

June 27, 2006

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North Carolina Division of Water Quality
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Mr. Monte Matthews
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Dear Messrs. Blaisdell & Matthews, Ms. Karoly:

This letter is in response to the Western Wake Partners draft EIS [Environmental Impact Statement] to construct a sewage plant in New Hill.

Instead of treating their own waste and sending effluent, The Western Wake Partners want to force their waste to New Hill. This plan is not necessary, it is not sustainable, and it places the environment and the citizens around the pipeline, pump stations, and facility at great risk. I would willingly cede an extra easement to make room for an effluent line through my front yard, but the high-pressure sewage that is aimed at my land threatens my farm and my home and my family. Development in western Wake County is unsustainable, so they are trying to reach out and dump on somebody else. Please do not let them put their outhouse on our front porch!

In the last week, the Town of Cary's sewage has spewed into Lake Crabtree to the North, and Swift Creek and Lake Wheeler to the South. They are asking you to approve the extension of this defective system into a very vulnerable community. If a small storm like Alberto caused such serious pollution of our water, another storm like Katrina will ruin our environment, and our natural resources.

The June 15 spill into Lake Crabtree was 792,000 gallons, but Cary staff would not enter the lake at night to stop it, for fear of snakes. The Swift Creek spill is flowing as I write, 200,000 gallons per hour. Lake Wheeler and the City of Raleigh's park there are closed. Holly Springs Road, a major artery, is closed. The news headline from WRAL today is "Sewage Overflow Costs Cary Thousands Of Dollars Each Hour." The Town of Cary has a sophisticated messaging system, which spins stories away from the damage to our soil and water, and the other environmental costs. Led by the able Susan Moran, their team has done a tremendous job of turning the truth to their favor.

Another example, of many: The News & Observer's regular column on tracking financial waste ran a questionable story, reporting that the Town of Cary saved its citizens \$7 million by placing the plant in New Hill. The information that our Association has provided shows otherwise.

But the key issue here is not financial, or about the media. It's our environment, and our natural resources.

We are not protected by their Secondary and Cumulative Impacts Master Mitigation Plans (SCIMMP), which only seem, to this non-lawyer, to cover their own jurisdictions. Even there, their SCIMMPs are very skimpy on prescribing devices to control erosion and other pollution. The present pattern of scraping large areas and leaving tiny patches of native tree canopy and topsoil guarantees more of the same runoff that we had before Alberto. They scrape and they sprawl and they don't manage the trees that are left and the trees that are replanted, so they die too. When they remove green infrastructure, they put mud in my streams, and I am not happy.

Many members of the New Hill Community Association, Inc. (NHCA) appeared at the SCIMMP's state hearing. DENR sponsored it, but staff did not attend. You all didn't miss much — the NHCA were just about the only citizens at this sparsely advertised event. The hearing was introduced by someone who encouraged us to consider not only the negative environmental effects of concrete infrastructure, but the opportunities it brings, like the chance to choose between a Big Mac and a Whopper.

But the real issue here is not commercial. It's about DENR responsibly managing our environment, to protect our natural resources. As soon as I learned about the Western Wake Partners' plan, I visited my neighbors on Garris Road, which abuts the former Seymour Farm. I told them about the plan. Their reaction was the same as mine — shock, and concern for the health of our families. Our skin color is different, but our feelings are the same. New Hill is a rainbow community, intact and sustainable. We draw water from our own land and it recycles back to our own land.

We turn animal waste into compost into new plants, and so the cycle goes. There is no hill like New Hill. I've been inside the two churches closest to the Seymour Farm. The people are shocked at the prospect of odors and the very legitimate concern about spills ruining their services and their activities and their community. Would you want your house of worship overshadowed by a sewage plant?

But the big issue here is not cultural, or religious. It's our environment, and our natural resources.

The Partners condemn private land without mercy, straining the limits of the law, as Progress Energy did before the construction of the nuclear plant. I knew Mr. Al Seymour. I worked on his trees for him. I saw his hayfield under production. I saw him and his family tend the flowerbeds near their weekend home, and sit on their porch under that tree, and enjoy life. Mr. Seymour took pride in working his land, especially after retiring from the Town of Apex Police Department. As an owner of equestrian property, I was glad that he grew hay. At the first

informational meeting, June 14, 2006, I walked by a television interview. The reporter asked “So it’s not a working farm then?” “No,” said Ms. Moran. The cameras clicked off just as I told them that it was a working farm, and asked if she had ever been on the property. The loss of his farm is a loss to the whole community. Can you imagine the pain of being uprooted from your land?

But the main issue here is not social, or personal. It’s our environment, and our natural resources.

Al Seymour’s years of service, risking his life for Apex, got him little gratitude from the town in the end. The Mayor of Apex signed a letter speaking for all Apex citizens, approving the plant and the site. The problem was, the Town Council wasn’t in on the deal. The elected officials were totally bypassed. Apex citizens, many with ties to New Hill, were blindsided, just like New Hill was blindsided.

Wake County Commissioners passed a resolution asking for a 30-day delay to inform affected landowners, per the law, but Cary knocked that aside. Cary’s council was pressured, and passed it 4-3. Later, one member said, after seeing the effect on New Hill citizens, that she’d vote differently. Holly Springs fought a dump in their own town tooth and nail, but washed their hands of our predicament, pointing out that they were only sending effluent. (Today we are seeing how added stormwater breaks down Cary’s sewage system.) When Holly Springs lost that fight, they learned a little about how New Hill feels.

We have not heard from the Soil & Water Conservation District at all. Don’t they have a role when sewage pollutes our waterways? Please help us, state officials. You are our last hope.

The important issue here is not democracy or politics. It’s our environment, and our natural resources.

Sincerely Yours,

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