FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WREC Welcomes Southeast Culvert to Lacoochee

Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative (WREC) hosted a gathering at Southeast Culvert's new Florida facility to introduce the manufacturer to community leaders and celebrate an investment bringing employment opportunities, workforce development and a faith-based commitment to improving lives to Lacoochee.

The event brought together U.S. Reps. Gus Bilirakis and Laurel Lee, company leaders, local officials, education and workforce representatives, and community members. The gathering highlighted Southeast Culvert's operations and expansion plans as the company builds its local workforce and establishes relationships in the community.

Southeast Culvert's leadership described a mission grounded in Christian faith and centered on human relationships, personal development and encouragement. Through training, support and opportunities for advancement, the company helps employees develop skills, build careers and overcome challenges. Leaders said that investment in people has created a dedicated workforce and will guide the company's growth in Lacoochee.

Two employees shared personal accounts of how opportunities at Southeast Culvert helped them rebuild their lives. Their stories highlighted the importance of second chances and a workplace that supports both personal and professional growth.

Bilirakis, the area's longtime congressional representative, reflected on efforts to bring expanded services and investment to Lacoochee, including education, health care, infrastructure and road improvements. He credited WREC General Manager David Lambert for more than 20 years of advocacy on behalf of the community.

Bilirakis emphasized that Lambert had championed the people of Lacoochee for many years and that the progress being celebrated would not have been possible without Lambert's personal efforts and the contributions of WREC's board and employees.

Lee voiced enthusiasm for Southeast Culvert's investment and its mission to improve lives, describing the company as a future cornerstone for the region. She also reaffirmed her

continued support for Lacoochee and her commitment to advocating for the region's growth and revitalization.

Pasco County Commissioner Seth Weightman and state Rep. Jeff Holcomb also offered remarks, expressing admiration for Southeast Culvert's mission and encouragement for its growth and the opportunities it brings to the region.

The gathering included representatives of the Pasco County School Board and school district, along with representation from the Pasco-Hernando Workforce Board, which operates as CareerSource Pasco Hernando. Their participation brought education and workforce leaders into the conversation as Southeast Culvert develops its local workforce.

Southeast Culvert President and CEO Wallace Johnson and General Manager Thomas Caldwell shared the company's history, mission and vision for its Florida operations. WREC board members and employees joined local residents and other community representatives for the celebration and tour.

Lambert reflected on Lacoochee's industrial history and the importance of sustained investment. The community once flourished around the Cummer Sons Cypress Co. sawmill and box factory, established in 1922. Its closure in 1959 left Lacoochee without a major employer. Southeast Culvert's presence offers an opportunity to build on that manufacturing heritage and help create a stronger economic future.

Company leaders emphasized that their goals extend beyond the factory floor. As operations expand, Southeast Culvert intends to develop a workforce that contributes positively to community life. They also highlighted the value of community partnerships, including their relationship with WREC, in supporting employees and the company's long-term success.

By hosting the gathering, WREC welcomed Southeast Culvert as a new manufacturing partner and connected its leadership with people and organizations invested in Lacoochee's future. The event celebrated both the company's economic investment and its commitment to helping employees, families and the broader community thrive.

About Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WREC):

Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative, Inc. is a not-for-profit electric cooperative established in 1947. WREC proudly serves more than 281,000 homes and businesses across Pasco, Hernando, Citrus, Polk, and Sumter counties. WREC is dedicated to providing safe, reliable, and affordable energy and services while actively supporting the communities it serves.

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Pictured below: Seth Weightman, Jeff Holcomb, U.S. Rep Laurel Lee, U.S. Rep Gus Bilirakis and Southeast Culvert employees



Pictured below: WREC's David Lambert, U.S. Rep Laurel Lee, U.S. Gus Bilirakis, and Southeast Culverts Wallace Johnson and family



Pictured below: Southeast Culvert President and CEO Wallace Johnson speaking



Pictured below: Southeast Culvert employee sharing his story



Pictured below: Southeast Culvert employee sharing his story



Pictured below: WREC's General Manager David Lambert speaking



Pictured below: David Lambert and U.S. Rep Gus Bilirakis and Gus touring the facility





Pictured below: Southeast Culvert General Manager Thomas Caldwell speaking

