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**WEKIWA SPRINGS SEPTIC-TO-SEWER PROGRAM  
PRESENTATION FOR PEOPLE OF WEKIWA SPRINGS  
DISTRICT 2  
TUESDAY, MAY 2, 2023**

PRESENTED BY:  
**David S. Arms, P.E.**  
**Chief Engineer**  
**Orange County Utilities**

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### **Agenda**

- Welcome
- Background
- Wekiwa Springs Septic-to-Sewer Program
- Funding Details
- Balloting Process
- Questions and Answers



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District 2 Commissioner  
Christine Moore  
District2@ocfl.net



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## Welcome

- Orange County Utilities
  - Wastewater services for a population of 1,046,000
  - Four Regional Wastewater Plants
  - 1,421 miles of gravity mains and 641 miles of force mains
  - 823 pump stations
  - Ranked #1 in Customer Satisfaction for Midsize Water Utilities in the South by J.D. Power



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## Background

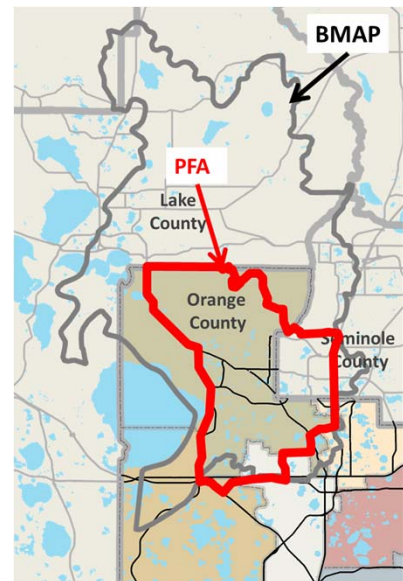
- Wekiwa Springs is a 7,000-acre Florida State Park near Apopka containing diverse plants and wildlife
- Popular for swimming, canoeing, hiking, and camping
- 42 million gallons flow from Wekiwa Springs to the Wekiwa River each day
- Wekiwa Springs and Rock Springs Run are impaired by nutrients
  - Nitrate
  - Total phosphorus
- Excess nutrients cause overabundance of algae
  - Reduce diversity of plants and animals
  - Cause fish kills



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## Background

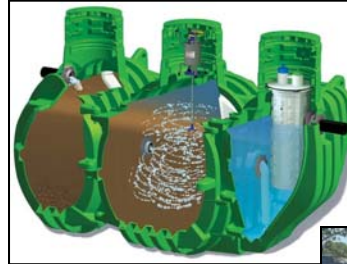
- FDEP formulated a Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) to reduce nutrient loading to the springs
  - Delineates a Priority Focus Area (PFA), which is the area where the aquifer is most vulnerable
  - 18,000 septic tanks within Orange County Utilities' service area inside the PFA
  - Identified septic tanks as the source of 29% of nitrogen in the springs
  - Presents a Septic System Remediation Plan



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## Background

- All parcels in the PFA that are less than one acre are affected
- In the next 20 years homeowners will have two choices
  - Connect to sanitary sewer
  - Upgrade to enhanced OSTDS that reduces nutrient loads
    - Estimated costs range from \$20,000 to \$25,000 per system
- Homeowners cannot keep conventional septic systems after a certain date established by FDEP



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## Agenda

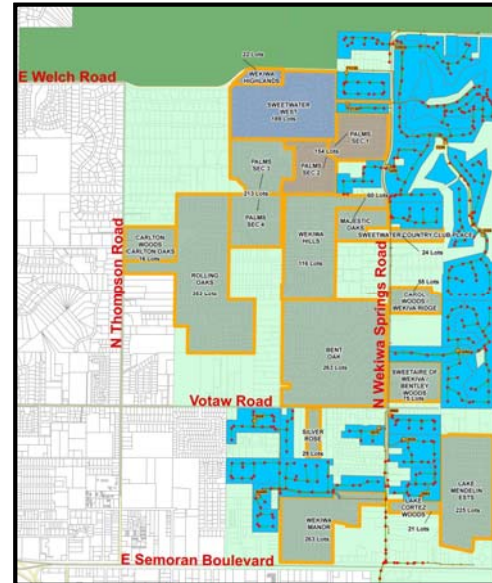
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## Wekiwa Springs Septic-to-Sewer Program

