



PRESS-REGISTER

Conecuh landfill opponents speak up

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By **CONNIE BAGGETT**
Staff Reporter

EVERGREEN -- A Texas minerals broker told Conecuh County commissioners Monday that a proposed landfill near Repton could disrupt ongoing oil exploration there and rob several companies of their interest in mineral rights in the area.

"Development of this site into a producing field is highly likely, based on the level of activity we are seeing," said Mark Robinson, vice president of Black Stone Minerals Co. of Houston. "We already have wells on the periphery, and we have companies asking to do seismic work across the property."

Conecuh County commissioners heard a presentation Monday by representatives of Citizens for a Clean Southwest Alabama, who outlined their arguments against allowing a 5,100-acre landfill in the rural area near Repton.

Robinson's statements regarding oil exploration came toward the end of the presentation.

Four months ago, a Tampa Bay, Fla., development company proposed building a landfill along Alabama 41 between Range and Repton. The property extends westward to the headwaters of Big Escambia Creek.

Proponents say the landfill, with 1,500 acres of active disposal area, could generate some \$250 million in host fees for the county over about 63 years of operation.

Representatives of the development group, Conecuh Woods, met with commissioners two weeks ago to make arguments in favor of the landfill. Al Agricola, a Montgomery attorney who represents Conecuh Woods, attended Monday's meeting but did not address the commission.

The Press-Register was not able to contact Agricola or any other Conecuh Woods representative for comment Monday.

Robinson told commissioners that speculators believe the landfill site could be part of an oil field that rivals the most productive in the state in recent years.

"We are concerned that if the landfill goes forward, Black Stone and others who have paid for mineral rights could be deprived of the ability to develop their interests," Robinson said. "Our property will have been effectively taken from us without compensation."

June Serravezza, who lives near the proposed landfill site, told the commission that her research in recent months shows federal officials as well as engineers at several leading universities say the liners in municipal landfills leak, and every landfill can potentially contaminate groundwater.

The presentation included a videotaped interview with Peter Montague, a Princeton University professor who has done extensive research on landfills. His research, he said, "shows there is no such thing as a secure landfill."

He said rainfall affects formation of leachate -- the liquids that leak off a landfill. Even when landfills are maintained as well as possible, he said, they eventually fail to keep in all toxic leachate.

Once the leachate enters groundwater, he maintained, "it is next to impossible to clean it up."

"The typical way people find out about contamination is not through monitoring wells," Montague said, "but through people getting sick."

The video interview was produced by Greenpeace, an international environmental activist group.

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