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## Less of an impact

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The UNCW Center for Marine Science has seen the light, so to speak, and it's making sure it doesn't make the same mistakes twice.

In fact, neighbors should barely notice the \$5.5 million addition to the center, lights that go with it and its air-conditioning equipment, said Paul Reinmann, the center's assistant director for fixed operations and planning.

"We're going overboard to make sure there's no impact on neighbors," he said.

As workers reroute underground utilities or enlarge them to add roughly another quarter building to the existing facility in Myrtle Grove, air-conditioning equipment will be on the ground and lights will be enclosed in a box fixture that points where it's supposed to - down, Reinmann said.

It was precisely those issues that caused controversy when the \$17.5 million center opened in 2000 off Masonboro Loop Road.

Neighbors from the subdivisions lining the Intracoastal Waterway thought the rooftop air-conditioning unit was too loud and the lights around the center were too bright.

Tom Strickland, who has lived on nearby Captain's Lane for 11 years, said the center still produces noise but is making an effort to keep it in check.

"They seem to be doing a good job of trying to control it," he said. "We really appreciate it."

The University of North Carolina



STAFF PHOTO | PAUL STEPHEN

**Ground clearing and utilities installation have begun for a \$5.5 million expansion of the University of North Carolina Wilmington's Center for Marine Science in Myrtle Grove, which will relocate operations currently at its facility near Wrightsville Beach.**

Wilmington spent more than \$300,000 to muffle machinery sounds, redirect light fixtures and erect fences.

"We're trying to be a good neighbor," Reinmann said. "We're taking those lessons learned previously and applying it to the new building."

Workers broke ground in the fall on the expansion, which will add 23,127 square feet to the Center for Marine Science at 5600 Marvin K. Moss Lane. The expansion is expected to be completed in December.

With the cooling unit on the ground, "it's going to be quieter," Reinmann said.

"I'm talking at a louder level than this cooling tower is going to emit," said Reinmann, speaking atop the center's roof above the din of the

towering, white cooling unit on the second floor of the existing facility. Already, a footprint in the sand gives an idea of the expansion's magnitude.

"They're trying to work with us, so I can't ask any more," Strickland said, adding he's not worried about the expansion. "There's a pretty good swath of woods between us and them. It'll be all right."

Funding for the expansion comes from several sources - in part from UNCW's portion of the \$3.1 billion state higher education bonds approved by voters in 2000 and also from the sale of the old Center for Marine Science Research near the Wrightsville Beach drawbridge, said

Greg Walker, a facility construction engineer who is overseeing the building's design. Another portion is coming from funds generated by the center, he said.

The owner of the Babies Hospital site is buying the old site for \$3.25 million, slightly less than UNCW's asking price. Developer Chris Bailey of Bailey & Associates is in the process of purchasing the property and buildings on roughly 2 acres at 7205 Wrightsville Ave.

The expansion will allow for many of the center's functions - such as the boat, oceanographic instrumentation, dive and aquaculture shops - to be centralized under one roof.

Because of budget constraints, those functions were cut from original plans for the Myrtle Grove building.

The expansion hasn't been without delays.

The project was supposed to be completed in the summer of 2006, but because of an influx in other state schools' construction projects from the bond, "we didn't get to bid it and award contracts as early as we originally hoped," Walker said.

"The state approval process can be slow," he said.

Cost was another factor. The price of the project has escalated because of rising construction costs. The original cost was projected to be about \$3 million.

"Each time they would do a cost estimate, the costs were increasing, but the building was staying the same as far as size and needs," Walker said.