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# MORGAN COUNTY CITIZEN

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## Landfill water pollution an issue

Submitted by editor on Thu, 03/11/2010 - 21:31.

**Editorials**

By: Celia Murray



Presently pending before the Morgan County Board of Commissioners is an application to rezone a tract of land between Pierce Dairy Road and Highway 83 from AR to I2 in order to clear the way for the building of a Regional Municipal Solid Waste Landfill – a dump.

The initial request concerns 518 acres, but the owners of the property have stated their intent to transpose their complete 1,100 acre tract into a dump that will eventually reach heights of 250 feet – 25 stories of trash. This would make it the sixth largest landfill in the nation, and given the size of the project, its proximity to the interstate highway and rail lines, it is obvious that this landfill would accept garbage from up and down the east coast.

Of course, our garbage must go somewhere. However, protection of the environment must be of paramount concern for all of us. Without question, the proposed site is completely inappropriate for a regional landfill for a variety of reasons, most importantly because of the pollution and contamination of the water table such a facility will produce.

The proposed site, if used as the present owners intend, would result in potential, indeed certain, substantial water pollution. As shown on the map included in the re-zoning application, two creeks, Four Mile Branch and Little Indian Creek, flow through the site, with Four Mile Branch eventually flowing into the larger Little Indian Creek. Little Indian Creek, a protected sub-wetland of the Big Indian watershed, flows into the Little River from which drinking water for Eatonton is taken. Additionally, the site is surrounded by four re-charge areas. These areas capture and store water during times of flood and provide needed reserves in times of drought – water that acts to recharge or refill our aquifer and wells. It is well documented that water contamination is at its highest within a one-half mile radius of a landfill. There are already at least 30 homes surrounding the proposed site which rely on well water for drinking, and in a growth area, many more can be expected in the near future.

The site is also within two miles of the Madison Lakes development.

Many of these nearby homes are not indicated on the outdated re-zoning application, but a drive down Pierce Dairy and Aqua Roads makes it obvious that many, many families are dependent on



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well water which would be impacted by pollution from the proposed dump site.

The Morgan County Joint Comprehensive Plan (2004-2024) specifically addresses wetlands in section 3.3: "The wetlands in Morgan County have been mapped by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service... (T)he majority of wetlands are located in the bottomlands of the county along all major creeks and rivers. The major wetlands are along ...Big Indian Creek..." The comprehensive plan further states, "(E)very effort should be made to preserve Morgan County's contiguous system of wetlands to enable these areas to perform their positive function even more efficiently, effectively, and also to a much greater degree. Wetlands protection ordinances and enforcement of wetlands protection through the development review process must be given a high priority in local policy."

Pollution from a regional landfill is inevitable. Rainwater would course through the entire landfill, picking up contaminants and pollutants along the way and drain into the surrounding wetlands. The pollution of the water table would impact many Morgan County citizens, not just those in the immediate vicinity of the proposed dump.

The water pollution issue is of such serious magnitude that, 12 years ago, when a solid waste management landfill site was proposed directly east of the currently proposed site, Putnam County took legal action to stop it in order to preserve downstream water purity.

Water pollution from the proposed dump would be exacerbated by the unsuitable soil at the site. According to the Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Management Authority, the soil at the proposed dump site is "unsuitable" for the proposed use.

The map contained as a part of the re-zoning application incorrectly shows the proposed site with suitable soil, but the map reflects a portion of Madison County, Georgia, not Morgan County.

An examination of that same 10-county map clearly shows that the soil in Morgan County is considered of "limited suitability" or "unsuitable soil" for a solid waste disposal facility. Of course, there are other issues, aside from water pollution, which make the site inappropriate.

In conclusion, a careful and thoughtful waste management plan is not only appropriate, but necessary. However, the proposed re-zoning application to allow for the location of a regional dump in Morgan County, just outside the city limits of Madison, is a terrible idea which would result in a tremendous water pollution, air pollution, traffic congestion, loss of tourism dollars, and diminished quality of life for all of us. If the re-zoning application is granted, local citizens will no longer have any control over the use of this property as a landfill. Urge your commissioners to vote "NO" on re-zoning.

Celia Murray is a member of the Morgan County Democratic Party.

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