

## BLAMED FOR COASTAL POLLUTION

# Moratorium Placed On LPP Sewer Systems

BY TERRY POPE

Faulty, low pressure pipe sewer systems are getting blamed for polluting groundwater and coastal nursery areas.

Until given assurances that they will be properly monitored by experts, the Brunswick County Health Department will no longer permit such sewer systems.

A moratorium was placed on installation of new low pressure pipe (LPP) systems by the Brunswick County Board of Health Monday night until "a management entity" is in place to inspect the systems to "ensure their proper maintenance."

Brad Williams' motion passed 4-3. He said the health department doesn't have the personnel to properly inspect the systems that may be polluting Brunswick County's waters.

"We're sinking," added Pat Nutter, board member. "Putting more systems in and not having the manpower to inspect them isn't right."

LPP sewer systems were developed in the early

1980s and approved by the state as an alternative for soils where traditional gravity-fed septic tank systems do not function.

Such systems must be wired and equipped with a mechanical pump. They also contain a series of small pipes that make better use of top soils for drainage fields.

In Brunswick County, 14 percent, or 16 of the 109 that have been installed, have also failed, said John Crowder, environmental health specialist.

The failure rate for traditional systems is 12 percent, he said.

There are three larger LPP systems in the county that handle from 3,000 to 10,000 gallons of wastewater per day, said Crowder.

"All three have had problems," he said.

Long Beach resident Rosetta Short, who serves on the Coastal Resources Advisory Council and is president of the Brunswick County Board of Realtors, believes the moratorium will send a strong message to the

N.C. Health Services Commission to do away with LPPs.

"This is a national problem," said Ms. Short. "It's not just in certain areas."

The state may implement new rules in July 1992 requiring owners to contract with someone certified to inspect and to operate LPP systems before a permit can be issued. Health departments now are required to inspect LPP systems annually, said Crowder.

The new rules will require that operators inspect the systems twice a year and to report to the health department annually. Crowder said at least three persons in Brunswick County plan to become certified by the state to operate LPP systems in January 1992.

Board member Frankie Rabon voted against the moratorium. He said LPP systems are used in places other than near estuarine waters, making the ban an unnecessary hardship for other property owners.

Chairman Bill Rabon and Arthur Knox also voted against the moratorium. Bill Rabon said a committee

should study the new LPP rules and form a health department entity to oversee such systems before July.

"I want to get the ball rolling," he said. Frankie Rabon said he was not against setting up an entity to oversee LPPs.

"I'm opposed to telling Mr. John Doe, 'You can't put in this system,'" he added.

LPP systems aren't the only environmental health issue giving department officials headaches.

Recent resignations of two health specialists have created a backlog of applications for septic system soil evaluations, said Crowder.

Contractors have been notified that inspections will be done on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays only, he said, until three department trainees are certified.

The health department has a backlog of 140 applications for soil evaluations, with 60 pending more than 10 days. The department tries to complete site evaluations within 10 days of permit application.



TAX OFFICE employee Pat Morgan's desk sits next to a mountain of envelopes ready for the mailing of county tax bills, which are running about a month behind this year.

## Tax Bills Await Word On Parcel Fees

BY TERRY POPE

If you haven't received your Brunswick County tax bill yet, it hasn't been lost in the mail. The tax department's running about a month behind schedule getting them out.

"We've been getting a lot of phone calls," said Boyd Williamson, Brunswick County tax administrator.

Bills have been delayed by Brunswick County Commissioners until a decision is made on parcel fees, charges that will appear on the bills to help pay for county trash disposal.

Commissioners are expected to vote on parcel fees at their meeting Monday, Aug. 19. At least County Manager David Clegg hopes so.

"They are all fully aware of the provisions of the bill," said Clegg. "They're also aware that the 19th is due day. It's incumbent upon me to send those tax bills."

House Bill 86, passed by the N.C. General Assembly in July, allows counties in North Carolina to charge fees to owners of improved lots to pay for solid waste disposal. The fee could range from \$25 to \$60, depending on whom is charged, according to Clegg.

Once a decision is made, it will take the tax department a week to 10 days to mail the tax bills, said Williamson. The tax office has contracted with a Cary firm to laser print the roughly 92,000 to 95,000 bills that represent an estimated 50,000 pieces of mail, he said.

