

Lawsuit filed against Coyote Landfill

Plaintiffs say site polluting area, is harmful to health

Louis Cooper

A group of Holley-Navarre residents has filed a lawsuit against a landfill they say is polluting their neighborhood's air and water and harming the health of those living nearby.

A group of 83 people who reside near Coyote Landfill filed suit Monday in Santa Rosa County Circuit Court, seeking unspecified monetary damages.

The lawsuit alleges the landfill's owner has "recklessly and negligently operated" the facility since operations began in 2001, resulting in "off-site air, groundwater, soil and odor pollution."

The suit seeks to prohibit the landfill from accepting any new materials that could pollute the environment; it also seeks to force the owner to study the extent of area pollution since 2001 and remove the source of pollution.

"We have been working on this problem for 10 months (since a fire broke out at the landfill)," said Bruce "Zeke" Grieshop, one of the plaintiffs. "There are a lot of people getting sick."

John Warren, manager of the landfill, said he had not seen the suit as of late Monday.

"We knew one was going to be filed," he said. "I don't know how to respond since I don't know what the allegations are."

A door-to-door environmental health survey, conducted by residents and analyzed by the Santa Rosa County Health Department, showed people living less than a mile from the Coyote Landfill had more adverse health symptoms than people living between 1 and 2 miles away. Complaints included respiratory problems, nausea and other gastrointestinal problems and dizziness.

The Santa Rosa County Commission voted Aug. 10 to allocate up to \$15,000 to conduct health and environmental studies near the site. That's in addition to a \$25,000 grant the Health Department received to study the situation.

The lawsuit asserts that the landfill has polluted the plaintiffs' properties with smoke and odors, as well as arsenic, benzene, hydrogen sulfide, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide and other toxic chemicals.

The neighbors allege the landfill was cited seven times by the state Department of Environmental Protection for illegally disposing of solid waste in water, illegally burning solid waste and for failing to submit required reports.