

Ind. Fish Farm Expansion Approved Despite Complaints

MUNCIE, Ind. (AP) — An eastern Indiana county has narrowly approved a fish farm's plans to build a feed mill as part of a \$30 million expansion supporters say will help turn the area into an aquaculture hub.

Delaware County's Board of Zoning Appeals approved [Bell Aquaculture](#) [1]'s fish food mill Thursday [despite complaints by neighbors](#) [2] about the stench produced by the farm's fish feces lagoon.

The board's vote had been tied 3-3 until Chairman Jack Neal Jr. cast the deciding vote.

That mill will produce 2.2 million pounds of fish food a month, which is more than Bell Aquaculture needs for its operations. The company plans to sell the surplus food to help fuel the Indiana aquaculture industry's growth, [The Star Press](#) [3] reported.

The farm produces nearly 3 million pounds per year of yellow perch, trout and coho salmon in indoor tanks, but its expansion plans call for it to more than double that production.

Bell Aquaculture CEO Norman McCowan said residents who oppose the project do have legitimate concerns about the smell produced by the Albany-area farm's lagoons, but he said the company is already taking steps to address that.

"We are a cutting-edge technology," he told the zoning board. "We want to see Delaware County become a hub for aquaculture."

Neighbors who oppose the feed mill said that not only does the lagoon stink, but the farm is also discharging so much water it has flooded surrounding property. Bell withdraws nearly 400 million gallons of water yearly from the ground for its operations.

Bill Hughes, an attorney who represents the disgruntled neighbors, said the fish farm's operations will intensify.

"They intend to bring in a fish food factory, which is not agriculture. It's a factory. It's industrial, and all the problems that exist now are going to get worse," he said.

Terry Murphy, vice president of the Muncie-Delaware County Economic Development Alliance, said the county plans to build a road from Ind. 67 to the fish farm to address concerns about truck traffic.

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"We're doing everything we can to grow this industry, to attract new aquaculture, new jobs," Murphy said. "This is an opportunity to become a leader in this industry."

Information from: The Star Press, <http://www.thestarpress.com> [4]

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<http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/news/2014/03/ind-fish-farm-expansion-approved-despite-complaints>

Links:

[1] <https://twitter.com/BellAquaculture>

[2] <http://www.foodmanufacturing.com/news/2014/03/neighbors-fight-indiana-fish-farm-expansion>

[3] <http://tspne.ws/1lda15E>

[4] <http://www.thestarpress.com>