

The Sustainability Advisory Board's (SAB) mission is to provide oversight and continuous improvement of the County's Sustainability and Resilience plans and initiatives, and our duties include working toward achieving all future sustainability and resilience initiatives set forth by the County. We appreciate the opportunity to offer recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) for consideration. The SAB endorses the proposed Septic Tank Ordinance amending Chapter 37 of Orange County Code, as reflective of the County's commitment to protect water quality, both in surface waters and groundwater.

In conjunction with this endorsement, the SAB recognizes this ordinance applies to new construction and major renovations applicable in those priority vulnerability areas (PVAs) as defined during phase one of a Groundwater Vulnerability Assessment completed in April 2023. The SAB recommends the BCC and County staff continue analysis of water quality within those PVAs and further consider potential programs related to *existing* septic tank replacements, with the recognition that there would be a need to offset costs for property owners and to carefully consider costs for the County.

The County should also advocate that the State continue to prioritize existing septic system conversion and fund grant programs to address the health and safety of the residents of Orange County. The SAB recognizes that the health of our natural waterways directly impacts the health of our people, communities, and the environment. By decreasing the risk of algal blooms and well water contamination, improving septic tank systems directly impacts the health of our county residents by decreasing the risk of exposure to respiratory pollutants and neurotoxins from algal blooms and also decreases the risk of cancer that may be caused by well water contamination.

The SAB recognizes that the analysis completed for both the Groundwater Vulnerability Study and the development of this Septic Tank ordinance has been conducted with respect to current floodplain scenarios. The SAB recommends additional analysis to assess future climate conditions and its potential impacts to the environment and the health and safety of Orange County residents.

The SAB appreciates the exceptional work on informational County webpages for County residents and with stakeholder engagement. The SAB recommends continued outreach about the need to protect our natural water assets from adverse environmental impacts as well as education about health benefits and the updated standards from the State.