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Winnemucca residents oppose plan to import trash

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WINNEMUCCA, Nev. --]

Some Winnemucca residents are angry about a San Francisco company's proposal to ship tons of garbage from Northern California to the Nevada desert.

The Humboldt County Planning Commission has issued a permit to Recology, allowing the company to acquire the necessary state permits to open a dump outside Winnemucca.

According to the Las Vegas Review-Journal, Recology, formerly known as Norcal Waste Systems, intends to collect household trash from San Francisco and surrounding communities and haul it 300 miles by train to a mile-square landfill.

In return, Humboldt County might receive \$1 million a year and gain about 25 jobs.

Resident Tami Vetter said the proposed Jungo Road landfill is a health disaster waiting to happen, with 4,000 tons of garbage, hauled five days a week, over the next 95 years.

"There is no amount of money that makes it worth taking all that garbage," Vetter said. "The more I think of that amount of garbage, the more terrified I get. What we are going to have is a poisonous soup. We are setting ourselves up for health problems."

The idea of putting San Francisco trash in Humboldt County has divided this desert town of 7,700 people 150 miles east of Reno.

Vetter and others have formed Nevadans Against Garbage and have begun circulating petitions against the landfill. She maintains the vast majority of local residents oppose the dump.

Recology spokesman Adam Alberti said the employee-owned company is environmentally friendly, with an 89-year history of operating safe landfills.

"We don't want to jam it down their throats," Alberti said. "It will not pose any health risks. We are dealing with household waste. We are working to build trust in the community."

The company already operates one Nevada dump, the small Crestline landfill for residents in Lincoln County. But asbestos and tires could be put in the Jungo Road landfill, and that scares people like Vetter.

Alberti said barriers will be installed to protect groundwater. He added that asbestos will be wrapped in coating required by environmental regulations before it is buried.

"Asbestos can be handled safely," he said. "Like it or not, asbestos is in this world."

Winnemucca Mayor Di An Putnam estimates a "sizable minority" of residents opposes the dump, but she concedes it is largely a "done deal" because of past actions by the City Council and Humboldt County Commission.

Putnam said Winnemucca needs a new landfill, and Recology will accept the town's trash.

"A lot of people don't want to accept someone else's trash," she said, "but we do need a new dump."

Humboldt County Commissioner Tom Fransway insists the dump is not a done deal and won't be until the commission negotiates a host fee and restrictions.

"I am on record as opposed to it," he said. "I don't see a benefit to taking 4,000 tons of garbage a day from California."

Fellow Commissioner Garley Amos said the county can put restrictions on the landfill, but if Recology obtains the necessary environmental permits, "we have to approve it."

"It gives us a chance to have a solid source of revenue for 100 years," he added.

Amos also noted that Cyanco, a cyanide protection facility, is a few miles from the dump site and has not posed an environmental problem.

Cyanide is used to leach gold out of ore.

"There is nothing out there," Amos said. "A lot of people are going on emotions. There is an economic side to it, too."

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