

THEN, NOW AND THE ?FUTURE?

In a quiet corner of southwest Alabama lies the Town of Repton. It is more or less the center of a number of sleepy, laid back communities. Long gone are the days of a bustling economy based on the timber, lumber and farming. Long gone are the local hospital and one room schools thought their structures still stand as reminders of times past. Gone are the merchants along Repton's main street. The empty store fronts stand as sentinels of days gone by. It is a place of quiet solitude where one can live the simple life. Many here are tied to the land their ancestors struggled to conquer. Others have sought this place out from their wanderings to be free of the ring and ding of city life. It is a place we want to be because of what it is.

Then comes an operator out of Florida who forms an Alabama corporation named Conecuh Woods and proposes to build a mega dump in this environmental paradise. If allowed to do so this will be the largest dump in the continental U. S. It will consist of 5100 acres with a fill pit of 1500 acres and process 10,000 tons of garbage per day. (Based on other dump operations this could easily double) The site is west of Alabama highway 41 between the Town of Repton and the community of Range. On the west it is bounded by the Little Escambia River which ultimately empties into Pensacola Bay.

They say they will accept only household garbage a. k. a. municipal solid waste (MSW). This is very misleading because there are many hazardous materials in MSW. Because they pass through our homes they are exempt by definition as hazardous material. These materials originating from an industrial site would be considered hazards.

They say there will be "minimal local impact" because this will be a new modern sanitary landfill. New modern landfills have two liners; one is two feet of clay and the other a 10 mil plastic liner. In theory these liners contain the rainfall and water of decomposition to be pumped off thereby protecting the environment. In fact these liners leak. They have leaked from the beginning and the EPA knows and admits it. It was know two years before the EPA's new reforms of the early 1990's.

In fairness to the EPA they were under a great deal of pressure to do something about all the unregulated dumps creating potential hazards to people and the environment, and they did do something. They enacted rules and regulations that effectively closed many of these sites. Hey also put in place a flawed system that leaks. The net effect is to delay the inevitable contamination and to make it more difficult to detect contamination.

And then, we have ADEM, the State agency to oversee dumps etc, their actions have been less than adequate. They allowed toxic material containing mercury to be moved from McIntosh, Alabama to Timberlands to be used as general cover, saying that it was produced prior to the EPA regulations; therefore, the EPA regulations did not apply. Timberlands, by the way, is a MSW facility located in Escambia County, Alabama five miles from the proposed mega dump and it was not supposed to receive any hazardous material. They also allowed the mercury levels in the water at Timberlands to reach five times the safe level without informing the citizens or the local County government, and when asked why they failed to make s notifications they replied "there is no law that says we have to".!!DUH!! It seems perfectly clear to me that ADEM doesn't understand their job! And yet, we're supposed to accept their guidance, control, and regulation of another dump five miles away from Timberlands.

The time is at hand to reform ADEM to be responsive to the people it serves. It is also time for EPA to enact Plan B, new rules and regulation to correct the flawed system now in place. In fact it is time to move this Nation, this State, and this County to a zero waste concept. Garbage doesn't go away because we put it in hole and cover it over. It remains a potential menace to humanity and the environment for hundreds of years.

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