



# Florida's Great Northwest

received *bc*  
9-19-16 / *Adm*  
*Secret Shannon*  
*Shelia*

September 16, 2016

Chairman Lane Lynchard  
Santa Rosa County Board of County Commissioners  
6495 Caroline St, Suite M  
Milton, FL 32570

Dear Chairman Lynchard,

Thank you very much for your service to the residents and businesses of Santa Rosa County.

As your regional economic development organization, Florida's Great Northwest is focused on supporting business and economic growth in your county and the other communities that are a part of our 12-county area, which includes Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Holmes, Washington, Bay, Jackson, Calhoun, Gulf, Liberty and Franklin counties.

With the potential of BP oil spill settlement funds on the horizon, now is a critical time for the residents and businesses of Santa Rosa county, and Northwest Florida as a whole. While much is still unknown about the funds, we do know that it could significantly transform our region in a positive way if we work together to:

- 1) Ensure the funds remain dedicated to the Northwest Florida region
- 2) Develop a smart plan in which the entire region benefits with the eight disproportionately affected counties at the core

Since the BP oil spill settlement funds are a result of economic damages to the region, and Florida's Great Northwest is the regional economic development organization for Northwest Florida, we feel it is our responsibility and duty to our partner communities to assist in this effort.

As such, Florida's Great Northwest is in the process of developing an Advocacy Plan to ensure the BP oil spill settlement funds remain in Northwest Florida. Additionally, we are developing a Regional Economic Transformation Strategy to help identify key initiatives that will have a significant, long-term economic impact across the region. We would appreciate an opportunity to receive input from your Board of County Commissioners for both initiatives as well as establish a communication infrastructure to ensure there is a clear line of communications from the region to the counties and vice versa with regards to both efforts.

We feel that it is important to have our local partners from each county within the 12-county Florida's Great Northwest footprint – along with Wakulla County as one of the eight disproportionately affected counties – included in both of these processes. Your economic development professionals from Santa Rosa County EDO are already engaged, and at their

Chairman Lynchard  
September 16, 2016  
Page 2

suggestion as well as Florida's Great Northwest's Board, we are requesting a point of contact from your Board of County Commissioners to gain input for these efforts.

If you agree with the importance of these two efforts, please share with me the contact information of the person from your Board of County Commissioners and/or a designee that should be our primary point of contact by September 30, 2016.

I hope you will consider this request as we strive to provide a united voice for regional economic development. We feel it is important to gain feedback from your Board of County Commissioners and would greatly appreciate your insights and expertise at this critical moment in time for Northwest Florida. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at 850.635.2350 or [kwilmes@fgnw.org](mailto:kwilmes@fgnw.org). Thank you again for all that you do.

All the best,



Kim Wilmes  
President & CEO

cc: Tony Gomillion, Santa Rosa County Administrator  
Shannon Ogletree, Executive Director, Santa Rosa EDO  
Rick Byars, Chairman, Florida's Great Northwest