

Citizens Solid Waste Advisory Committee

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Good afternoon. Let me begin with a brief historical perspective on waste management. Back in the middle of the last century, our country and its industry were growing rapidly. Unfortunately so was the waste - both the household and industrial. We were faced with a massive waste crisis because the indiscriminate dumping of wastes was poisoning people.

The government had to act and did so with a set of laws called the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. Note- this is not the Lined Landfill Act. In fact, the spirit of this law is a 4 point integrated waste management system involving

1. **Waste reduction** - Public education to reuse things and carefully consider what you throw away.

2. **Recycling** - plastic to plastic; glass to glass; paper to paper; metal to metal

3. **Resource (energy) recovery** - Squeeze out the last bit of energy from the remaining waste. Usually involves incineration.

4. **And finally, landfills** - RCRA aim is 10% of original waste to end up in landfill.

You might ask does this actually exist? Yes, in fact our Commissioners were taken to such a landfill in St. Petersburg Florida.

They have an extensive recycling program, and an elaborate hazardous waste elimination plan. The reduced non-hazardous waste entering the landfill is then incinerated and the heat energy produced is converted to electricity.

The sterilized ash (15% of the original waste) remaining goes to the landfill which is very simple and has no plastic liner

system. This is modern state-of-the-art waste management, but it is expensive. The Conecuh woods proposed landfill will accept 100% of the original waste - unrecycled, contains hazardous material, no combustion reduction.

Lined landfills that accept huge amounts of unrecycled, commingled, and partially toxic waste are old fashioned and not in the spirit of the RCRA regulation no matter how many liners or leachate collection systems they employ. They are only a step above unlined dumps in the modern hierarchy of waste management.

But lined landfills are relatively cheap, and so they are very profitable for the owners, especially if they accept mega tons of raw waste a day.

Here are the problems with the lined landfill full of unrecycled, toxic waste.

1. Lined landfills leak - experts agree, manufacturers agree, there is a whole industry now to detect leaks in landfills. Even Conecuh Woods agrees they leak. Why else would they boast that their lined landfill would have a leak detection system?
2. The EPA says lined landfills will eventually fail. We already have examples of early failures. Camp Pendleton landfill was a state of the art modern landfill and it failed massively, leaving the community it served with a polluted environment and leaving a large financial burden for the taxpayers. Conecuh Woods has gone on record saying "No one should be surprised that a contractor hired by the federal government didn't do what they were supposed to do". But in the next breath they reassure us that we will be safe because a government agency - ADEM -will be protecting us from landfill hazards. Either way, I do not feel safe or reassured.
3. They contain poisonous material. Much of the material going

in is poisonous and after it sits in the closed cauldron of the landfill it rots and decomposes and degrades and often becomes even more toxic. As you will see, we are still learning about these transformation products and how they can escape the landfill.

A close to home example of this type landfill is Timberlands - our current regional landfill. Last spring Conecuh Woods pointed to timberlands as an excellent example of a new modern landfill which, according to ADEM, had had no problems. Other similarities to the proposed Conecuh Woods landfill include:

1. Similar hydrogeological region - less than 10 miles away
2. Double lined with plastic and clay and exceed ADEM and EPA standards.
3. Buries thousands of tons of raw, unrecycled waste each day.
4. Burns off methane and other gaseous byproducts into the atmosphere.
5. Recycles its leachate
6. Contracts with SCS - the engineering company
7. Run by Big Garbage - Allied Waste - for investor profit.
8. The county has no authority over the operation of the landfill.
9. A third party investor owns the permit.

For all these reasons, it seemed a logical and very similar comparable landfill to help us learn what to expect from new modern landfills that accept raw, unrecycled waste.

As you know, my husband and others found that Timberlands began to leak about 6 years after it was built. The groundwater outside the landfill has had very high levels of mercury contamination for years [chart]. This shows mercury 5 times above safe drinking water limits. Timberlands's hypothesis for the source of this contamination is that mercury in the landfill was acted upon by bacteria and transformed into methyl mercury that escaped in a gaseous form. The report admits this is an unexpected and poorly understood process. Timberlands

initiated a remediation plan that involved sucking the gaseous organic mercury out of the landfill and burning it off into the atmosphere. So mercury was removed from the groundwater that we will eventually drink and burned off to air we now breath. This scares and puzzles me. We will continue to research the wisdom of this solution, which was developed by Timberlands and endorsed by ADEM.

It was also noted that ADEM recently allowed 23,000 more tons of mercury laden sand from Olin Corporation into Timberlands, not to bury in the landfill, but to use as weekly cover for exposed waste. So you have in essence a layer of waste bacteria and a layer of mercury, a layer of waste bacteria, a layer of mercury, etc., building a large layer cake type situation that could produce huge quantities of methyl mercury which will then end up being burned off and released into our air.

We will, of course, continue to explore the safety implications of this practice.

We will also continue to explore the legality of this decision. We have asked the US attorney and the Criminal Investigation Division of EPA to evaluate this decision of allowing what we believe is a listed hazardous waste into a subtitle D landfill.

Further investigation of our comparable landfill - that accepts raw, unrecycled waste - revealed that arsenic levels have been rising in the groundwater test wells outside the landfill [graph]. We have arsenic levels 3 times above safe drinking water limits. But instead of expensive remediation, Timberlands funded an engineering study which concluded that (1) Even though this arsenic was found right outside the landfill about 100 feet and (2) even though arsenic levels were non-detectable before the landfill was built, they can find no evidence that the arsenic is coming from the landfill. So, they concluded the arsenic must be coming from natural sources and it was just a coincidence that the landfill happens to be nearby.

The ADEM hydrogeologist who reviewed the study had many questions and recommendations, but they were never addressed - the report was approved and Timberlands now has no responsibility for remediation. The arsenic levels continue to rise. This scares me.

Now to review: Lined landfills do leak, they can fail. When we look at our closest and most similar comparable - a double lined landfill accepting unrecycled raw waste about 10 miles away with similar hydrogeology, built by Big Garbage for investor profit, and regulated by the same state agency as Conecuh Woods we find:

1. mercury contamination in water and air
2. ongoing mercury placement in the landfill.
3. arsenic contamination in water

And this landfill is only 1/12 the size of the proposed Conecuh Woods landfill. Are we scared? Do we think there might be a health risk?

This is a sample of the data that led 45 of our area physicians to sign our petition against the landfill.

They know that mercury and arsenic are the 2nd and 3rd most toxic elements on the planet. They are aware of the neurotoxic effects of mercury and the lethal effect arsenic has on all cells.

We have been challenged to show the data or proof that this landfill has harmed anyone.....this reminds me of what happened with Big Tobacco. Doctors were well aware of the health hazards of cigarette smoking, but Big Tobacco kept saying - Show us the Proof. Finally, after many years and many senseless deaths, the evidence that links illness and smoking became overwhelmingly evident. How many years and how much illness will it take to reveal the dangers of burying huge

amounts of raw garbage in our earth?

We hope you will pass these facts forward to the commissioners and that they will act to protect us from this dangerous environmental experiment.