

SCVNews.com | Chiquita Landfill Plans to Expand Footprint by 50%

Operational acreage at the Chiquita Canyon Landfill would expand by 50 percent to accommodate the future solid waste disposal needs of the Santa Clarita Valley and other Southland communities under a plan filed with the county.

The Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning published a “notice of preparation,” or NOP, on Nov. 28, and the public has until Jan. 4 to comment on it. The first in a series of planning documents, the NOP calls for the drafting of an environmental impact report, which will have its own public-comment period at a later date. Thus, hearings before the Regional Planning Commission and ultimately the Board of Supervisors are several months away.

In the meantime, county planning staffers will conduct an initial scoping meeting Tuesday in Val Verde to discuss the NOP and determine whether the document identifies all of the areas of concern that the public thinks the eventual EIR should address.

The meeting will be held Tuesday, Dec. 6, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Val Verde Park clubhouse.

The landfill property is situated north of State Route 126 from Wolcott Way to Chiquita Canyon Road, with the U.S. Postal Service processing center on one side and the community of Val Verde on the other.

Landfill owner Waste Connections Inc. of Folsom uses 257 acres of the property for disposal operations and is seeking to expand the footprint by 124 acres.

The last time the landfill expanded was in 1997. The facility was operated by Laidlaw and the expansion drew fire from Val Verde activists who were concerned primarily with sludge and blowing debris.

The upshot was an equally controversial settlement when the Val Verde Civic Association agreed to accept royalty payments.

Under the 22-year agreement – signed by property owner Newhall Land and Farming Co., Laidlaw, the Civic Association and a representative of a group called Citizens Against the Chiquita Canyon Landfill Expansion – Laidlaw and Newhall Land agreed to pay into a Val Verde Community Benefits Fund.

Payments to the fund were to be on a graduating scale and would equal \$250,000 or more in any year the landfill received and processed more than 250,000 tons of trash. (The landfill usually processes 1.5 million tons per year. It can accept up to 6,000 tons per day or 30,000 tons per week.) The money was to be used for a variety of amenities ranging from Head Start-type early education programs and vocational training to increased library services and midnight basketball.

As part of the agreement, the Civic Association was barred from using any part of the money to malign “the good name or activities” of Newhall Land or the landfill operator or their successor companies.

While the Civic Association is still active and the Community Benefits Fund is managed by an independent committee, nobody who signed the 1997 agreement is around any more.

According to state records, the 39-year-old landfill handled 1.54 million tons of trash in 2007, 1.5 million in 2008 and just 688,000 tons in 2009, the last year for which records were immediately available.

In 2009, Santa Clarita was responsible for 94,326 of the 688,000 tons. Unincorporated Los Angeles County sent 68,290 tons.

The biggest jurisdiction to send trash to Chiquita that year – 335,521 tons – was the Los Angeles Area Integrated Waste Management Authority, a consortium of Artesia, Beverly Hills, Duarte, Hermosa Beach,



Jesus Vega runs the new power plant at the Chiquita Canyon Landfill. It turns methane gas into electricity for the cities of Burbank and Pasadena.

Hidden Hills, Los Angeles, Lynwood, Manhattan Beach, Palos Verdes Estates, Pomona, Rancho Palos Verdes, Redondo Beach, Rosemead, Sierra Madre, South Gate and Torrance.

Next were Culver City, Burbank and San Fernando, while other parts of Los Angeles, Ventura and Orange Counties sent lesser amounts.

“Alternative daily cover” – ash, shredded autos, construction waste, compost, contaminated soils, foam, geosyn blanket, green material, tires and other non-earthen materials placed on the surface of the landfill each day to control odor, blowing litter, fire, disease-carrying insects and scavenging animals – came primarily from Anaheim in 2009 (92,645 tons). Another 38,396 tons came from L.A.’s waste management authority. Santa Clarita sent just 422 tons and unincorporated L.A. County sent 445 tons in 2009.

Sludge hasn’t been an issue because it was forbidden under the 1997 agreement. Air quality standards have gotten more rigid since that time, and the landfill expansion would potentially violate current state clean-air rules, according to the new NOP.