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## Health Department warns of some new costs for certain new construction



**Wesley Asbell of the Florida Department of Health's Environmental Health Division for Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties speaks to the Levy County Board of County Commissioners on Tuesday (May 22).**

### Story and Photos

**By Jeff M. Hardison © May 24, 2018 at 3:38 p.m.**

**LEVY COUNTY** – Wesley Asbell of the Florida Department of Health warned of some potential new costs for certain new construction, when he presented an update on BMAP at the regular meeting of the Levy County Board of County Commissioners' meeting on Tuesday morning (May 22).



**Barbara Locke, administrator of the Florida Department of Health units for Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties, listens as her colleague attempts to update county leaders about the role of septic tank monitoring and regulation as a method to help preserve Florida's water coming from freshwater springs.**

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**Levy County Commissioner Rock Meeks**



**Levy County Commissioner Matt Brooks**

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**Levy County Commission Chairman John Meeks**



**Levy County Commissioner Lilly Rooks**

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**County Commission Vice Chairman Mike Joyner**



**Levy County Property Appraiser Oz Barker (left) and Terance Reed, a Republican who has announced his intention to seek election to the seat held by Commissioner Rock Meeks, listen at the County Commission meeting on Tuesday. The only other candidate (not already in office) who has announced an intention to seek election to the Levy County Commission so**

**far is Ryan Bell. Bell, is seeking the seat currently held by County Commissioner Lilly Rooks.**

Asbell who is the environmental health division director for the Florida Department of Health in Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties, stressed to the county commissioners that this potential \$15,000 to \$17,000 average cost to improve certain septic systems is

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only for new construction on property that is smaller than one acre, and it is only required in primary focus areas where the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is attempting to reduce nitrogen levels to freshwater springs in Florida.

On Thursday, Asbell said he can't pinpoint an exact cost because there is a range of systems that help reduce nitrogen content. The upper end of these systems, he said, could be in the \$15,000 to \$17,000 range; however, as the need for improving septic systems in Florida continues, the demand may create more competitive pricing.

Another point Asbell stressed for the County Commission is that only certain areas near spring basins are going to be affected.

The current best estimate now is 2,300 parcels Levy County would be in this area of concern, and not all of those parcels are buildable anyway. Levy County Property Appraiser Osborn "Oz" Barker said there are about 47,000 total parcels in Levy County.

In Gilchrist County, Asbell said there are an estimated 2,500 parcels in the area of concern by the DEP for nitrogen-output reduction. And, Asbell said, these mandates are only for new construction on property that is smaller than one acre within those 2,500 parcels in Gilchrist County that are a focus of the DEP.

A Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) is the primary tool for implementing a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL).

After a TMDL has been established for an impaired water body a BMAP is designed to implement restoration strategies that will sufficiently reduce the pollutant concentrations to meet that TMDL.

Florida is home to more large (first and second magnitude) springs than any other state in the union. Springs support ecosystems, flow into rivers and offer many recreational opportunities.

Levy County Commission Chairman John Meeks said he sees at some point in the future where he will receive a telephone call from a person who has saved every penny they could so that they can build a new house on less than one-acre of property, and then they find an unanticipated cost for a septic system crushes that dream.

Asbell reminded the county leader that this state law is to help protect springs, and fresh water, and that the Florida Department of Health can work with people who are building in these areas so that they can better understand the system they need to install.

There is no BMAP in Dixie County, Asbell said, because there are no springs affected by septic tanks in that county, according to the DEP.

During the meeting Tuesday, Asbell had wanted to show the County Commission a DEP map that is interactive. That shows the current areas of concern in regard to springs in Florida. This map and service can be seen by clicking [HERE](#). Among the areas that are of concern is the unrecorded subdivision known as Jemlands in Levy County. Therefore, new construction of a house in that part of Levy County will require a more expensive septic system than just a traditional septic tank and drainfield.

An excellent starting point for people interested in researching the DEP site in regard to spring protection can be seen by clicking [HERE](#).