 bordering the Rodman Reservoir, to receive additional support and
5 technical assistance through an economic development program that
6 supports projects that encourage job creation, capital investment,
7 and strengthening and diversification of each county's economy; and

8 **WHEREAS**, restoration of the Ocklawaha River would provide
9 natural flood storage and water filtration to the St. Johns River and
10 its fish and wildlife habitats, would increase the resiliency of
11 communities along its borders and reduce the flood risks associated
12 with aging infrastructure faults; now therefore

13 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of Jacksonville:

14 **Section 1. Expressing City Council Support and Requesting**
15 **the Florida Legislature to Pass House Bill 981 and Senate Bill 1066.**
16 The Jacksonville City Council urges the Florida Legislature to pass
17 House Bill 981 and Senate Bill 1066, also known as the "Northeast
18 Florida Rivers, Springs, and Community Investment Act." The Council
19 supports this action to restore the Ocklawaha River which will provide
20 increased resiliency to the Ocklawaha and St. Johns Rivers and Silver
21 Springs in addition to the recreational and economic benefits to the
22 counties surrounding the Ocklawaha and St. Johns River basins.

23 **Section 2. Direction to Legislative Services Division.** The
24 Legislative Services Division is hereby directed to transmit a copy
25 of this Resolution, once adopted, to the members of the Duval County
26 Legislative Delegation, the Senate President, the Speaker of the
27 House, and the Governor of the State of Florida.

28 **Section 3. Requesting One Cycle Emergency Passage Pursuant**
29 **to Council Rule 4.901 Emergency.** One cycle emergency passage of this
30 legislation is requested. The nature of the emergency is that the
31 City Council would like to ensure this Resolution is timely acted

1 upon so that it can be forwarded to the Florida Legislature for
2 consideration before the bills are taken up for final action.

3 **Section 4. Effective Date.** This Resolution shall become
4 effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective
5 without the Mayor's signature.

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7 Form Approved:

8
9 /s/ Mary E. Staffopoulos

10 Office of General Counsel

11 Legislation Prepared By: Brooks Dame, Executive Council Assistant

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