

More garbage for Burns Bog

By Jeff Nagel - Surrey North Delta Leader - January 25, 2008



The rate of dumping at the Vancouver landfill – located in Burns Bog – is set to rise by 50 per cent under the region’s new garbage strategy.

EVAN SEAL THE LEADER

Metro Vancouver is set to abandon its \$10-million decade-long drive to develop a new landfill in B.C.’s Interior due to continued opposition from aboriginal bands there.

Instead, the region plans to export garbage to the U.S. and to boost the rate of dumping at the Vancouver Landfill in Burns Bog by about 50 per cent – at least over the short term.

Those are the immediate solutions officials intend to use to make up for the loss of the nearly full Cache Creek Regional Landfill. It handles 500,000 tonnes per year – one-third of the Metro Vancouver’s total waste – but will now close without a replacement in 2010.

By 2015, the plan is to open a series of high-tech incinerators that would turn waste into energy across the region.

“We have been going through this now for 10 years,” chief administrative officer Johnny Carline said of the landfill replacement effort. “It now seems to be an absolute dead end.”

The recommendation of Metro’s waste management committee Tuesday must still be adopted by the full board on Friday.

The region first wanted to expand the Cache Creek dump, but that was scuttled due to aboriginal protest.

It then bought the Ashcroft Ranch lands and sought to build the new landfill there.

But the province froze its environmental review of the project after natives claimed they weren't adequately consulted.

On Victoria's advice, Metro launched a fresh review of all options designed to ensure full aboriginal consultation. It found the only options that could go on line fast enough were Ashcroft, another landfill proposed at Highland Valley Copper's mine near Logan Lake, or exporting the waste out of province.

But the B.C. landfills would all require new lengthy environmental reviews.

And the province made it clear to Metro that as part of its New Relationship commitment any new landfill will need First Nations backing.

Hopes of any deal crashed when the Nlaka'pamux Nation Tribal Council, which claims both Ashcroft Ranch and the Highland Valley mine within its traditional territory, spelled out its opposition in a letter late last year.

Chief Bob Pasco said any authorization of a landfill on Nlaka'pamux land without the tribal council's consent "will be treated as an unlawful, bad-faith and dishonourable act by the province" and vowed to pursue "all measures" to block such a move.

"It would appear that the era of our Nation being the transportation corridor and dumping ground for Vancouver's garbage is over," he declared.

Continuing to pursue an inland landfill is likely futile, Metro officials concluded.

Cache Creek Mayor John Ranta appeared before the committee, urging them to continue to consider an expansion of the Cache Creek landfill, which he said would maintain local jobs and now has backing from the local Bonaparte band.

Coquitlam Coun. Fin Donnelly also favoured keeping that as an option, adding it would be far preferable than exporting waste to Allied Waste's Roosevelt Regional Landfill in southern Washington State.

"I abhor shipping our waste to somebody else's backyard," said Donnelly, the only director who voted against the committee recommendation. "I don't think the public will accept that option."

The regional district paid \$4.5 million for the 4,200-hectare Ashcroft Ranch, five per cent of which was to become the landfill.

Consultants, studies and housing upgrades to allow the ranch to keep running have boosted Metro's total cost there to more than \$10 million.

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