

State seeks more information about UNC animal research wastewater plan

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CHAPEL HILL Neighbors of UNC's animal research facility in rural Orange County will get much of the information they want after the state asked the university for more details about its wastewater.



Lowman

UNC is seeking state approval to modify and resume using its wastewater treatment system at the Bingham Facility, three buildings west of Carrboro that currently house about 150 dogs used to study hemophilia and other blood disorders.

Last month the Orange County Board of Adjustment denied neighbors' request for a public hearing on a new permit when it determined the university's plans fell outside the county's jurisdiction and required only state approval.

In a Dec. 6 letter, however, the state Division of Water Quality asked the university for much more information about its plans.

The state wants to know what pollutants are in the wastewater, the effectiveness of proposed treatment of any carcinogens and isotopes, and a list of surfactants (detergents) used in washing down cages and throughout the facility.

The letter from environmental engineer Nathaniel Thornburg also asks UNC to reconsider how much wastewater it expects to generate and possibly scale back the irrigation field where it plans to spray the treated wastewater.

"It's more than what we would usually ask an applicant to provide," Thornburg said. "We want to address the public's concern and get the information on the record."

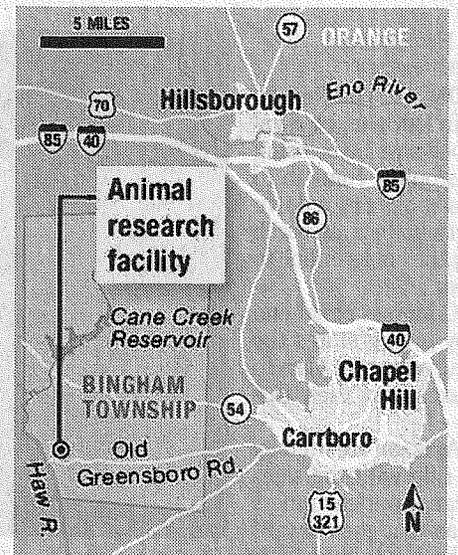
The state's request, especially its suggestion that UNC consider downsizing its spray field, addresses neighbors' major fear. They worry that a bigger field, plus the university's purchase of three nearby properties, signals plans for a bigger facility.

Associate Vice Chancellor Bob Lowman, however, has stressed that the university has no plans to expand at Bingham.

"We are very pleased," said Laura Streitfeld, director of the grass-roots watchdog group Preserve Rural Orange. "I consider it great progress and a victory for all of the neighbors who expressed the concerns. I think it's terrific."

The state has given UNC a Jan. 5 deadline to respond but says the university can request an extension.

The university has been spending about \$3,500 a month pumping and hauling the



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Bingham Facility's waste to the Orange Water and Sewer Authority treatment plant since it shut its system down two and half years ago, Lowman said.

A three-month delay could cost about \$10,000.

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