

Local firms' trash complex sparks battle close to PSU; Massive landfill, incinerator and industrial park generates fierce opposition and statewide attention.

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Opposition is stiffening to Lancaster County investors' plans to build a massive landfill-incinerator-industrial park complex on nearly 6,000 acres of abandoned strip mines in a remote part of Centre County.

"Who wants to be known as the dump town?" says Ed Hildebrand, a Narvon resident who built a log home for his retirement near the proposed mountaintop site.

"This area is kind of the gateway to the north woods," he said.

In Snow Shoe Township, where Hildebrand and other Lancaster County residents have built second homes on dream sites in the woods, supervisors are indicating they will reject rezoning next month for 3,714 acres that would be involved in the waste project.

Stirred by claims that the landfill would be the largest east of the Mississippi River, up to 500 residents have shown up at each of a series of public meetings there.

The gatherings have been so crowded, some people have had to stand outside and listen through windows.

Residents have been so strident that at one meeting last week, the developers who were trying to explain their "economic development" package packed up their easels and left.

But about half of the 5,840 acres targeted for the project is in neighboring Rush Township. There is no zoning there, and supervisors have already approved a "host" agreement with the project developers in which the township would get around \$1.44 million a year, depending on how much municipal and industrial waste is brought in from New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Officials for the Mountville-based developers, Resource Recovery LLC, say they think they can compress the project onto Rush Township's 2,126 acres, if need be.

Resource Recovery is headed by Edward Abel, who owns the Abel Companies, a group of demolition and construction companies based in Mountville.

Abel, a York County resident, has been seeking new ventures and a few years ago opened a nationally recognized golf course near Havre de Grace, Md.

Resource Recovery's executive vice president is Herbert Flosdorf, of Lititz, who established Lancaster County's waste-to-energy incinerator and current waste-management system as former head of the Lancaster County Solid Waste Management Authority.

Both Flosdorf and Abel refused to name other partners in the venture, expected to cost in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

The cost of a proposed new interchange to Interstate 80 to handle out-of-state trash truck traffic and keep trucks off local roads is estimated at \$10 million to \$40 million, alone.

The 5,840 acres on which Resource Recovery has a purchase option are owned by the estates of the Clark family, former owners of Dutch Wonderland, and Carlos Leffler, who founded a well-known fuel company based in Mount Joy.

Brad Clark, a spokesman for the estates, said this morning that the families are not financial partners in the waste project.

The families bought the land years ago for coal, timber, oil and gas speculation. Except for timbering, it has sat mostly vacant and unused, Clark said. Resource Recovery officials, who did not want to be quoted, say the spot-polluted, unpopulated and near a major transportation highway - is "almost an ideally suited property" for the wave of the future in waste disposal.

The trend in waste management is for fewer but larger landfills, a company official said. He said there are

about 80 landfills in Pennsylvania and most will close within the next decade.

Resource Recovery's project would be a bold venture in which as much of the waste as possible would be recycled and turned into energy.

The energy would power innovative companies eager to build at the site to take advantage of the resources, the official said.

The complex would include a waste-to-energy incinerator and a processing area to recycle tires, plastics, wood and metals.

Decomposition would be encouraged in the landfill, and resulting methane gas and carbon dioxide would be harnessed.

Acid mine drainage that is polluting local trout streams would be largely halted. The property, nearly 3 miles wide, would be all but invisible outside the buffer area, and trash trucks would not have to travel on public roads, officials said.

An old railroad could be revived to bring in trash. The plan is for the landfill to operate for 150 years.

But opponents fear pollution and odors and say the surrounding area already generates millions of dollars for the local economy through hunting, fishing and a 19-mile rail-trail that's a mecca for all-terrain vehicles.

If the project developers go forward, an extensive approval process by the state Department of Environmental Protection would be required, including a harms-benefits study.