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## **Foes cite Wal-Mart record elsewhere**

Opponents of a proposed eastside Wal-Mart Supercenter say they want city officials to consider the company's record of environmental violations in other states before allowing construction to begin.

City engineers have already approved a storm-water management and soil erosion control plan that a Greenville firm developed for Wal-Mart. The city officials said the plan meets local and state ordinances.

The plan calls for the building of a retention pond designed to capture water runoff created by paving the property.

But that report has failed to assuage the fears of many residents who live near the 45-acre tract where the proposed 220,000-square-foot store would be built. City say Wal-Mart has failed to follow similar plans elsewhere.

"How do we know they're going to do what they say?" asked Lilly Hutto, organizer of the Spartanburg Sierra Club.

"We have no real idea of what will happen once that store goes in," said Onoosh Gahagan, a Webber Road resident and president of the Piedmont Chapter of the Audubon Society.

Opponents point to Connecticut, where Wal-Mart faces litigation brought by the Department of Environmental Protection. Connecticut officials have accused Wal-Mart of not following environmental plans the company submitted.

The Connecticut Attorney General's Office, for example, filed a lawsuit against 11 Wal-Mart stores on April 13. The suit says WalMart violated Connecticut's clean-water act 62 times between October 1996 and July 1999.

That suit charges Wal-Mart with:

- \* Failure to implement outsidestorage measures.
- \* Failure to implement spill control measures.
- \* Discharging storm-water associated with commercial operations without a permit.

"To be a serious statewide polluter at 11 stores gives Wal-Mart a very dubious distinction as an environmental lawbreaker," Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said when the suit was filed.

Amy Hill, a Wal-Mart spokeswoman, said most of the company's problems in Connecticut were administrative.

"We're in compliance now," she said.

Julie Kirittis, a Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Agency spokeswoman, said the sides have settled one suit, with WalMart agreeing to pay a \$65,000 fine and restore a pond that was harmed.

Kirittis said the agency monitors Wal-Mart's new sites more closely now.

"We make a point to review Wal-Mart's plans because they have a significant enforcement record," Kirittis said.

Some residents who live in the neighborhoods adjacent to the proposed Spartanburg store have asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to review the stormwater plan.

The EPA, however, doesn't review site plans, saying granting approval to developers would make it difficult to enforce subsequent violations.

Instead, the agency allows local municipalities to review and approve site plans.

"No violations of the plan can occur until they start moving dirt," said Roosevelt Childress, chief inspection permit officer for the regional EPA office in Atlanta. "So the complaints by the citizens are premature at this point."

Hill also said the residents' fears were unfounded.

"To say we're just going to ignore any problem is not true," she said.

City engineers say they inspect all storm-water drainage sites twice a year to ensure no violations occur.

"We periodically check detention sites to make sure it's clear of trees and debris that would deter it from working properly," said Bob Perrine, an engineering manager.

Perrine said violations of the city's storm-water management ordinance are rare.

"Since we implemented the storm-water management plan, (violations have) not been a problem," Perrine said.

It is unclear when construction will start. Wal-Mart has submitted a site plan to the city's planning board. The planning board is scheduled to meet Dec. 6 at 7 p.m. at the Spartanburg County Public Library on South Church Street.