

# Golf Courses Urge State To Ease Irrigation Standards

BY DORI COSGROVE GURGANUS

Five golf courses in Brunswick County have been gathering evidence in an effort to prove to the state that its effluent water standards should be less strict.

Sea Trail, Sand Piper Bay, Brunswick Plantation, Lion's Paw and Lockwood Folly Golf Links have joined forces to persuade state environmental officials that treated effluent wastewater can be used to water their golf courses without presenting a health hazard to the public.

The goal, said spokesperson Dean Walters of Sea Trail in Sunset Beach, is "to educate them" on the benefits and safety of using the system to increase available water supplies to golf courses.



WALTERS

"They have some very strict rules," he said. "Stricter than South Carolina."

The method, which has been used in South Carolina for over 20 years, calls for treated effluent water from the local sewer system to be pumped to the golf course. The water would then be sprayed on the grounds as a source of irrigation.

During periods of abundant rainfall, the wastewater would be stored in holding ponds for later use.

Currently, such an irrigation system is not allowed in North Carolina. Officials with the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) in Raleigh are not yet convinced that South Carolina's practices are in the best interests of environmental safety or public health.

Preston Howard, Wilmington regional supervisor for the DEM, said last week that his office would be willing to change North Carolina's standards if representatives from the Brunswick County golf courses could give him substantial evidence that the proposed system would be successful.

The present 'non-discharge per-

*"We're not asking for a lessening of the water quality, simply a changing of some of the regulations."*

—Dean Walters, Sea Trail spokesperson on requests made to the DEM

mit,' which is issued to golf courses that meet state standards, has several requirements that are slightly more strict than South Carolina's regulations.

First, the effluent wastewater needs to go through a three-part cleansing process. It has to be disinfected, filtered and biologically broken down to remove all traces of waste materials.

It is then pumped to a holding pond, which must be lined to prevent seepage into groundwater sources, and stored. The ponds must also have some sort of drainage system to further prevent run-off onto the grounds.

Spraying is not allowed up to 2 hours to 3 hours before tee-time, nor before 11 p.m., which limits the time irrigation can take place.

Golf communities with residences are not allowed to spray within 100 feet of a house.

"Maybe we can learn not to be so stringent," said Howard, indicating the agency's willingness to consider the approach.

"We'd like to promote this as a good means of supplying nutrients to the grounds as well as conserving water, while supplying the companies with added irrigation," he said. "We will try to work with them."

Howard said he's not necessarily opposed to the system, stating that it prevents wastewater from being dumped into natural lakes and rivers.

Meetings have been conducted for the past year on the subject, but no visible results have been realized to date.

Walters said that "three or four" meetings between the golf corporations, represented by attorney Ken

Kirkman of Morehead City, and DEM officials had been held since September of 1990.

Howard reported that he had asked the group to bring him evidence to support their request, but that no such data has been presented to date.

He said that Brunswick Plantation, which now contracts for sewer service with Carolina-Blythe Utilities in Calabash, applied for a non-discharge permit in late 1991.

Preston said he had "some concern with their pumping lagoon," since it was not lined. The lagoon is close to the CawCaw Swamp, Howard said, and would run off into that tributary of the Waccamaw River.

The application will probably be submitted again, Howard said, and would be reconsidered at that time.

If the permit were issued, Brunswick Plantation would become the trendsetter for area large-scale golf courses.

### Mounting Evidence

Only one non-discharge permit has been issued in Brunswick County, Howard said. It's in the name of North Star Carolina, a corporation based in Kansas City, Kan., which owns and operates Sand Piper Bay Golf Links.

Gene Blanton, general manager of Sand Piper Bay, said that the company has had the permit since "around April of 1988," but that it only allows spraying of treated wastewater from their restaurant on the driving range.

Blanton reported that the system has been successful.

"We haven't had a minute's problem with it," he said. "We were just



STAFF PHOTO BY DORI C. GURGANUS

GENE BLANTON OF SAND PIPER BAY Golf Course points at one of the ground-level sprinklers on the driving range that irrigates the grass with treated effluent wastewater from the club restaurant.

inspected and we had a great inspection."

Regarding the proof needed by other golf courses to change the DEM's standards for irrigation with treated effluent, Blanton said his experience "couldn't do anything but help the situation."

Blanton said that he is eager to have the regulations changed to make it easier for local corporations to implement the system.

Sand Piper Bay currently sprays the remainder of its course with fresh water pulled from nearby natural lakes.

Meanwhile, Sea Trail Corp. has been busy gathering evidence in the form of a study conducted on its greens' capacity to handle such a system.

Russnow, Kane, and Andrews, Inc. of Raleigh, have been conducting a hydrologic/geologic study to send to the DEM.

According to Walters, the report will confirm what he has believed all along.

"I maintain that it is not a health hazard, that this hasn't been proved," he said. "I maintain that this is a viable alternative."