- Orange County developed a program to eliminate septic tanks, thereby reducing nutrient loads
  - 19 neighborhoods closest to Wekiwa Springs
  - Multi-year, multi-phase program
  - 1,989 residential lots
  - \$140 million
- Cost estimated at up to \$75,000 per typical residential lot
- Evident that cost is critical factor for viability of program
  - Funding is available from state agencies such as FDEP and SJRWMD
  - Orange County Utilities may contribute up to 25% of total project cost per ordinance
  - Funding model must include contributions from homeowners of benefitting properties



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## Wekiwa Springs Septic-to-Sewer Program

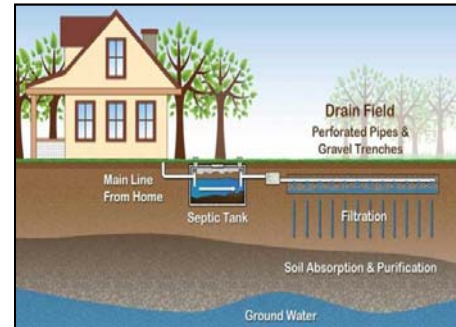
- Project Considerations
  - Public funding is secured for ALL proposed septic-to-sewer connections in 19 neighborhoods
  - Implementation will occur in phases
  - Community buy-in needed prior to design
- Project Objectives
  - Construct a gravity sewer system
  - Eliminate septic tanks to reduce nutrient loading of the springs
- Project Requirements
  - MSBU ballot
  - Design and construction
  - Connection to gravity sewer system required by County Code



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## Wekiwa Springs Septic-to-Sewer Program

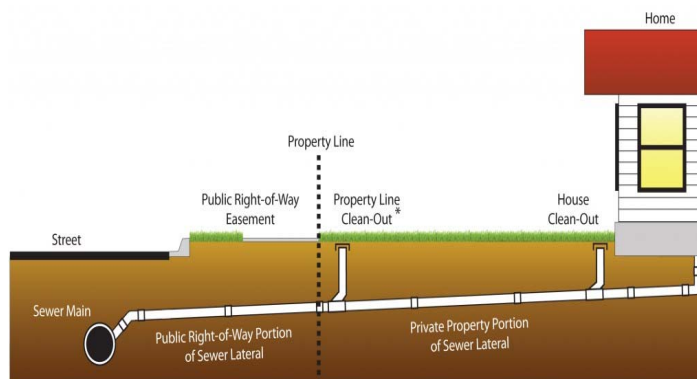
- Onsite Sewage Treatment & Disposal System (OSTDS)
  - Collect wastewater in a water tight tank
  - Solids settle to the bottom
  - Liquid (effluent) exits the tank to a drain field
- Drain field
  - Spreads effluent into unsaturated soil, where it is filtered and treated
  - Water is discharged into the groundwater
  - Some nutrients remain in the treated water



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## Wekiwa Springs Septic-to-Sewer Program

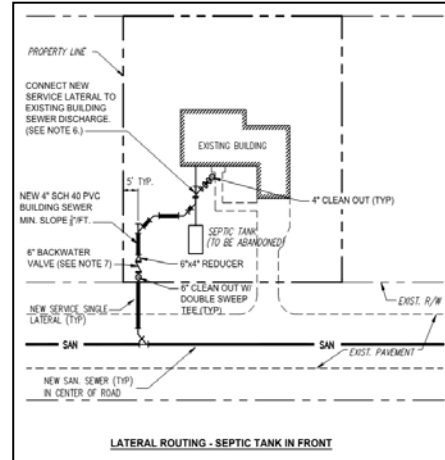
- Construction of new gravity sewer system in the right-of-way
- Ensure reasonable efforts to maintain access to each home at the end of the day
- Install service lateral from home property line
- Abandon existing septic tank and drain field
- Replacement of asphalt pavement from curb-to-curb



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## Wekiwa Springs Septic-to-Sewer Program

