

## Santa Rosa health study money OK'd

Residents: Landfill causing some illnesses

Louis Cooper

Santa Rosa County has committed up to \$15,000 to study the health of people living near Coyote Landfill at Holley/Navarre, as well as test the air and groundwater in the area for pollution.

The County Commission unanimously approved the allocation Thursday, a total that anticipates \$5,000 from the landfill's owner.

The tests will measure benzene, hydrogen sulfide, arsenic and particulate matter, all substances that can cause health problems.

Residents near the site say they have tolerated a foul smell and suffered respiratory problems, upset stomachs and dizziness since the landfill caught fire in October.

The money will be used by the county Health Department to develop a health-screening program for those living near the facility, test water wells in the area, and hire a consultant to conduct air-quality sampling around the site.

A recent door-to-door environmental health survey, conducted by residents and analyzed by the Health Department, showed people living less than a mile from the Coyote Landfill had more symptoms than people living between one and two miles away.

Bill Kolb, who lives near the landfill, said he was pleased with the commission's action, but he hopes the county will stick with consultant Wilma Subra, a Louisiana-based expert who has worked with the Escambia Treating Co. Superfund site in Pensacola.

"She has been working with us already," Kolb said. "She helped us put the air-quality testing program together."

County Administrator Hunter Walker said the county will make every effort to work with Subra, but Commissioner Gordon Goodin said that will depend on her availability.

"There's more than one consultant we can go to," Goodin said. "We're going to get one that's qualified, but we're (also) going to get the one we can get the quickest."

John Warner, manager of the landfill, told the commission at its Monday committee meeting that his company is willing to contribute \$5,000 to the effort. However, he wanted the consultant to be chosen by a three-person panel: someone from his company, someone from the county and an impartial expert.

On Thursday, he said he's not comfortable with someone who has a relationship with the neighbors.

"We want a nonbiased firm that has no connection to our company, the citizens or the county," he said.