



Preserve Rural Orange.org

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January 26, 2010

Chancellor Holden Thorp
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
103 South Building
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-9100

Dear Chancellor Thorp,

I'm writing with regard to the UNC Research Resource Facility's illegal discharge of animal wastewater from a leaking lagoon into Collins Creek in southwest Orange County. We are deeply concerned with the number of reported malfunctions involving the facility's new animal wastewater treatment and disposal system, which operates without a permit and was improperly constructed. By failing to report the discharge to state environmental officials for more than seven weeks, the university has endangered public health, the ecosystem and a regional water supply. Neighbors, farmers and residents downstream of the UNC facility were never informed that the discharge reached the creek, even after UNC was issued a Notice of Violation by the Aquifer Protection Section of the state's Division of Water Quality on December 18, 2009. We still don't know the duration or volume of wastewater discharged or its adverse impacts.

Collins Creek feeds into the Haw River, which flows into Jordan Lake, a regional source of drinking water. The section of Collins Creek downstream from the UNC facility, parts of the Haw River and Jordan Lake are all on the EPA list of impaired waters, and under federal and state law must be restored and protected. We ask you to take immediate action to ensure responsible stewardship of the environment in our watershed.

Preserve Rural Orange and community members call upon you to engage the university in the public process outlined in our January 18, 2010 Proposal to UNC to ensure transparency, communication and environmental and human health safeguards, and to take the following additional measures:

1. Cease animal wastewater system operations at the UNC Research Resource Facility until the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources concludes its investigation of the illegal discharge into Collins Creek, determines the system's compliance and permit status, and confirms the safety of continued use.
2. Apply for a permit for the animal wastewater treatment and disposal system to ensure oversight and safeguards at the facility.
3. Provide neighbors, Preserve Rural Orange and county officials with timely copies of communications and reports about this and future incidents.

Sincerely,

Laura Streitfeld
Chair, Preserve Rural Orange