

**NO ACTION**



To: Mayor Teresa Jacobs

From: Commissioner Bryan Nelson, District 2

Date: November 2, 2015

Re: Wekiva Springs Area Projects

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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My passion for water quality in the Wekiva Springs area has carried over from my time in the legislature to the County Commission. Both Kelly Park and Wekiva Springs are extremely popular and turn hundreds of visitors away on a daily basis in the summer months and deserve our attention. I have initiated two Water Summits this year to identify problems and potential solutions to improving our water quality here in Central Florida and also around the rest of Florida. I plan to ask the legislature for help in funding projects that will reduce nutrients loads starting with ones that will give us the most bang for our buck. Funding could come from DEP, SJRWMD, Amendment One, or a combination of the three. Projects that have been identified should be evaluated to include:

- 1) Placing Bio-reactive media under retention pond.
- 2) Providing curb baskets in storm water inlets.
- 3) Taking inefficient package plants offline.
- 4) Taking selective non-residential septic systems offline such as the Apopka Library.
- 5) Taking drainage wells offline or adding bio-reactive media to reduce nutrient runoff.
- 6) Agricultural advanced irrigation & fertilization systems- cost sharing.
- 7) Upgrading current sewer plants to reduce total nitrogen to <3mg/L.

DEP is currently conducting a study of septic tanks in the Wekiva area to determine the nutrient levels released by septic systems in the area. DEP is also completing a Basin Management Action Plan or BMAP for the Wekiva River Basin and one of the recommendations is to create a Septic Tank Initiative with input from Lake, Orange, and Seminole counties and the cities within the basin. SJRWMD has offered the county a \$5M grant with a 25% county match requirement to take 367 septic systems offline in several neighborhoods in my district near Wekiva Springs. My recommendation is to hold off and make sure that this grant is the best use of taxpayer dollars. By my calculations, it will cost between \$17,000 and \$24,000 to take each septic system offline for a 95% reduction in Nitrogen. An alternative would be to require an added bio-reactive media to be installed at the time of drainfield replacement for a cost of \$3,000 which could remove an estimated 70% of nitrogen for a fraction of the cost per pound of nitrogen removed. I will be asking the legislature for a change in state statutes to require this septic tank upgrade but for the state to fund it. By my calculation taking all systems offline and hooking them up to sewer in just the Wekiva Basin would cost north of \$2 billion.

**COMMISSIONER BRYAN NELSON, DISTRICT 2**

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This legislation could not only help us in the Central Florida area, but it could also have major impact on lakes, rivers, lagoons, and estuaries across the state.

We have held two community meetings in District 2 to discuss the potential septic retrofit projects, so I would like to communicate the status of the initiative in the Wekiva area and my recommendations to the residents of the affected subdivisions by sending the attached letter to the residents.

Please review the attached letter and let me know if you have any questions or would like to discuss this important issue at our next board meeting.

Thank You for your consideration of this request.

CC: Board of County Commissioners  
Ajit Lalchandani, County Administrator



**Subject: Septic Tank retro-fit**

**Dear Homeowner,**

**As your Commissioner for Orange County District 2, I would like to take this opportunity to update you on our efforts to improve the water quality in the Wekiva Springs and River.**

**As you might recall - Orange County Commissioner Brummer and myself, as a State House of Representative, held two Community meetings about a possible grant from St. Johns Water Management District (SJRWMD) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) concerning additional financial help from Orange County to take homes off septic systems and connect to sewer. I feel that more information is needed to determine which water quality improvement projects will best serve the public and the taxpayers of Florida.**

**Two important initiatives are currently underway which may provide more clarity as to which projects will give us the most bang for our buck. DEP is currently conducting a study of septic tanks in the Wekiva area to determine the nutrient levels released by residential septic systems in the area and should be completed within one year. DEP is also completing a Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) for the Wekiva Basin which will include a Septic Tank Initiative with input from Orange, Lake, and Seminole counties along with the cities of Altamonte Springs, Apopka, Longwood and Orlando to determine the best course of action.**

**I feel that it is important to wait until the DEP study is completed before we move forward on how best to help protect our Springs with the financial resources available. I intend to ask our State Legislature for springs protection money this Legislative Session (2016) for not only our Spring shed but all the valuable water resources across our great state.**

**There are other projects that are less disruptive to residents that could be undertaken to improve water quality in the Wekiva Basin at a much lower cost per pound of Nitrogen removed. One option is to use bio-reactive media under the standard drain field that could reduce Nitrogen run-off by up to 70% at a cost of \$3,000 compared to taking your septic systems offline for a cost of \$17,000-24,000 and a reduction of 95% of Nitrogen. If the study holds true we can get more than SIX times as much Nitrogen removal for every dollar. Additional projects that may give us more bang for our buck than taking Home Septic systems offline could be funded by Amendment One, DEP and SJRWMD and include:**

- 1) Placing bio-reactive media under retention ponds**
- 2) Providing curb baskets in storm water inlets**
- 3) Taking inefficient wastewater package plants offline**
- 4) Taking selective non-residential septic systems offline such as the Apopka Library**
- 5) Taking drainage wells offline or adding bio-reactive media to provide nutrient reduction**
- 6) Upgrading Agricultural irrigation and fertilization systems with State cost sharing**
- 7) Upgrading current sewer plants to meet higher standards**

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**I will keep you informed on the progress of these alternative projects and their funding status as we proceed with this evaluation.**

**Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about Orange County's effort to improve water quality in the Wekiva Basin while ensuring the best use of taxpayer's money.**

**Sincerely,**



**Bryan Nelson**

**Commissioner District 2**

**To access the information gathered at the 2 Water Summit public meetings, please visit:**

[www.dropbox.com/sh/95gyzo5wvitaums/AAA5CD1hOjDfgGnLFLPoygdea?dl=0](http://www.dropbox.com/sh/95gyzo5wvitaums/AAA5CD1hOjDfgGnLFLPoygdea?dl=0)

[www.dropbox.com/sh/gt02sr640hj0cv3/AACcMXuRLjmHr7dzyj-8tp0Va?dl=0](http://www.dropbox.com/sh/gt02sr640hj0cv3/AACcMXuRLjmHr7dzyj-8tp0Va?dl=0)