

Masthead



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Town weighs pipeline options

Holly Springs may send treated wastewater to Harris Lake.

BY TED RICHARDSON - STAFF WRITER

HOLLY SPRINGS A \$24 million expansion of the Utley Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant will soon allow Holly Springs to treat 6 million gallons of wastewater per day.

That's 24 times more than the town could in 1985 when it first got sewer service, and more than twice what it could treat in 2009.

All that extra flow has the town searching for the cheapest way to move the treated water out of town and safely back into the environment.

Last week, town leaders approved a \$64,000 contract for an environmental study that will assess whether additional treated wastewater could flow to Harris Lake.

Until recently, the town had planned to send it to the Cape Fear River by way of a proposed treatment facility in New Hill.

But the decision last week indicates that the town is serious about an alternative to that route. The New Hill plant has been delayed and opposed by residents in the unincorporated part of the county.

The New Hill project was born from a partnership of Holly Springs, Cary, Apex and Morrisville. Called the Western Wake Partners, the towns wanted to make sure their wastewater treatment facilities could keep pace with their rapidly-growing populations and could comply with state and federal environmental regulations.

The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources is requiring Cary, Apex and Morrisville to pump their treated wastewater to the Cape Fear River by 2011. The agency is suggesting that Holly Springs do the same.

But Holly Springs sees another way. "We see an opportunity to explore a less expensive, more environmentally friendly option," said Stephanie Sudano, Holly Springs' director of engineering..

Holly Springs may be able to use a 2.5-mile pipe - and gravity, free of charge - to move 6 million gallons of wastewater per day to Harris Lake. That could save the town up to \$15 million in initial capital, Sudano said.

"Right now we are pursuing both alternatives," she said.

Holly Springs discharges about 1.5 million gallons of treated wastewater each day into Harris Lake via a discharge point at Utley Creek.

Increasing that volume beyond 2.4 million will require state approval, which the town began to seek last week with the \$64,000 environmental consultant contract awarded to Davis, Martin and Powell, with Carolina Eco Systems as a sub-consultant.

"Time is of the essence," said town manager Carl Dean, highlighting the need to secure environmental approval from the state within the next nine months. By then, the increased water treatment capacity will likely be online.

The town's urgency to meet that deadline, and secure a cheaper, more eco-friendly option, comes as budget discussions heat up, and as the town begins financing the \$10 million yet to be paid of its \$24 million wastewater upgrade.

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