

Coyote Landfill to be monitored

Santa Rosa officials expect oversight to start next week

Carmen Paige

Santa Rosa County Health Department officials expect to begin monitoring the air around the Coyote Landfill next week.

"We are waiting for the air-monitoring equipment to come in," said Bill Sirmans, environmental manager for the Health Department. "We plan to mount one machine at a resident's house who lives within a couple of lots of the landfill and take a portable machine to the hot spots."

Holley-Navarre residents living near the construction and demolition debris disposal facility on Five Forks Road filed a class-action lawsuit last summer against the Coyote Land Co. seeking legal relief and monetary damages.

In the lawsuit, residents claim the 37-acre landfill, which began operating in 2001, has caused pollution of off-site air, groundwater and soil, as well as odors. Residents said they are being exposed to toxic and noxious odors.

Nancy Grieshop, who lives southeast of the landfill, said the smell is not as strong in the winter.

"We still get some nasty, foul odors. But it's wintertime, and that means the air has changed," she said. "I'll start getting the bad air again come spring, which is when it seems to really get potent."

Officials with the Coyote Landfill did not return calls.

John Warren, the landfill's manager, has said he hopes environmental studies will reveal other possible sources -- such as neighboring active and inactive landfills -- of residents' health concerns.

In September, Santa Rosa County commissioners placed a six-month moratorium on new construction and demolition debris pits so they could tighten regulatory measures for the facilities. Possible changes to ordinances were presented Tuesday night during a public workshop.

Robert Grant of Navarre said the landfill was 400 feet from his front door, forcing him to move.

Grant was not in favor of a recommendation to have setbacks for construction and demolition debris disposal and land-clearing debris disposal facilities at 100 feet from residential areas.

"The setback should be a mile," he said. "There is no reason to put something 200 feet from someone's front door."

Sirmans said the air monitoring could take up to a month. Then state health officials will examine the data.

No trial date has been set for the class-action lawsuit.