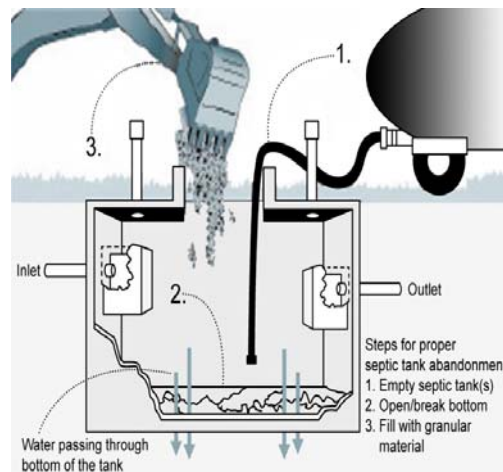
- Install new 4-inch sewer lateral and connect at existing discharge point
- Includes connection of each home to central sewer by the OCU contractor upon receiving authorization from the homeowner via license agreement
- Septic tanks will be abandoned in place in accordance with law: remove liquids and sludge, break up the bottom and sides to 12 inches below grade, backfill, and restore with sod
- Any impacts to existing driveways, sidewalks, sod, irrigation, etc. will be fixed by the OCU contractor
- All of this work is included in the project; there will be no additional costs to the homeowner



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## Wekiwa Springs Septic-to-Sewer Program

- Septic Tank Abandonment



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## Funding Details

- Orange County Utilities
  - May contribute up to 25% of total project cost per Orange County Ordinance 2014-28
- Legislative Appropriations
  - Local legislators sponsored funding from State budget
  - \$500,000 approved for FY 2021 and \$500,000 approved for FY 2022
  - Administered by FDEP in the form of a grant
- SJRWMD Cost Share Program
  - Up to 25% of construction costs only
  - Maximum of \$3 million per project per applicant per year
  - Projects may span a maximum 24 months from start of construction



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## Funding Details

- Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Grant Programs
  - Contributed \$4.3 million from unspent funds for Phase 1 (211 lots)
  - Awarded Sewer Connection Incentives grant for \$154,000 for Phase 2
  - Awarded grant for over \$39 million for Phases 2 – 6 (1,242 lots)
  - Awarded grant for \$16 million for Phase 7 (509 lots)
- Homeowner Contributions
  - Ballots mailed to all benefitting properties to approve an assessment and establish a Municipal Service Benefit Unit (MSBU)
  - Balloting for Phases 4, 6 and 7 to be completed within the next year
  - 67% “In Favor” required for consideration by Orange County Board of County Commissioners
  - Assessment is equal to 10-15% of total project cost by phase
- ARPA provides funds to State, local, and Tribal governments to make necessary investments in sewer infrastructure
  - Necessary investments are designed to provide an adequate minimum level of service and are unlikely to be made using private sources of funds



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## Balloting Process

- The Orange County Comptroller will mail ballots to establish a Municipal Service Benefit Unit (MSBU)
- Ballots must be returned to the Comptroller to be counted
- Ballots must be returned/postmarked within 30 days
- 67% of returned ballots “In Favor” of project required
- If ballot passes, each homeowner will be responsible for 10-15% of project cost
  - Financed over a 10-year period or may be paid up front
  - If financed, homeowner will pay annually – included with property taxes
    - A low interest rate and \$2.50 annual admin fee
    - Balance may be paid at any time during the 10-year period
- If the home is sold, the MSBU remains with the property, not the individual
- Previous ballots/voting to gauge commitment levels (straw polls) or for land acquisition (pump station) did not provide the basis for assessing an MSBU and proceeding with the sewer project. That is what the new ballot will do.



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## Balloting Process

The ballot will arrive in an envelope from the Orange County Comptroller

**SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS**

**OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER**

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ORANGE COUNTY FLORIDA  Phil Diamond, CPA  
 County Comptroller  
 Department of Finance and Accounting  
 Post Office Box 38  
 Orlando, Florida 32802-0038

Name 1  
 Address 1  
 Address 2  
 City, State Zip

**OFFICIAL BALLOT ENCLOSED**



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