

## FRONT CCSA landfill

BY JOSH DEWBERRY

Journal Staff Writer

Citizens from Monroe and Conecuh counties concerned about the proposed landfill in Repton poured into Nettles Auditorium on the Monroeville campus of Alabama Southern Community College to hear the Citizens for a Clean Southwest Alabama's (CCSA's) argument against the facility.

Repton Mayor Terri Carter first presented a video she received from Greenpeace titled "Why all landfills leak."

In the video, Dr. Robert Montag, a self-proclaimed "accidental expert" in landfills who did extensive research on modern, lined landfills in the Northeast, says that all landfills, no matter their size or how state-of-the-art they are, are destined to leak.

"My research showed that four new, modern, scientific landfills in New Jersey all began to leak within six months of construction," Montag said.

He went on to say that the landfills were lined, several of them double, and they still ended up leaking.

The proposed landfill near Repton would be lined with a large plastic-like liner and have several layers of clay on top of and below the liner, according to representatives from Conecuh Woods, the company formed to construct and operate the landfill.

Montag also said the water that passes through the landfill and to the bottom, called leachate, is usually treated in a way that passed oxygen through the water to "bubble out" the toxins, releasing them into the air to be carried down wind and "become another person's problem."

He said the leachate from a landfill – toxic or municipal household waste (MSW), which the Repton landfill is proposed to be – is highly toxic to humans and would cause death "almost immediately." He said there is virtually no difference in the leachate from either type of landfill.

"Landfill leachate is full of carcinogens and can cause birth defects and genetic mutations that can be passed down from generation to generation," Montag said.

Montag also said the average depth of groundwater is 30 feet below the surface and in some places is much shallower.

"One-half of all Americans get their water from wells drawing from groundwater," he said in the video. "A landfill can be seen as contamination waiting to happen. And it is not possible to clean up groundwater."

CCSA education chairman Dr. June Serravezza spoke to the crowd about the possible effects this landfill would have.

"The more I've studied this the more I've realized our situation is truly dire," she said. She said her research – and documents from the federal Environmental Protection Agency – has shown that "all landfill liners will get holes in them" and it's a matter of "when, not if."

She said one hole per acre could leak 300 gallons of leachate a day.

Serravezza also said the proposed facility will process up to 10,000 tons of garbage a day and that Monroe County only produces 37,000 tons a year.

“In four days they will have taken in what this county produces in a year,” she said. “That obviously means the garbage will not be coming from around here.”

She reiterated Montag’s statement that groundwater is shallow in some areas, saying the groundwater on the over-5,000-acre piece of property is “two feet below the surface in many places” and “this landfill will be sitting in the groundwater.”

Dr. George Jervey, the reconnaissance chairperson for CCSA, said he had made some discoveries that made him more and more steadfast in his position against the landfill.

“First of all, we don’t have the means to fight a fire if one breaks out at the landfill,” Jervey said. He said the Hamden Ridge and Town of Repton water systems don’t have enough water pressure to supply water to fight the fire.

Jervey also pointed out that the property sets on top of five underground water aquifers that supply water from as far west as Mississippi to the Eastern Seaboard.

CCSA Chairman Johnny Andrews said the City of Andalusia draws water from the same aquifer the City of Monroeville does and that aquifer is under the property.

Jervey then turned his attention to the initial presentation Conecuh Woods gave to the Conecuh County Commission in January, in which the statement was made that the company’s public relations specialist Patrick Slevin had recently built a home within a mile of a landfill.

“I never knew until my wife asked the neighbors when the garbage truck ran and they told her we’d have to haul it to the landfill a mile away,” Slevin said at the time. “This is a very nice neighborhood with expensive houses within a mile of a waste facility.”

Jervey said he had visited the area and presented pictures.

“This is the ‘landfill’ that is 2.4 miles from where Slevin lives,” Jervey said, pointing to a photo of a dumpster and a sign that marked it as a Jefferson County garbage collection site with seven-day-a-week pickup for the citizens, except for holidays.

“If we believe anything they say,” Jervey concluded, “we will become the biggest collection of fools this side of the Mississippi.”

Andrews took the podium to close the meeting, and said this is a battle that will last for a long time.

“We have a target on our backs now, people,” he said. “With the help of the citizens of Monroe and Escambia counties we can fight this.”