Normally, the bills are mailed between July 12-18. This year, a bar graph will show how county tax dollars are being spent, said Williamson.

H.B. 86 was intended to give Brunswick County permission to charge a one-time fee for every parcel of land, not to exceed \$12 to \$15 per

property owner, said Clegg.

The intent was to "raise the issue of recycling to every man, woman and child in Brunswick County," said Clegg.

"What we were dealt with is not what we were asking for," said Clegg.

Once the bill entered the House, it became open game for other counties that jumped in and revised it, said Clegg. The outcome was a bill that neglects the educational and conservation issue originally raised and focuses more on how to raise revenues, he said.

The original bill would have expired before next year's budget, said Clegg.

Brunswick County needs to raise about \$1.8 million to cover the cost of solid waste disposal and recycling for the 1991-92 fiscal year. County officials are not sure if there will be a parcel fee in next year's budget.

"My opinion is probably not," said Clegg. "We now have the authorization for it."

Instead, what Clegg would like to see are user fees at transfer stations in Leland, Southport and Hale Swamp Road and at the county landfill in Supply. Scales may be installed at the transfer stations and tipping fees established at the landfill for commercial haulers.

The county is also exploring the idea of issuing a dump ticket to county property owners, who would have to show the ticket before disposing of trash at dump sites. Non-residents would have to pay to dump garbage at transfer stations.

"I think it is important that there be some controls at the sites," said Clegg. "It would be no more inconvenient than it is anywhere else. Many of our visitors are used to a more structured system."

# Ocean Isle Puts Limits On Personal Watercraft

BY DOUG RUTTER

After two years of talk, Ocean Isle Beach officials have finally put restrictions on the use of personal watercraft, commonly known as jet skis.

Commissioners approved the new rules Tuesday morning, regulating where and how the popular devices can be used in the ocean, waterway and canals.

Town officials approved the ordinance because they are concerned about the safety of swimmers. They say some people use jet skis and similar devices recklessly and drive too close to people in the ocean.

The rules adopted Tuesday are designed to provide more protection during times of the year when more people are visiting the resort community.

Between April 1 and Sept. 30 of each year, the ordinance prohibits personal watercraft from operating within 500 feet of the shoreline and fishing piers between the hours of 7 a.m. until 6 p.m.

The devices must stay at least 300 feet away from the beach and fishing piers during other times of the year.

The rule also prohibits people from launching, loading and refueling the devices on the ocean beach between April 1 and Sept. 30.

The ordinance sets year-round speed limits for personal watercraft in the finger canals and within 100 feet of any moored vessel in the town limits.

Operators are not allowed to run faster than "idle speed" or at any speed that creates a "noticeable wake."

*"We've workshopped it for about two years now. I really don't feel like the town needs any additional time to study the problem."*

—Mayor Betty Williamson

Mayor Betty Williamson, who has heard a wave of complaints about the small, noisy watercraft in recent years, said she gets phone calls all the time about excessive speed in the canals.

In the past, she said people have ignored "No Wake" signs erected by the town or simply taken them down.

Mike Powell, an Ocean Isle Beach landowner who owns and operates personal watercraft, suggested at Tuesday's town meeting that the board hold a workshop before adopting the rules.

Powell agreed that the town needs some controls on the devices, but said he had some ideas that he thought would make the ordinance better.

Mayor Williamson said she appreciated Powell's comments, but asked the town board to approve the ordinance as it was written.

"We've workshopped it for about two years now," she said. "I really don't feel like the town needs any additional time to study the problem."

She said there are more personal watercraft being used than there

were two years ago when the town started discussing the regulations.

Town officials started talking about limits on personal watercraft in 1989, gathering ordinances from communities as far away as Florida.

At Ocean Isle's request, State Rep. David Redwine introduced legislation this year giving the town the authority to regulate personal watercraft along its shores.

Ten other communities, including five in Brunswick County, were included in the legislation. Holden Beach and Sunset Beach already have regulations on personal watercraft.

Powell specifically objected to the provision requiring watercraft to stay at least 300 feet from the beach during the winter.

He wears a wetsuit when he rides his personal watercraft in January and February and said there are very few people on the beach.

