

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to the Northwest Florida Rural Inland
 3 Counties Recovery Fund; creating s. 288.8055, F.S.;
 4 providing legislative intent; providing definitions;
 5 creating the Northwest Florida Rural Inland Counties
 6 Recovery Fund within the Department of Economic
 7 Opportunity; requiring certain payments to be
 8 appropriated annually to the fund; requiring the
 9 department to grant awards to organizations and local
 10 governments for specified infrastructure projects and
 11 workforce programs; requiring the department to
 12 establish an application procedure and prioritize
 13 projects and programs that meet certain requirements;
 14 requiring the department, in consultation with
 15 specified entities, to review and certify
 16 applications; exempting certain funds from reversion;
 17 providing an effective date.

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 19 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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 21 Section 1. Section 288.8055, Florida Statutes, is created
 22 to read:

23 288.8055 Northwest Florida Rural Inland Counties Recovery
 24 Fund.—

25 (1) The Legislature recognizes that as a result of the

26 Deepwater Horizon disaster, the rural inland counties of
27 Northwest Florida continue to face extraordinary challenges in
28 significantly improving their economies, specifically in terms
29 of household income, job creation, average wages, and strong tax
30 bases. The Legislature also recognizes that this area is
31 designated as a rural area of opportunity by the Governor
32 pursuant to s. 288.0656. Therefore, the Legislature intends to
33 provide a long-term source of funding for economic recovery and
34 enhancement efforts of the rural inland affected counties.

35 (2) As used in this section, the term:

36 (a) "Fund" means the Northwest Florida Rural Inland
37 Affected Counties Recovery Fund created in this section.

38 (b) "Rural inland affected county" means Calhoun County,
39 Gadsden County, Holmes County, Jackson County, Jefferson County,
40 Liberty County, or Washington County.

41 (c) "Settlement agreement" means the agreement entitled
42 "Settlement Agreement Between the Gulf States and the BP
43 Entities with Respect to Economic and Other Claims Arising from
44 the Deepwater Horizon Incident," which was entered into on
45 October 5, 2015, in the case styled In re: Oil Spill by the Oil
46 Rig "Deepwater Horizon" in the Gulf of Mexico, on April 20,
47 2010, MDL 2179 in the United States District Court for the
48 Eastern District of Louisiana.

49 (3) The Northwest Florida Rural Inland Affected Counties
50 Recovery Fund is created within the department to facilitate the

51 planning, preparation, and financing of infrastructure projects
52 and workforce programs in rural inland affected counties which
53 will encourage job creation, capital investment, and the
54 strengthening and diversification of the economies of such
55 counties by promoting tourism, trade, and economic development.

56 (4) Five percent of all payments to the state received
57 pursuant to the settlement agreement after July 1, 2018, shall
58 be appropriated annually by the Legislature to the fund.

59 (5) The department shall grant awards to organizations or
60 local governments within the rural inland affected counties for
61 infrastructure projects and workforce programs that meet the
62 priorities for economic recovery, diversification, and
63 enhancement. Awards may be provided for:

64 (a) Local match requirements of s. 288.0655.

65 (b) Infrastructure planning, design, construction,
66 expansion, or maintenance projects that meet such priorities.

67 (c) Infrastructure feasibility studies, design and
68 engineering activities, or other infrastructure planning and
69 preparation activities necessary to induce the relocation or
70 expansion of specific employment opportunities.

71 (d) Grants to support workforce programs that provide
72 participants in the rural inland affected counties with
73 transferable sustainable workforce skills.

74 (e) Grants to the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing
75 Corporation created under s. 288.1226 for the purpose of

76 advertising and promoting tourism and agricultural or
77 agricultural-based products marketed under the "Fresh From
78 Florida" or "From Florida" logos and for promoting
79 infrastructure projects and workforce programs on behalf of the
80 rural inland affected counties.

81 (f) Grants to regionally based economic development
82 organizations representing the rural inland affected counties
83 for the purpose of building the professional capacity of such
84 organizations and providing technical assistance to businesses
85 served by such organizations.

86 (6) The department shall establish an application
87 procedure for awards and a scoring process for the selection of
88 infrastructure projects and workforce programs that have the
89 potential to generate increased economic activity in the rural
90 inland affected counties, giving priority to such projects and
91 programs that:

92 (a) Generate maximum estimated economic benefits, based on
93 tools and models not generally employed by economic input-output
94 analyses, including cost-benefit, return-on-investment, or
95 dynamic scoring techniques, to determine how the long-term
96 economic growth potential of the rural inland affected counties
97 may be enhanced by the award.

98 (b) Increase household income above the national average
99 in the rural inland affected counties.

100 (c) Leverage or further enhance key assets, including K-20

101 educational institutions, research facilities, and military
102 bases, in the rural inland affected counties.

103 (d) Partner with local governments to provide funds,
104 infrastructure, land, or other assistance to the rural inland
105 affected counties.

106 (e) Benefit the environment and economy of the rural
107 inland affected counties.

108 (f) Provide outcome measures.

109 (g) Partner with K-20 educational institutions or school
110 districts located within the rural inland affected counties.

111 (h) Are recommended by the board of county commissioners
112 of the rural inland affected county in which such project or
113 program will be located.

114 (i) Partner with convention and visitor bureaus, tourist
115 development councils, or chambers of commerce located within the
116 rural inland affected counties.

117 (7) Applications for awards shall be submitted to the
118 department. The department, in consultation with Enterprise
119 Florida, Inc., the Florida Tourism Industry Marketing
120 Corporation, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the
121 Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, as
122 appropriate, shall review and certify applications pursuant to
123 s. 288.061. The review shall include an evaluation of the
124 economic benefit of the infrastructure project or workforce
125 program and its long-term viability. The department shall have

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126 | final approval for any awards provided pursuant to this section.
127 | (8) Notwithstanding s. 216.301, funds appropriated for the
128 | purposes of this section are not subject to reversion.
129 | Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.