

Largest monkey breeding facility in nation will eventually hold 30,000 monkeys, planners say; neighbors say they're worried

(February 13, 2024) By Lenah Allen and Gray News Staff



A tall sign **opposing** the monkey facility sits in the front yard of a Bainbridge, Georgia, couple's home. (WALB)

Words to Know

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|----------------|------------------|
| 1. alleviate | 6. oppose |
| 2. behaviorist | 7. municipal |
| 3. deter | 8. primate |
| 4. husbandry | 9. transparent |
| 5. incentive | 10. veterinarian |

BAINBRIDGE, Ga. (WALB/Gray News) - The company behind what will be the country's largest monkey breeding facility said it plans to move forward and won't be **deterred** by what they call misinformation in the southern Georgia community.

The 200-acre animal **husbandry** facility will eventually house 30,000 monkeys that will be raised and shipped out for research.

Concerns from locals include the number of monkeys that will be in town compared to the city of Bainbridge's current population, as well as environmental concerns. The U.S. Census estimates that there are over 14,000 people who live in Bainbridge.

The new company, Safer Human Medicine, said it's a \$396 million investment that will bring 263 jobs to the Bainbridge area. Those jobs will include **veterinarians** and animal **behaviorists**. All the jobs are expected to have an average annual salary of \$64,000.

The Bainbridge Decatur County Development Authority voted Feb. 2 to take back its support for the monkey facility — that support includes the tax **incentives** that were previously approved.

"It doesn't mean that those incentives are unwound. So we're going to continue to move forward as planned," said Jim Harkness, Safer Human Medicine CEO. "I think right now, we still think that this is an important project. The timelines are, I would say tight because it's a critical need for researchers in the United States."

Safer Human Medicine's leadership said it understands the flood of concerns coming from Bainbridge residents. They say they've been in and out of town to hear those concerns and clear up any misinformation.

Many Bainbridge neighbors have not been shy about their opposition to the facility — saying the facility will bring environmental impacts and unsafe living conditions.

Kurt Derfler, Safer Human Medicine's COO, said the facility will be a state-of-the-art building that can withstand weather impacts.

"Our buildings are engineered to withstand a direct Category 4 hurricane hit. Additionally, our buildings allow air to pass through, which further reduces the risk of the roof being taken off," he said.

As far as the environmental impact, Derfler said there won't be any discharge of waste from the site. He said all of the waste will go directly to the **municipal** wastewater treatment plant in the city.

David and Donna Barber, who live just 400 feet away from the facility, said they still have concerns about the smell and noise from the monkeys.

"I don't think anybody would want 30,000 monkeys next door," David Barber said.

Harkness said it will take 20 years before 30,000 monkeys will be in town.

"So in the first few years, we're only looking at a few thousand **primates** on site. So a much smaller operation," he said.

Safer Human Medicine's leaders said overall, they want everyone to keep bringing their questions to them.

"We have nothing to hide. We've been very **transparent** about who we are and what we're doing. We just want to share with people and help them **alleviate** their concerns and understand how we can benefit them and the community as a whole," Harness said.

David Barber said he won't stop speaking out against the facility until it's shut down.

"We're not going to stop. We're not going away and we're not going to give up," he said.

Neighbors of the primate facility, Penny and Johnny Reynolds, said they are rallying with other residents to do everything they can to shut the monkey facility down.

"First, I heard about it I worried about myself, what my property value is going to do, what it was going to do to our health, and then all of sudden it wasn't about just me. It was really about all these people in this area," Johnny Reynolds said. "To stop the breeding facility. That's our overall goal."

Penny Reynolds said that the city of Bainbridge's quality of life is in jeopardy.

"We love to be outside, and I'm concerned about our environment, about the noise. 30,000 monkeys ..." she said.

At this point, the project is still in progress, but there will be a public hearing scheduled at a later date with a judge to discuss the legalities around the tax incentives.

"We need to get all of the legal elements resolved but everything is largely ready to go. So, as soon as that's done, it'll probably be about six months

from the time we start construction to the time we're fully operational," Harkness said.

Activity A

Directions: Answer the following questions.

1. What are Bainbridge's racial demographics?
2. What is the average age of the city's residents?
3. What is the average salary?
4. What will the average age of residents be in 20 years?
5. Speculate why a company like Safer Human Medicine wouldn't build a facility like this in a less populated region like Montana or Nebraska?
6. What is Safer Human Medicine doing with the monkeys?

Activity B Directions: Write a complex sentence for each word in red.

Examples of complex sentences:

1. Because she became ill, she had to leave work early.
2. Even though he was tired, he managed to finish all his homework.
3. Even though the evidence was circumstantial, the jury reached a guilty verdict.

Activity C

Directions: If your last name begins with A – N, write an argumentative essay that advocates for building the facility. If your name begins with O – Z, write an argumentative essay that opposes building the facility.

The article was taken from the following website for educational purposes only:

<https://www.wwnytv.com/2024/02/13/largest-monkey-breeding-facility-nation-will-eventually-hold-30000-planners-say-neighbors-say-theyre-worried/>