

To the County Commission

I am writing in my personal capacity to urge passage of a county wide septic ordinance. As we all know, our county is one of the most beautiful places in the country. People come to visit and come to live here because of its pristine natural beauty, clean air and water.

However, as reported by BLDHD in the July 25 Leelanau County Board study session, septic inspections in Leelanau County reveal a potentially dangerous picture, with risk of spoiling our waters, and potentially creating health problems. Of 355 evaluations, nearly 20% of septic inspections were unsatisfactory and an additional 10% required future upgrades. Of 341 Water well inspections, nearly 5% were unsatisfactory and an additional 4.4% required future upgrades.

In Benzie County, where septic and well inspections are required upon sale or transfer of a property, only 3.5% were found not to be in compliance. Non compliance could be for several reasons, such as the system was failing, too small, made of improper material, or was too close to groundwater, surface water or a well.

With higher use of Leelanau County properties for short term rentals, this could also cause stress on a too-small septic system.

There are about 15,000 residential homes in Leelanau County with a well and septic system. About 700 businesses also rely on these systems. An inspection requirement upon sale or transfer of a property would not strain our health department, and would be an important way to find and upgrade failing or improperly constructed systems and would protect buyers of a property, who often are not knowledgeable about septic systems. Most importantly, such an inspection requirement would protect our waters from contamination.

I respectfully ask that you put in place inspection of well and septic systems at time of sale or transfer in Leelanau County

Thank you for your attention,

Barbara Conley MD

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