"We're not asking for a lessening of the water quality, simply a changing of some of the regulations," Walters said. "Twenty or 30 years from now, we won't see any signs of run-off."

Walters also said that South Carolina had shown no cases of health risks, even though their water is not regulated to be as clean as North Carolina's.

"We've been through a long process with the DEM, state health services and environmental agencies," he said. "We're going to prove that there's not a run-off problem or a down-grading of the aquifer."

Sea Trail's study shows, he said, that the entire 18-hole course, which Walters estimated at 115 acres to 125 acres, can accept 300,000 gallons of water per day.

Both Walters and Howard said that irrigating an area of this size with sources other than treated effluent, such as groundwater, does limit the available amount of drinkable public water.

More meetings are on the agenda for the parties involved, and results appear to be in sight.

"We're going to change some things about the law, regardless, based on what we already know," Howard said of the irrigation regulations. "But other parts of it we'll need evidence for."

Said Walters, "I'm sure they'll decide in the next few months. I'm sure we'll be able to persuade them."

## SEWER SYSTEM DISCUSSED ONCE AGAIN

# Holden Beach To Continue Accepting House Plans As Presented

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach Building Inspector Dwight Carroll will continue accepting building plans just as they're presented following Monday's town board meeting.

After a lengthy debate, commissioners tabled a proposal that would have allowed the town manager and inspector to determine the intended use of rooms shown on house plans.

Town Manager Gary Parker had recommended the town follow a state code which allows inspectors to consider as a bedroom any room which can reasonably be expected to function as a bedroom.

"There are some builders who think the rule is difficult to enforce and think we should not enforce it, but I think we should enforce the rule," Parker said at the outset of the discussion.

The rule is designed to control density and discourage people from submitting house plans with rooms listed as dens or offices which are later marketed, sold and

*"In 10 years you won't get any more permits on Holden Beach. I'll write that in blood."*

—Alan Holden, developer

used as bedrooms in violation of the health code.

But the proposal met with widespread opposition Monday night, both from the board of commissioners and the audience.

Commissioner Gay Atkins, who opposed the idea when it was last discussed in the spring of 1989, hasn't changed her mind.

She said builders that want to stay in business will build whatever the homeowner wants. Each homeowner, she said, must be responsible for how their rooms are used.

Alan Holden, who owns a real estate company at Holden Beach, said there's nothing the town can do to stop someone from violating the law.

If a homeowner wants to rent a two-bedroom house to 10 or 12 people, Holden said there's nothing practical the town can do to stop it.

"I'm gonna beat you any way I want to go if I'm a villain out to beat you," he said. "You are not going to beat it unless you limit the people."

Jim Griffin, a real estate developer, admits that septic tank permits are frequently abused.

But he doesn't think the town should be able to tell someone they can't have a den simply because it might be used as a bedroom.

"You're telling him that his intent is to break the law," Griffin said. "I think that's

treading on real thin ice and I would resent it tremendously."

Commissioner David Sandifer agreed, and used Griffin's home as an example of how the rule could backfire.

Sandifer said Griffin has a legitimate den and workout room in his house that could have been interpreted as bedrooms on a set of building plans.

"It is abused, but you can't throw the baby out with the bath water," Sandifer said.

Discussion of the bedroom issue quickly turned into talk of the need for a sewer system at Holden Beach.

Parker said he agrees with several builders he has talked with who see a central sewer system as the solution to problems associated with overcrowding.

Planning Board Chairman Roger Williams said 50 percent of the property owners who responded to a recent survey are in favor of a sewer system and 47 percent are opposed.

Of the permanent residents who responded, he said 45 percent want a sewer system

and 52 percent are against it. All of the town's property owners were sent surveys.

Holden, who serves on the town's planning board, encouraged the board to contact the neighboring towns of Ocean Isle Beach, Long Beach, Sunset Beach and Calabash about sewer system development.

Ocean Isle has a sewer system in place and the other three are building or considering sewer systems.

Holden said a sewer system would be cheaper if constructed on a large scale, with several communities pooling their resources.

According to Holden, the Brunswick County Health Department "hammered" Holden Beach as soon as Ocean Isle installed its sewer system four years ago.

He said he expects another crackdown on septic tank permits as soon as the other beach communities get their systems in place.

"In 10 years you won't get any more permits on Holden Beach," Holden said. "I'll write that in blood."

# Bellamy One Of First 3 Inductees In N.C. Soil Conservation Hall Of Fame

BY SUSAN USHER

James D. Bellamy Jr. of Shallotte adds another "first" this week to the honors he has earned during 40-plus years of soil conservation service.

The 69-year-old Brunswick County native was among the first three persons to be inducted Tuesday at Raleigh into the new North Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Hall of Fame.

In accepting the honor, Bellamy told listeners that the award did not mark the end of his service, that he has one item of "unfinished business."