"The only people out there as crazy as me are the surfers and I stay out of their way," Powell said.

In addition to limiting when and where personal watercraft can be used, the ordinance requires that registration numbers be visible at all times.

Operators and riders must wear life vests or other personal flotation devices approved by the Coast Guard, and they must report all accidents and property damage to the police department.

Violators have to pay a \$25 fine at town hall. The rules do not apply to police, fire or rescue personnel involved in an official operation relating to law enforcement, fire control or water rescue.

## Task Force Exploring Habitat Project

BY SUSAN USHER

Providing decent, affordable shelter is the goal behind efforts to establish a Habitat for Humanity project in Brunswick County.

The project is being spearheaded by the South Brunswick Interchurch Council, an interdenominational, interracial coalition of lay members and pastors of local churches.

The council's housing task force will hold a special informational meeting Monday, Aug. 19, at 7 p.m. at Shallotte First Baptist Church to discuss the possible formation of a county Habitat for Humanity project.



REV. HANCOX REV. WARNER

All interested individuals, as well as representatives of concerned businesses, churches or community organizations, are asked to attend. The Rev. Jack D. Hancox, co-

chairman of the task force, said that a representative of the nearest Habitat project, Cape Fear Habitat of Wilmington, will be the guest speaker. Deborah Palmer will discuss how that group organized and how it raises funds, and show a film depicting a recent Habitat for Humanity project in Mexico.

Habitat for Humanity International is an ecumenical Christian housing ministry. Its objective is to do way with poverty housing in the world and to make decent shelter a matter of conscience.

While a number of local volunteers are expected to participate, (See TASK, Page 2-A)

# Seafood Permit Proposal Aimed At Roadside Vendors

BY TERRY POPE

An increasing number of roadside seafood stands this summer has county officials concerned, for such vendors are unregulated by the health department.

"There are those who see it as a public health problem," said Bill Rabon, chairman of the Brunswick County Board of Health.

District 3 County Commissioner Gene Pinkerton wants the county to adopt an ordinance requiring seafood vendors to purchase a permit and undergo regular inspections by the health department.

"Selling of seafood and other food products is a concern of mine and many others in our county," said Pinkerton.

He has asked the health board to consider a seafood ordinance to protect residents from old seafood, frozen seafood being sold as fresh and the trash left behind at the vending sites.

Pinkerton is also concerned that there are no bathroom facilities for the people who staff the sites all day, making it unsanitary for them to handle fresh seafood.

"I am not interested in handicapping our people from whatever their business interests are," said Pinkerton, "only that it is done properly and in the interest of health for our citizens."

A permit would likely cost \$5 to \$15 and would tell the health department "who these people are and what they are selling," said Rabon.

"There's no guarantee of freshness," Rabon said. "With tourists who do not know the difference, there might be some harm there."

Health board members Pat Nutter, Brad Williams and Bill Phillips have joined Rabon in forming a committee to look into a possible county seafood ordinance.

Pinkerton says he also plans to bring the matter be-

fore the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners. He asked the health board to "seriously consider a program that would improve the present conditions."

Under Pinkerton's plan, permits would have to be posted by the vendors so residents could recognize ones that are operating within guidelines. Also, the permits would require that the proper county sales taxes be collected on all seafood sold, he said.

Roadside vendors do not collect sales taxes, which is a loss of revenues to the county, said Pinkerton.

"As far as sales taxes go, that's not our concern as a board," said Rabon. "Our concern is the public's health."

Inspections would fall into the lap of those who presently inspect restaurants, swimming pools and motels, said John Crowder, environmental health supervisor.

"I have seen more people selling shrimp in this coun-

ty in the last two or three months than I've ever seen before," said Crowder. "I don't know where they're getting all of the shrimp."

Last fall, the health department surveyed the county's roadside seafood vendors and seafood markets. There are an estimated 100 outlets that sell seafood in Brunswick County, said Crowder.

The survey indicated a majority did not want regulations, Crowder said.

"It's not a matter of what they want," added Rabon. "We're not picking on these people. We're just concerned about our public's health."

Health Director Michael Rhodes said his department has reviewed local seafood ordinances adopted by neighboring coastal counties.

The committee plans to draft a model ordinance for Brunswick County based on those samples.