

DOJ explains Meyers Landfill settlement

To the community,

A settlement with El Dorado County will ensure the beginning of the cleanup, at an estimated cost of approximately \$7 million, of the Meyers Landfill Site, located outside of the city of South Lake Tahoe, the Justice Department and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service announced June 29.

The agreement, lodged in U.S. District Court in Sacramento, resolves certain federal claims against El Dorado County for clean up of the Meyers Landfill site. In addition, the agreement resolves certain counter-claims made by the county against the United States for cleanup of the site.

Under the settlement, El Dorado County will be responsible for consolidating the waste mass at the site and placing it under an impervious cap. The cap and associated drainage features around the cap will prevent the infiltration of precipitation and snowmelt into the landfill waste mass thus eliminating or significantly reducing additional groundwater contamination. A landfill gas venting and monitoring system will also be installed.

The U.S. Forest Service is continuing to investigate groundwater contamination related to the site. Several years of study will be required after the landfill cap is constructed to determine the effect on the groundwater, and what remedy may be required to address any remaining groundwater contamination.

The Meyers Landfill site is a former municipal waste dump and is located wholly on National Forest System lands administered by the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit of the U.S. Forest Service. The site is located in an unincorporated portion of

El Dorado County approximately 4.5 miles south of Lake Tahoe. The site was operated as a landfill from about 1946 through 1971 under a series of Forest Service special use permits that were issued to private parties and since 1955 to El Dorado County.

Between 1991 and 1994, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), likely produced by degradation of organic material within the landfill waste mass, were detected in the groundwater beneath the former landfill disposal area. In August 1996, VOCs, including vinyl chloride, were detected down gradient of the site, including in Saxon Creek, a tributary of Lake Tahoe. The Forest Service initiated a response action under the Superfund law or the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act to determine the extent and impacts of the VOC contamination, and in 2001 it filed litigation against El Dorado County and the city of South Lake Tahoe.

“This settlement outlines specific steps that will be taken to ensure that the contamination at the Meyers Landfill site will be cleaned up and contained,” said Ignacia S. Moreno, assistant attorney general for the Environment and Natural Resources Division. “It is important that we ensure that longstanding hazardous waste sites are cleaned up and our natural resources are protected.”

“We are excited for construction to begin on the ground; this project will provide for the long-term protection of public health and safety and water quality in the Lake Tahoe Basin,” said Eli Ilano, deputy forest supervisor, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit.

The partial consent decree, lodged in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California, in Sacramento, is subject to a 30-day public comment period and approval by the federal court. A copy of the partial consent decree is available on the Justice Department website.

U.S. Department of Justice