He is heavily involved in efforts to establish a Resources Conservation and Development District for Region O, Cape Fear Council of Governments. He is acting chairman for the commission that is working to win one of 20 new positions that will be created nationwide. There is the only application from North Carolina, which means it should have the state's support, said Bellamy. Plus, the original application has been on file in Washington since 1974.

Bellamy has served as district supervisor and chairman of the Brunswick Soil and Water Conservation District since 1949. In nominating him for the Hall of Fame, the board's vice-chairman, Harold C. Robinson, wrote, "Without any doubt, he is one of the most dedicated supervisors in America. We feel this is one way for the State of North Carolina to say thank you for all his contributions..."

Bellamy became the first district

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—James D. Bellamy Jr. Hall of Fame Inductee



supervisor to serve as state conservation chairman in 1965 and also chaired the group from 1968 to 1970 and again in 1972.

He has also served on the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Board of Directors from 1982 through 1988 and was southeastern NACD regional chairman in 1984 and 1987.

Locally he spearheaded efforts to re-establish and secure additional grant money for the CawCaw Drainage District, a watershed constructed in 1967 with a federal grant that became inactive when property owners failed to pay their assessments and the drainage ditches deteriorated.

Interviewed Saturday, Bellamy said the Hall of Fame is the greatest honor he has ever received.

"It means a whole lot to me," said the man who has already received every major known award in his field of endeavor. "The Hall of Fame is what everybody considers the ultimate because you'll be there for time indefinite."

Bellamy's "dozens" of past hon-

ors include the Governor's Conservation Award from Gov. Terry Sanford, the State Soil Conservation Service Award twice and the State Soil Conservation Society chapter award. The latter led to the National Soil Conservation Society Award the following year.

Joining him as the hall's first honorees are Lloyd C. Bunch of Edenton and the late Dr. Hugh Hammond Bennett of Wadesboro.

Bennett, who died in 1960 at age 79, was known nationally as "the Father of Soil Conservation". He founded the international Soil and Water Conservation Society and was the first chief of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service.

Bunch, 89, a Chowan County native, served as a district chairman from 1948 through 1988, is a past state association president and Area 5 chairman, and served a three-year term on the N.C. Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

N.C. Agricultural Commissioner Jim Graham, who presented their enshrinement plaques, described the

three as working leaders in soil and water conservation.

"Their work helped farmers retain and control a natural resource, soil, so necessary to agriculture," he said. "That, in turn, makes a cleaner, safe environment."

Next year, up to three individuals may be named to the Hall of Fame, with the number reduced to one a year in subsequent years, said Bellamy. Founded in 1991, the Hall of Fame recognizes lifelong achievement with the 48-year-old N.C. Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Inductees' plaques will be placed in the Scott Building at the State Fairgrounds in Raleigh.

### Began As Farmer

When Bellamy first became involved in soil conservation work, he was a full-time farmer, growing tobacco, hogs and at one time a large herd of cattle.

He later became involved in the livestock, feed and farm equipment businesses, all the while farming on a more limited basis.

Bellamy presently raises quail

and has a few cows at his farm on Four Mile Road, he said, "but now I don't keep a schedule or meet a deadline."

Involvement in the Soil Conservation Service and agriculture has taken Bellamy and his wife, Virginia, a former public health nurse, to all states but Alaska, as well as to Europe.

He was the first supervisor to serve on the National Soil Conservation Service Plant Materials Center Board of Directors, serving three years.

Also with the NACD he has served on five committees and chaired two, coastal and urban resources and the prestigious research and technology. From 1982 to 1985 he served on a special task force charged with revamping the bylaws and structure of the seven-state southeastern region. Before the group's work was completed, three of seven members had died.

### Remembers The People

But what he enjoys most and remembers best are the movers and shakers he has mingled with in agricultural circles and the policies and decisions that he has helped shape over the years.

He drops names casually—those of U.S. Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block, Sen. Jesse Helms, Rep. Charlie Rose and many others.

How some efforts were a success is hard to explain, he said, citing the 1985 Farm Bill as an example, which met heavy opposition nationwide.

"When it was drafted it was the

first major changes in agricultural law to have enforcement power with it," recalled Bellamy. "I was heavily involved with that, especially with the wetlands."

Through contacts with the Senate Agriculture Committee chaired by Helms, Bellamy was in constant contact, exerting what influence he and others could as the bill moved through Congress.

"It's hard to brag on what we kept from being done. It's hard to tell people, 'It would have been a lot worse if we hadn't been there.'"

"I doubt today, though, that there's anyone who can give you a definition of what a wetland is."

## CPR Class Offered At Shallotte Point

Shallotte Point Volunteer Fire Department will hold a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) class at the station on Bay Road Jan. 13 and 20.

Both sessions will start at 7 p.m., said Joyce Land, with Gregg Warren as the instructor.

Senior citizens age 65 and older and members of the Brunswick County Fire & Rescue Association may take the class at no charge. For others, a fee of \$30 is payable at the first class meeting.

For more information, contact Ms. Land at 754-6985.