

Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: October 1, 2018

Date Submitted: September 20, 2018

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Chuck Hess, County Commissioner District 5

Subject: Request Board Approval of a Proclamation Declaring October 2018 as Florida Native Plant Month in Wakulla County

Statement of Issue:

This agenda item requests Board approval of a Proclamation declaring October 2018 as Florida Native Plant Month in Wakulla County.

Background:

Florida received its name from the floristic displays seen by early explorers, and to this day, an abundance of native wildflowers attract visitors to our natural areas.

Florida native plants are critical to the health of bees, insects, butterflies and other animals, since they provide food and shelter for the pollinators, on which many of our food crops are dependent. Flowers such as tupelo play a key role in the honey production that occurs in our community, and is one of the vital industries sustaining our economy.

Wakulla County plays host to thousands of migrating Monarch Butterflies each October, as they feed off the swamp bush (*Baccharis halimifolia*), that grows in great abundance throughout Wakulla County. Each year thousands of tourists flock to Wakulla, to see these and other amazing insects, while attending the Monarch Butterfly Festival at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Wakulla County is one of the Monarchs critical feeding stopover points prior to their long journey over the Gulf of Mexico.

Wakulla County is home to several Florida and National “champion trees” and visitors are drawn to our County from promotions such as the Department of Transportation’s Wildflower road map where many Wakulla County roads are featured.

The Native Plant Society was created to support native plants and consists of 37 chapters across Florida. Members from all walks of life volunteer their time, knowledge and skills teaching Floridians about the benefits of native plants. Wakulla County is home to the Sarracenia chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society.

The chapter has requested the Commission to join other counties and the Governor in declaring October as “Florida Native Plant Month.”

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Analysis

Wakulla County has an opportunity to support our chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society by joining the Governor and other counties throughout Florida to remind citizens of the value that Florida native plants bring to their gardens, roadsides and our way of life. Preservation of Native plants and native plant communities help preserve the Florida we have come to love. Native plants are part of our Natural Florida.

Budgetary Impact:

None.

Options:

1. Approve the Proclamation declaring October 2018 as Florida Native Plant Month in Wakulla County.
2. Do not approve the Proclamation declaring October 2018 as Florida Native Plant Month in Wakulla County.
3. Board Direction.

Recommendation:

Option #1

Attachment(s):

1. Proclamation

PROCLAMATION DECLARING OCTOBER 2018 AS FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT MONTH IN WAKULLA COUNTY

WHEREAS, Florida’s native plants and plant communities are rich and diverse, are essential in the natural environment in sustaining bees, butterflies, and other animals, and thus provide benefits to Wakulla’s citizens that cannot be overstated and must be preserved for future generations; and

WHEREAS, Florida, and particularly Wakulla County, have an incredible wealth of natural areas to showcase our native plants and native plant communities to our citizens and visitors alike and;

WHEREAS, Wakulla county enjoys over 1,000 species of native plants, trees, vines and shrubs including Zephyr Lilies, Blazing Star Liatris, Grass Pinks Orchids, Stokes Aster, Wild Azaleas, Saw Palmetto, Night Flowering Petunia, 19 species of carnivorous plants, and 15 species of Milk Weed, which all support ecotourism by drawing thousands of visitors from all over the world to our roadsides and those unique spots within the County where these and similar plants can be seen in abundance and;

WHEREAS, Wakulla County is home to many Florida and National Champion trees; grows Ogeechee tupelo (Nyssa ogeche) which is foundational to the tupelo honey industry; and features miles of roadways graced by native wildflowers that also support the pollinators that benefit local agriculture; and

WHEREAS, Wakulla County’s complement of Florida native plants features species whose known global range lies entirely within the County; including St. Marks Yellow-Eyed Grass and Godfrey’s Spider Lily; and

WHEREAS, the Sarracenia Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, whose mission is the conservation, preservation and restoration of native plants and plant communities serves Wakulla County and is helping keep Wakulla County “natural”;

NOW THEREFORE, the Board of County Commissioners of Wakulla County convened this 1st day of October, 2018 declares the month of October 2018 as FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT MONTH in Wakulla County.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
WAKULLA COUNTY, FLORIDA**

Ralph Thomas, Chairman