

Published: Dec 16, 2006 12:30 AM

Modified: Dec 16, 2006 05:54 AM

# OWASA fights odor at Mason Farm plant

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CHAPEL HILL - The stink of 80,000 people ends up on Mason Farm Road every day.

The Orange Water and Sewer Authority treats an average of 7.5 million gallons of raw sewage per day at its wastewater treatment plant near Finley Golf Course. OWASA serves Chapel Hill and Carrboro.

For years, OWASA has tried to shield residents in the neighboring Highland Woods subdivision from the smell, but it lingers.

"It is a bit like opening your fridge and getting a whiff of something you can tell has gone bad," Highland Woods resident Gary Richman said in an e-mail message. Richman spoke on behalf of the Highland Woods Residents Association last week at a public forum on OWASA's odor-elimination program.

Since 2000, OWASA has spent more than \$4 million on reducing off-site odor, including new covers on biosolids storage and treatment tanks at a cost of nearly \$3 million. The agency has also created an odor hot line, (919) 537-4376.

Over the next several months, OWASA plans to spend another \$3 million. Most of that -- \$2.2 million -- will go toward the cost of new headworks, where untreated sewage enters the plant. "As you can imagine, it can be quite odorous," OWASA Executive Director Ed Kerwin told the Chapel Hill Town Council last week.

OWASA plans to have the new headworks installed by summer. But Mayor Kevin Foy said OWASA is out of compliance with a permit the town issued for an expansion of the plant in 2004. "I don't want to hear it's going to be another year," he said.

OWASA will appear before the council in January to report its progress in eliminating the odor.

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An odor scrubber, installed in 2004, uses chlorine to remove odor from foul air.

**OWASA Photo**

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