



S.F. Might Start Outsourcing Its Trash to Cheaper States

By Anna McCarthy in Environment

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Possibly heading to Nevada is one more thing to be grouchy about

San Francisco's current waste management service, Recology -- formerly known as NorCal -- wants to ship the 20,000 tons of garbage we produce per week (not including weekends) on a freight train to a proposed landfill near Winnemucca, Nevada. Apparently San Fran hasn't quite reached that zero-waste goal yet -- and until we do, we will face the problem of where to stash our trash so that we don't have to be anywhere near it. The company is considering a freight line that would carry garbage from all over the Bay Area to the Nevada landfill, according to Recology representative, Adam Alberti. He added that moving trash via freight is a greener and more cost-effective alternative to the company's current method of disposal, which includes motoring 100 percent of the city's trash via diesel truck to the Altamont Landfill in Livermore.

But what's environmental for San Francisco isn't always so pleasing for everyone living outside the city -- some Nevadans are crying NIMBY, and saying they refuse to become the nation's preferred refuse yard. Sill, Nevada is an appealing state in which to stash trash because its hosting fees tend to be cheaper than those in California (and what happens in Winnemucca stays in Winnemucca).

Alberti said that Recology is negotiating a fee that would mean about \$1 per ton of garbage dumped at the landfill for Nevada's Humboldt County. At Altamont, Recology currently pays "definitely more than a dollar" per ton, according to an Alameda County planning department representative. The fee covers everything from compensation to the host city to recycling education. Recology also pays a mandatory \$1.85 per ton to the state, which a representative for California's waste management board, Andrew Hughan, says the company won't be able to finagle their way out of paying, even if the trash winds up in another state.

Hughan said that California is indeed running out of available landfill space, and that the process for creating new landfills can take up to 10 years because of the long list of regulations. "Not dumping in California eliminates about 80 percent of all the rules," he said.

The proposed Nevada landfill has been in the works for at least a few years now, according to this letter from Jungo Land & Investments, Inc., a subsidiary of NorCal Waste, dated in 2007 and addressed to the regional planning commission of Humboldt County inquiring after a permit. According to the letter, the landfill is expected to operate for at least 100 years. Let's see: That's 20,000 multiplied by 48, multiplied by 100, equaling about 9.6 million tons of SF trash.

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