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Garbage solution trashed by critic

WASTE MANAGEMENT: With few places to turn to, politicians size up Burns Bog

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STAFF REPORTERS

Burns Bog could become the main dumping ground for Lower Mainland garbage.

Metro Vancouver's waste committee is advising the region's board to prepare to abandon the practice of trucking garbage to a landfill in the B.C. Interior.

Instead, the committee is urging the board to look at using Burns Bog in Delta as "the long-term residual waste-management facility for the region" after garbage is incinerated and converted from waste to energy.

The recommendation, approved yesterday by the waste committee, will be voted on by the full Metro Vancouver board on Friday.

"We have to take responsibility for our own garbage and not just shovel it away up-country to another community," said Delta Mayor Lois Jackson, who chairs the Metro Vancouver board.

"Vancouver still has huge capacity at its [Burns Bog] landfill."

But the proposal to use Burns Bog was blasted by Eliza Olson, president of the Burns Bog Conservation Society.

"It's a dumb idea," she said. "It's robbing Peter to pay Paul. Garbage is [already] destroying the bog."

"The last place garbage should be put is in wetlands. It reacts with the water and contaminates farms and the Fraser River."

Lower Mainland residents produce about three million tonnes of garbage annually, of which about 500,000 tonnes are trucked to the Cache Creek landfill and an equal amount is dumped at Burns Bog. Some is also burned at a facility in Burnaby.

The region finds itself in trash trouble because the current landfill at Cache Creek will be full by late next year or early in 2010. The search for an alternative to Cache Creek has been in the works for a decade.

Jackson said the committee is also suggesting that Metro Vancouver look at dumping some of the region's garbage in Washington state, where there is major landfill at Roosevelt along the Columbia River, south of Yakima.

Metro Vancouver wants to build several waste-to-energy facilities where trash is burned to produce power.

And it is pushing a Zero Waste Challenge to reduce what's thrown out and establish major composting facilities.

Building incinerators and composting facilities will take time, said waste committee chairman Marvin Hunt.

"The whole process is going to take another seven, eight years," he said.

But waste committee member Peter Ladner, a Vancouver councillor, is optimistic.

"It's a great day because we finally made a decision," said Ladner, who is also vice-chairman of the Metro Vancouver board.

"There are a lot more and difficult decisions ahead but at least we're narrowing down the options."

Incinerators use a multi-stage control system to reduce emissions.

Jackson said several small ones could be built around the Lower Mainland, or one large one could be built to serve everyone's needs.

GERRY KAHRMANN — THE
PROVINCE



Eliza Olson, Burns Bog Conservation Society president — seen yesterday at the entrance to the landfill — calls the politicians' proposed alternative to Cache Creek 'a dumb idea.' She says 'it's robbing Peter to pay Paul.'

The goal would be to increase the waste diverted from garbage from the current 52 per cent to 70 per cent through reduction, reuse and recycling.

The waste committee notes that the region's best hopes for two Interior landfill sites to replace Cache Creek have all but been blocked by native land claims.

A committee report said that Ashcroft Ranch, which was purchased by the Greater Vancouver Regional District in 2000 for \$4.5 million, and the Highland Valley sites "do not provide very realistic solutions unless there is support from First Nations."

With Cache Creek facing closure, Jackson said time has run out for the region.

"Hard decisions have to be made," she said.