

SAYS WASTE MANAGEMENT EXPERT

Dumping Of Sewage May Be Threat To River

BY DOUG RUTTER
Two materials used in local crop production probably are not polluting the Lockwood Folly River. But its resource-rich waters may be threatened by the dumping of raw sewage in the river basin, a waste management expert said last week.

Bob Rubin, a bio- and agri-engineering specialist with N.C. State University, said local officials should be more concerned about the disposal of untreated septic tank solids than the sludge and Pfizer by-product used as fertilizer on farms.

Along with Brunswick County Agricultural Extension Chairman Milton Coleman, Rubin spoke to a group of eight people at the Save Our Shellfish (SOS) meeting last Friday night in the Lockwood Folly Community Building.

SOS President Annie Smigiel blamed the unusually small turnout on the recent opening of the lower Lockwood Folly River to shellfishing. When the river opens to harvesting, she said fishermen tend to

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—Dr. Bob Rubin, waste management specialist
N.C. State University

forget about pollution problems.

During the two-hour meeting, Rubin and Coleman said the legal dumping of septic tank waste at disposal sites in the Lockwood Folly River Basin should be the group's main concern relating to waste management.

They said SOS members should not worry about the use of sludge, which comes from waste treatment plants in Wilmington and Carolina Beach, or mycelium, a byproduct from the Pfizer citric acid plant in Southport.

Although land is the best place to dispose of septic tank solids, Rubin said the waste typically goes on the land untreated.

He urged the group to push for changes in local health department regulations on disposal of septage and to use rules adopted in Cumberland County as a model.

One simple way to improve local practices, said Rubin, would be to add a bag of lime to a septic tank or the pumper truck before the tank is being pumped out. That would kill almost all of the bacteria and greatly reduce the chance of pollution seeping into ground and surface wa-

ters once the solids have been applied to the land.

Rubin and Coleman said they're almost certain sludge isn't a source of pollution in the river. The product is strictly regulated, they said, with permits handled through the state Division of Environmental Management.

Of the eight farms in the county that have been permitted and received sludge, Coleman said none are situated in the Lockwood Folly River Basin.

Nine other sites in the county have been permitted but have not received sludge. Most of those permits will probably be withdrawn, said Coleman, since most the farms are located in the river basin.

Since no sludge has been used near the Lockwood Folly, Varnantown Mayor Pro Tem Ennis Swain said last week, "It's doubtful if any of that has reached the river."

"I think you could rightfully say zero," added Coleman.

Rubin noted that applicators—contractors who deliver sludge to the farms—have millions of dollars invested in their equipment and it behooves them to follow permit

guidelines.

State permits require that sludge be disked or injected into the soil shortly after it is delivered to a site. Also, it cannot be applied within 100 feet of streams, ditches or other waterways.

"It's a highly-regulated agriculture operation," Rubin told the group. "I am very comfortable with the way sludge is managed in North Carolina."

While the use of mycelium is not restricted like sludge, Rubin and Coleman said it's unlikely that it is contributing to pollution problems in Lockwood Folly River.

Mycelium, one of three byproducts made at the Pfizer plant in Southport, is permitted for use as agricultural fertilizer and is often stockpiled in fields.

Coleman said the organic material is being used within the river basin, but since it contains no fecal coliform bacteria, it cannot be contributing to pollution problems.

Throughout the evening, Rubin said that using waste in crop production should not be stopped just because there are a few instances where it harms the environment. "It means what we've got to do is find better ways of managing it," he said.

As an analogy, Rubin said the state shouldn't stop building highways just because stormwater runoff from highways has polluted rivers, lakes and streams for years.

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LETTER
A Figment Of Reporter's Imagination

To the editor:
As a newly-elected commissioner in District 2 of the Town of Calabash, I find it necessary to reply to the recent column in *The Brunswick Beacon* dated Feb. 1.

Our new board has been in existence for two months with an attendance rate of almost 100%. We have concentrated on community involvement in our town government and the general operation of our new organized community.

We in District 2 have deeded restrictions which are a marriage between the golf course and the homeowner. Living on the 4th fairway, with a beautiful view of a well kept golf course, it is my obligation to abide by our restrictions.

Your writer's comments about clotheslines and pick-up trucks has to be a figment of his imagination. It has never been our intention to legislate our deed restrictions to the town as a whole.

Surely seven individuals will, from time to time, have a difference of opinion and not spiteful as the column indicated. We are not a divided town, having elected Doug Simmons as mayor from District 1, showing the support of District 2.

I hope in the future all editorials and articles concerning our town will reflect a more positive attitude and not a reporter's pipe dream.

George L. Taubel
Commissioner, District 2
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