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Cary Permit Issued for controversial Western Wake sewage plant

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After five years of fighting the placement and construction of a wastewater treatment plant within their town's historic district, the New Hill Community has received a setback.

Yesterday the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers' district commander Col. Jefferson M. Ryscavage issued the Corp's [Record of Decision](#) (ROD). The ROD gives the Western Wake Partners the necessary permit to begin building their \$327 million wastewater plant at Site 14. That site is located on a 237-acre parcel of farmland taken by eminent domain by the Partners for the purpose of building the 62-acre wastewater treatment plant. The location lies adjacent to churches, playgrounds, and homes.

New Hill is a small town on the fringes of western Wake County. Because it is unincorporated, New Hill's total size is hard to quantify in acres or miles, and there are no defined boundaries. On a map it sits between Moncure (Chatham County) and Apex.

More than five years ago, New Hill residents were upset by an alliance of Cary, Apex, Morrisville and Holly Springs, later known as Western Wake Partners. Soon the partners decided New Hill was an ideal location for them to build a wastewater treatment plant to meet the needs of their towns' fast-growing populations.

The project is more than three years behind schedule. It could be completed by 2013, with construction beginning as early as this year.

While the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers felt there were no practicable alternatives to Site 14, there are significant social justice impacts that defy the Corp's statement that the project "is not contrary to the public interest."

Site 14 sits directly across the street from the New Hill Baptist Church and playground, and a half-mile away from the First Baptist Church of New Hill; the plant will be built within 1,000 feet of 23 homes.

More important, 83 percent of the 230-plus residents immediately affected by the sewage treatment plant are African-American; rural neighbors on fixed incomes or retired and elderly.

Chris Brook, attorney with the Southern Coalition of Social Justice representing the New Hill Community Association expresses disappointment after an initial review of the ROD with the NHCA.

"The ROD suffers from the same problems that have plagued this entire process: it does not adequately consider environmental justice or water quality concerns and also gives short shrift to alternative sites with fewer human impacts," he said.

Tags: [Western Wake Partners](#), [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#), [New Hill](#), [Southern Coalition for Social Justice](#), [wastewater treatment plant](#)