

# Southwest Florida Regional Resiliency Compact

## Memorandum of Understanding For Review and Ratification

**Draft Date: June 23, 2020**

**WHEREAS**, the Southwest Florida Regional Resiliency Compact (hereinafter, the Compact) has been formed to develop a regionally consistent approach to the impacts of climate change and to advance local and regional responses to and preparations for economic and community disruption projected to result from the impacts of climate change; and

**WHEREAS**, the Counties of Charlotte, Lee, and Collier and the municipalities in these counties (hereinafter, the Compact Members) form a unique and extraordinary area, sharing a sense of community, economy, and critically important environmental resources; and

**WHEREAS**, the Southwest Florida region has some of Florida's most remarkable beaches, rivers, estuaries, and unique ecosystems which are closely coupled to the region's history and cultural heritage; and

**WHEREAS**, the Southwest Florida region has approximately 1.26 million permanent residents which represents approximately 6.1% of Florida's population, and is projected to exceed 1.7 million residents by 2040; and

**WHEREAS**, tourism is of critical importance to the Southwest Florida region with approximately 7.5M visitors to our 3 counties in 2019 and is heavily dependent on its unique natural resources to promote and sustain that tourism; and

**WHEREAS**, the Southwest Florida region is especially vulnerable to the impacts of a changing climate, including: sea-level rise, rainfall, heat events, wildfires, droughts, flooding, and storms, which threaten community priorities, human well-being, and natural resources; and

**WHEREAS**, rising sea levels, intense rainfall, rising water temperatures, and other climatic stressors will compromise crucial drainage infrastructure and water quality (e.g., saltwater intrusion); and

**WHEREAS**, extreme weather events can impact the lives of residents, damage property, and disrupt businesses; and

**WHEREAS**, natural areas including forests, beaches with dunes, wetlands, mangroves, and oyster reefs can provide valuable flood risk reduction and water quality benefits and may be compromised by changing climate conditions; and

**WHEREAS**, planning for and implementation of activities to reduce the Southwest Florida region's vulnerability to a changing climate is among the most consequential actions the Southwest Florida region could pursue; and

**WHEREAS**, a regionally consistent message communicated through a coordinated outreach program to citizens of, and visitors to, the Southwest Florida region is critically important to ensuring thorough understanding of the issues facing the region; and

**WHEREAS**, the Compact Members are committed to being resilient to a changing climate, and will consider adaptation and risk reduction strategies intended to ensure public safety and safeguard infrastructure, property, cultural and environmental assets, and basic quality of life for current residents and future generations; and

**WHEREAS**, measures to mitigate hazard risks provide a significant return on investment because resilient communities and regions support a thriving economy and create opportunities to attract new businesses and economic investments; and

**WHEREAS**, proactively preparing for a changing climate will be less costly and enhance the major sectors of the regional economy, maintaining and growing manufacturing, health care, tourism, agriculture, and

other economic drivers; and

**WHEREAS**, many of the activities undertaken to enhance resiliency to a changing climate will be concurrent and supportive of existing local efforts, such as addressing aging infrastructure, emergency management, and public health; and

**WHEREAS**, local governments play a critical role in fostering social equity in the face of climate-related challenges, including the potential for community displacement; and

**WHEREAS**, while counties and cities in Southwest Florida have independently identified and undertaken activities to address vulnerabilities, they recognize the value of a collaborative commitment to build resiliency in the region; and

**WHEREAS**, the Compact Members have joined in formation of the Southwest Florida Regional Resiliency Compact to coordinate their efforts and enhance their abilities to prepare, adapt, and mitigate for the effects of climate change in their individual communities and throughout the entire Southwest Florida region.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GOVERNING BOARDS OF THE COMPACT MEMBERS THAT:**

**SECTION 1. Findings** - The findings set forth above are adopted and set forth as the reasons and statement of purpose for the formation of the Southwest Florida Regional Resiliency Compact.

**SECTION 2. Regional Cooperation** - The Compact Members shall work together to maximize their efforts to adapt to and work to mitigate the effects of climate change by: identifying vulnerabilities to the effects of climate change in their communities; identifying common vulnerability assessment methodologies; planning for adaptation and mitigation actions that will enhance the resiliency of their communities; learning from each other and their prior efforts and planning documents; leveraging their resources; and pursuing public-private partnerships.

**SECTION 3 Regional Resiliency Action Plan** - The Compact Members shall develop a Regional Resiliency Action Plan which shall include strategies for coordinated regional preparation for and adaption to a rapidly changing global environment.

**SECTION 4. Science-based Decisions** - The Compact Members will base their strategies and actions on sound science and technical data and shall work together to identify experts for guidance and use recognized and consistent sea-level rise projections to assess vulnerability and inform planning efforts.

**SECTION 5. Legislative Strategy** - The Compact Members shall develop a legislative strategy which recognizes the region-specific vulnerabilities of Southwest Florida to the impacts of climate change and includes recommendations for the allocation of state and federal resources.

**SECTION 6. Community Involvement** - Recognizing the importance of involvement in these regional, cooperative efforts by all members of the community, the Compact Members shall engage and involve local businesses, organizations, associations, and individuals in developing the Compact's plans, policies and recommendations. Additionally, the Compact membership may grow, with private and public organizations joining as best seen fit by the existing members.

**SECTION 7. Education and Outreach** - It is critical that the Southwest Florida region present a cohesive and consistent message to avoid ambiguity across jurisdictional lines. Therefore, the Compact Members will develop a Regional Resiliency Education and Outreach strategy to assist the Compact Members in communicating efforts to their citizens.

**SECTION 8. Intent** - The Compact Members each join the Southwest Florida Regional Resiliency Compact as an expression of their intent and commitment to work together on a regional level to identify and address

the effects of climate change.

**SECTION 9. Funding** – The compact members do not hereby commit any financial resources to the operation of the compact and shall seek alternative funding sources through grants, philanthropic funding and other means to fund the operation of the compact.

**SECTION 10. Governance** – The compact shall be governed by a leadership committee consisting of one member appointed by each compact member. This member may be staff or an elected official of the jurisdiction they are representing. Each compact member shall have one vote on the actions of the compact and all actions shall require a majority vote to progress.

**SECTION 11. Autonomy** – Nothing in this compact will prevent any compact member from taking actions to increase their own resiliency nor shall this compact take any power or authority away from the individual compact members.

**SECTION 12. Separation from the Compact** – Any compact member may leave the compact at any time by informing the other compact members in writing of their intent to leave the compact.