

New meeting set on proposed Liberty wastewater plant

Carl Elmore | Saturday, May 16, 2009 at 12:30 am

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RICHMOND HILL - A public meeting has been scheduled for May 27 on the disposal of wastewater from a proposed **Liberty County** treatment plant.

Stakeholders in the dispute met May 8 in **Midway** to discuss how the Laurel View River should be studied. At stake is whether the river can absorb some 3 million gallons of treated effluent daily from a proposed Liberty County Industrial Development Authority wastewater plant.

"This collaborative effort is going to be beneficial to the Georgia coast through the study effort that's under way," said Allen Davis, president of the Coastal Estuaries Protection Association, one of the stakeholder groups.

Others involved include the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, the Skidaway Institute of **Oceanography**, the Ogeechee-Canoochee Riverkeeper, the Liberty County Development Authority and FORAM, the company that owns the Liberty County property near the proposed effluent outflow site.

The public meeting is set to start at 6:30 p.m. May 27 at the Midway Civic Center, which is the old Midway elementary school.

The Liberty County Development Authority has asked the Environmental Protection Division for permission to build a \$30 million wastewater treatment plant in its Tradeport East Industrial Park. The plant would be permitted initially for 2 million gallons daily and would expand to 3 million gallons in a second phase.

Tradeport East is home to two large distribution centers, including Target. The wastewater treatment plant eventually would support not only industrial development, but also residential and commercial growth in eastern Liberty County.

Some of the plant's effluent will drain into the Laurel View River, flowing into the Ogeechee River basin and on into adjacent downstream **Bryan County**.

Although Liberty County officials claim the plant is safe and that its effluent won't damage the coast, residents from neighboring Bryan County helped pack a Jan. 28 public hearing. Many demanded that the Environmental Protection Division seek an objective study before allowing the plant to be constructed.

Negotiations continue over that study, and public comments on the proposed study will be sought during the May 27 meeting.

Opponents have claimed that the Laurel View River estuary is unique and that treated freshwater effluent will ruin the salt marsh. The study will include examinations of river salinity and flow and how the effluent might be disbursed. A slide show about the study is available on the state Environmental Protection Division's Web site.

On the Web

A slide show on the proposed study is available online at **www.gaepd.org/Documents/laurel_view_study_plan.html**.

