

Meyers Landfill: contractor sought, toxic plume moving

By Kathryn Reed



A settlement has not been reached, but resolution to the debacle known at the Meyers Landfill is getting closer.

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors will accept bids to cap the toxic site until Dec. 15, with the bid expected to be awarded Jan. 12.

The more than 20 acres of U.S. Forest Service land off Pioneer Trail on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe has sat idle for years after the county stopped using the property as a dump. When the Forest Service figured out gunk from the trash site had decomposed into a toxic mess that was leaching contaminants into the soil, it sued the county and a plethora of other entities.

That lawsuit has for years been mired in a bureaucratic mess. Much of the problem is centered on who is going to pay the clean-up costs.

“The Forest Service engineers’ estimate for the project is \$5.5 million; however, given the current bidding climate, it is highly likely that the bids will come in below that amount,” Supervisor Norma Santiago said. “This does not include ongoing operations and maintenance (O&M) which has been estimated by the USFS as \$1.1 million over a 30-year period. Who will pay for the O&M is still under the ongoing negotiations through the mediation process.”

Meetings with both sides have been taking place on a regular basis lately. Resolution is expected to come before supervisors award the bid in January so it's known where the money is coming from to pay for construction of the cap, installing surface drainage controls, and putting in passive landfill gas extraction and parameter monitor systems.

Part of the funding will be a \$750,000 grant the county received from the California Integrated Waste Management Board for the project.

Additional funding will be coming from settlement agreements that have been finalized during the course of the mediation," Santiago said.

Forest Service officials found out in November that the plume is moving. A series of wells were drilled with the one on Hekpa Drive showing low levels of vinyl chloride and other volatile organic compounds.

"It was about 160 feet down. There is no reason anyone would come in contact with it. No drinking wells or private wells are in the area," Forest Service spokeswoman Cheva Heck said.

Neighbors have been advised of the situation and offered one-on-one meetings with the Forest Service if they have questions.

"Sampling results from Saxon Creek did not detect vinyl chloride or other VOCs, and there is no danger of exposure due to contact with the water in the creek," Heck said.

More drilling will be necessary, most likely this winter, to establish the outer limits of the plume.