



PRESS-REGISTER

New York law firm hired in Conecuh landfill fight

Friday, September 07, 2007

By **CONNIE BAGGETT**
Staff Reporter

REPTON -- A grassroots organization formed to fight a proposed 5,100-acre landfill in Conecuh County has hired Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s law firm, which specializes in environmental cases, Kennedy's law partner said Thursday.

Word that Kennedy & Madonna agreed to work with the opposition came a week after Conecuh County commissioners stepped out of an executive session and voted to ask state legislators to include the landfill issue on the primary ballot in February.

"This one is a complex case," said Kevin Madonna, "We do a lot of cases involving communities where industry has done harm to drinking water supplies. This case is a chance to protect the community before damage is incurred."

Madonna said the large landfill proposed for the rural community in Conecuh is "a classic case of an out-of-state corporate interest bringing garbage in from out of state and dumping it on the people there, taking the money and running. It is a fundamentally unfair situation for the people there."

Phillip Kinney, who works for the public relations firm Matrix in Montgomery, is a spokesman for Conecuh Woods whose principals are based in the Tampa Bay, Fla., area. He disagreed with Madonna's characterization of the project.

"Conecuh Woods is not an out-of-state corporation," Kinney said, "it is an Alabama LLC, which was incorporated by Jimmy Stone and David Kirby. No other corporation or individuals have any interest in Conecuh Woods."

Kinney said that Conecuh Woods will be a "state-of-the-art economic development project" generating construction jobs, permanent jobs and revenue for Conecuh County. The money could be used to pave roads and help provide emergency services and programs for children and seniors, he said.

Developers have said the project could bring more than \$250 million over more than 60 years and would provide about 15 jobs.

Controversy began in Conecuh and surrounding counties even before the landfill developers made a proposal. Several municipal governments and the Monroe and Escambia county commissions passed resolutions urging the Conecuh commission to refuse the landfill.

Though the commission voted in January against the project, that vote was not binding.

Once the developers make formal application, the County Commission can vote yes or no after a public hearing. If the commission takes no action, the landfill is automatically approved after 90 days.

Commissioners said the outcome of the referendum would not be binding.

Johnny Andrews, president of the citizen's group, said he was satisfied that the majority of Conecuh people oppose the landfill.

"I was startled the commissioners would ask for this to be on the ballot," Andrews said. "Why waste taxpayers' money when it is clear to everyone most people are against it?"

Madonna said his firm was "evaluating our options with respect to the commission's decision to place the issue on the ballot."

Kinney said Conecuh Woods considered the request for a vote to be good news. "Conecuh Woods applauds the county commissioners' decision to let the voters have a voice in their future and we look forward to the opportunity to speak directly to the citizens of Conecuh County."

© 2007 Press-Register

© 2007 al.com All Rights Reserved.