

Waste Transfer Station Threatens Maple View Farm and Orange County's Heritage

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HILLSBOROUGH -- When we moved Maple View Farm from Maine to Orange County in 1963, we were attracted to the natural beauty of the area. We delighted in the communal and rural way of life. Now, that way of life is under threat by the County's plan to put an unnecessary waste transfer station in the heart of our farming area.

When we started bottling on Maple View Farm, a couple dozen families would visit us, every Sunday after services, to buy bottles of milk which we sold off our loading docks. Most of our Sunday guests stayed the afternoon. Children wanted to pet the calves. Parents wanted to walk in the fields. We loved this weekend ritual, which we saw as our unofficial open house - and the start of our opportunity to offer a connection to a rural way of life.

We started farm tours about 30 years ago. In the beginning, it seemed like every child had some relative - aunts, uncles or grandparents - who were farmers. A decade later it became apparent that an increasing number of our young visitors had no idea where their food came from.

Our tours started on the steps of our front porch where the children could look at the views - the silos, the cows and the fields. We asked them to consider the labor and land it took to feed the livestock - 150 cows that produced their milk, and 150 more calves and heifers who will comprise the herd of the future. For these youngsters, it was an early and important lesson in sustainability.

We can no longer safely allow tours, so we are building a 5,000 square foot agricultural education center on our farm - which will be completed in a couple of months. Here, local school children will interact with farm animals and try their hands at gardening. The center will have pigs, turkeys, chickens, cows, fruit trees, samples of different types of soil and a garden. It is our commitment to assure an agricultural education for every child in Orange County.

We are pleased that Maple View Farm has become a special place for the community. Families enjoy time together in rocking chairs on the porch at our store - especially on warm summer nights. Our bike rack, water and ice cream provide a well-deserved rest stop for a constant stream of the cyclists. Most of all, there's the contemplative quiet beauty of our breathtaking sunsets - a perfect way to end the day.

We are now concerned that our heritage is threatened. Orange County's plan for a waste transfer station will allow dozens of garbage trucks to rumble past Maple View Farm every day and cut our farm in two. Our tractors will no longer be able to easily cross the road to deliver feed to our livestock. Traffic and noise will compromise the views that we all love and effectively destroy the rural character that our families and neighbors have worked for nearly a half century to build. We fear that those commitments from the Commissioners to protect our rural community may have been empty political rhetoric.

The waste transfer station makes no sense - spending \$7 to \$10 million of taxpayer money on a temporary fix? Plus there are the costs to operate and use the facility - which the county staff has not even estimated. Vendors and community groups have provided the Commissioners with good alternatives for quality and cost effective service. These alternatives can save millions of dollars and keep us on a path toward the sustainable future that we like to believe our farm symbolizes. Shouldn't we be pursuing them aggressively?

The days are long gone when we could herd our cows down Dairyland Road without encountering a car - but our role has never been more important. We don't fight many changes but strongly oppose this waste transfer station. It threatens Orange County's rural heritage and our community's link to their farms and food. It's a waste of our tax money and resources. We can do better.

Bob and Chris Nutter
Maple View Farm