

State of the Environment

2009



Orange County
Commission for the Environment

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The Board of Commissioners established the Environment & Resource Conservation Department on June 22, 1998 and authorized the Lands Legacy Program on April 4, 2000.

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Printed copies of the 2009 SOE can be viewed at public libraries within the County or at the ERCD office.

For further information about the report please contact the ERCD at (919) 245-2590.

Cover photos by Rich Shaw. From left to right: Pickards Mountain, Eno River, Lewis' Heartleaf, Stone Currie Farmland on Old 86, Bolin Creek at Adams Preserve



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Splendid Clubtail (Gomphus lineatifrons)

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What is the state of our environment?

Addressing this question from the global perspective, the Global Footprint Network (GFN) and the World Wildlife Fund report that *humanity uses the equivalent of 1.3 planets to provide the resources we use and to absorb our waste.*

Stepping down to the national level, we learn from the GFN that *if everyone lived the lifestyle of the average American we would need five planets.*

The *Ecological Footprint* was developed in 1990 by Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees at the University of British Columbia as a measure of humanity's demand on the planet's natural resources. It translates how much land area and water volume a human population requires to produce the resources it consumes and to absorb its wastes. The *Footprint* puts into simple terms the number of planets needed to support our activities and lifestyles.

For Orange County, this edition of the *State of the Environment Report (SOE)* provides a more detailed look at a variety of environmental indicators that are grouped into three key categories: Air Resources, Biological Resources and Water Resources. The indicators were selected to monitor and evaluate the progress the County and its citizens are making to protect, preserve, conserve and manage our environmental resources.

Both the *Ecological Footprint* and the SOE environmental indicators share the fundamental intent to assess our demands and impacts on environmental resources, inspire and inform public policy and practices to manage our ecological assets more efficiently and provide recommendations for personal and organizational actions that will lead toward a more robust environment.

This edition of the State of the Environment report continues the goals and format of the 2002 and 2004 documents, but with one key difference: this 2009 report is primarily a digital publication, accessible through the Orange County Website at http://www.co.orange.nc.us/ercd/2009_SOE_index.asp.

We encourage you to contribute to our local effort to conserve the Earth's resources by reading this report online. If you are interested in evaluating and decreasing the size of your own *Personal Ecological Footprint*, there is an interactive and informative quiz available at the Global Footprint Network website at <http://www.footprintnetwork.org>. You can find many other ideas on the final pages of this report.

Sincerely,

Michelle Kempinski and Johnny Randall, Co-Chairs
Commission for the Environment

PURPOSE

*The Orange County
Commission for the Environment
presents the
2009 State of the Environment to:*

- Describe the current status of Orange County's natural environment
- Provide measures to monitor and evaluate progress toward a cleaner, healthier environment
- Highlight the major environmental challenges facing the County
- Recommend actions to confront these challenges

Orange County's 2009 State of the Environment

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