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## EPD to offer update on air quality impairment concerns

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Dec 1, 2021

About a year ago, complaints began to pour in about a pungent stench noticed by Brunswick citizens and by residents in other parts of Glynn County.

The official source of the smell was never confirmed, but an answer to the longstanding question of what's caused the air quality impairment may be coming.

Staff of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Environmental Protection Division will provide an update on the local air quality complaint investigations at 5 p.m. today during a City Commission work session.



A manager for the EPD's Ambient Air Monitoring Program, Air Protection Branch, will also share an update on plans to conduct a two-month study to evaluate local sulfur dioxide emissions in the same timeframe as last year's events of concern.

"The intent right now is to basically do the monitoring from the beginning of December to the end of January," said Rachael Thompson, executive director of the Glynn Environmental Coalition, which has spearheaded a continued search for information about the air quality issue.

A deluge of air quality complaints were filed with the EPD in late 2020. The Glynn Environmental Coalition quickly took the lead in pursuing information about what could be causing the problem.

GEC helped residents who wished to complain document their comments with the EPD.

A “Smell Something, Tell Something” Facebook page has also served as a central hub for continued comments about the issue.

The number of complaints dropped in February 2021, but they have continued to trickle in on about a weekly basis almost all year.

The EPD did not at the time of a high influx of complaints point a finger at any specific entity or entities that may be the culprit in creating the odor. The dense number of industrial and other odor-causing industries in the area made such an accusation difficult.

GEC also helped residents submit comments during a public input period offered by the Georgia Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Program earlier this year.

The program’s review of comments prompted a two-month investigation through which the program is deploying equipment to monitor sulfur dioxide.



Hydrogen sulfide, a colorless gas that smells like rotten eggs, can be emitted by pulp mills and has also been considered a contender for the cause of the air quality impairment.

GEC sought out a partnership with an academic institution that could provide an unbiased, third party investigation into the source. GEC began working with the University of Georgia in March.

UGA's report analyzed weather conditions from Dec. 2, 2020, to May 8, 2021, and determined that 80% of complaints were downwind from a specific area.

"At the work session, they're going to talk a little about their investigations and what they have found as well," Thompson said. "... People have an opportunity to participate."

While the confirmed cause of the smell has yet to be determined, the quality of life for people affected by the odor is clearly impacted, Thompson said.

The air quality impairment has had physical and mental health impacts on Brunswick residents, she said.

"When the initial complaints were coming in, there were reports of burning sensations in the throat, burning sensations in the nose, coughing, difficulty breathing," Thompson said. "There were some residents that had described that whatever was in the air it felt like it had kind of landed on their skin, and their skin was actually irritated."

Some describe the odor as "putrid," noting that it causes their eyes to water or wakes them up in the night.

The frequent odor can also cause anxiety for those living in areas where it's strong, Thompson said.

"We don't have evidence of any long term health impacts at this point," she said. "However, you can expect that people who are living in these kinds of scenarios over a long-term period of time can have irritation to their respiratory systems that can cause more long-term effects."

The workshop can be attended in person at Old City Hall, 1229 Newcastle St., on the second floor or virtually via Facebook Live at <https://www.facebook.com/citybwkga> or Zoom at <https://cityofbrunswick-ga-gov.zoom.us/j/93114642040>.

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