

Woodland board addresses town's water infrastructure



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Woodland town leaders are continuing their efforts to improve the town's water infrastructure.

Marshall Lassiter, Woodland Operator in Responsible Charge, discussed the item during the town board's Sept. 4 meeting. He discussed a letter recently sent by the town to the N.C. Division of Water Quality, requesting permission from the agency to spray debris taken from a lagoon at the town's wastewater treatment plant, to spray fields near the town.

Spray fields are sprayed with treated wastewater through a sprinkler-like system, according to information from the U.S. Geological Survey. According to the agency's information, they are used as a means for wastewater removal. The fields benefit by having enriched soil.

Manuel talked about the letter during a recent interview with The Daily Herald.

"Some years ago, in about 2009, there was an explosion at the peanut factory in Severn," he said. "It put a lot of debris in the lagoon. There was also already a lot of sediment in the lagoons, so on Aug. 9, we requested permission to remove the sediment from the lagoons and spray it on fields near the lagoons. That's why we had to send the letter, to request the

permission to spray the debris and sediment from the lagoons on our existing spray fields."

Manuel provided a copy of the letter to The Daily Herald following his interview. The letter, which was written by Lassiter, confirms Manuel's statements, noting "In 2009, there was an explosion of a peanut dome in Severn, NC. As a result of the explosion, there were thousands of tons of peanuts that had been burning for some time. A decision was made by the state to have the burned peanuts and other related debris to be discharged into lagoons. In an effort to accommodate our neighboring town and NCDWQ, we received many truckloads of burned peanuts and debris into our lagoon. We now have a problem with excessive build-up in our #1 lagoon. I am not indicating that the dome fire of Severn Peanut Co. is the entire problem, but was a significant contributor to the current problem. We cleared our sewer lines and that contributed, but to a much lesser degree."

Lassiter added in the letter, "I am requesting that Woodland be allowed to re-use the sand and dirt from lagoon #1 to be spread on our spray fields. This would allow us to significantly improve the surface of the spray fields. This material that is now in the lagoon, why not utilize it to improve our spray fields? We would remove the trash and other debris from the content as best we can and properly dispose of that material."

Manuel said during his interview the removal of debris from the lagoon will not only address the ongoing issue with the debris in the lagoon, but will also serve to protect the environment.

"With all the sediment there, it displaces a lot of water in the lagoon," he said. "It makes the water go higher and gets us into a situation where the water can get higher than the state allows for levels in wastewater lagoons. It's not like it will flood over anytime soon, but it's really a proactive move to make sure that doesn't happen."

Manuel added town officials are waiting to hear back from the state on its request to spray the treated wastewater onto the town's spray fields.

"It's a formality that we have to do," he said. "All we can do is wait, hope and see what they say."