

## **Bay Area Garbage Could Pile Up Near Winnemucca Proposal to ship Bay Area garbage to Humboldt County is meeting resistance from Winnemucca residents.**

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Reporter: Ed Pearce: KOLO TV, Reno NV

There is nothing to distinguish a section of land on Jungo Flat west of Winnemucca. Nothing to set this piece of high desert playa apart from the land for miles in either direction.

It's adjacent to the Union Pacific rail tracks. There's a geothermal plant and some alfalfa fields a few miles away and a surprising amount of traffic on the gravel road that runs parallel to the tracks. The nearest civilization is 28 miles or so to the east at Winnemucca.

Not everyone sees value in this landscape and to some this may seem an ideal place for waste no one else wants. To those who live nearby that's missing the point.

"I would argue that the high desert is just as pristine and just as valuable relative to the qualities it affords the public as anything that has a Ponderosa or Jeffrey pine on it," argues Winnemucca resident and retired Department of Wildlife employee Jim French.

Recology---a California firm operating landfills in the Golden State--is seeking permission to build a landfill here. Four thousand tons of waste, 5 days a week arriving by rail. It won't be coming from Winnemucca or even from elsewhere in Nevada. It will be coming from the Bay Area. If built, an artificial hill of waste would rise here, more than 200 feet high. Over decades fifty eight metric tons of waste.

"In three days out there they would be putting more garbage into that proposed landfill than our garbage facility processes in a whole year," says Winnemucca resident Annie Drake, a housewife who's been transformed into an activist by the idea. "This is out of my comfort zone," she notes.

Tami Vetter agrees. "Six months ago I'd never have believed I'd be spending my time researching landfills. I'm passionate about this. This is my home, not somebody's garbage dump."

Vetter, Drake and others have formed a committee, Nevadans Against Garbage, and they are circulating petitions and raising awareness.

The campaign is getting results. A hearing last week before state environmental officials drew a standing room only crowd and they came armed with a lot of questions.

Most have only learned about the landfill in the past few weeks, but in fact it's been in the works for 4 years and received a conditional special use permit from the county's regional

planning commission in 2007. More recently state Environmental Protection Division staffers have been approving the site's air quality stats.

Recology officials are puzzled by the late public response, noting the approval by the regional planners got front page treatment in the local paper two years ago. They say they're following all the rules and have a record of being a good corporate neighbor.

Still, on one level they're not surprised at the reaction they're getting. For people in the landfill business it comes with the territory.

"Nobody wants to be near them," admits Recology President and CEO Mike Sangiacomo. "So you try to find remote places like the Jungo Road area. There aren't any residents anywhere near there."

But those 28 miles don't seem to be far enough for Winnemucca residents who enjoy the high desert beyond town limits there are worries about impacts on air and water quality, the county's image, even sage grouse strutting grounds. The questions and concerns mount.

Tami Vetter says she knows a lot more about the subject now than she did weeks ago. "The more I learn about the hazards and ill effects of landfills the more unsettled I become,"

Residents who feel otherwise are hard to find, but the few we've found argue landfills are heavily regulated and not to be feared and they see possible positive economic impacts should the waste site be built.

In part two of "Somebody's Backyard: The Politics of Waste" we'll take a look at what the Jungo Waste Site would look like by visiting a rural California county whose Recology site could be the next to receive waste from the Bay Area.

For those expecting your average city dump and all that implies, there may be a surprise or two.