



# County of Santa Cruz 567

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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JOHN A. FANTHAM  
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS

AGENDA: MARCH 23, 1999

March 11, 1999

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

701 Ocean Street  
Santa Cruz, California 95060

SUBJECT: BUENA VISTA LANDFILL SOIL MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Members of the Board,

On October 20, 1998, your Board approved a revised Coastal Zone Permit for the Buena Vista Landfill Soil Management Project. This permit was revised at the direction of the California Coastal Commission during their August 13, 1998, hearing on this matter. The revised conditions of approval contained within this permit were the result of negotiations conducted between County staff, and representatives from the California Coastal Commission, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Fish and Game, and the Buena Vista Community Association (BVCA). Of primary concern to the California Coastal Commission (CACC) was the level of biotic mitigation for the project. The permit approved by your Board on October 20, 1998, reflected an expanded biotic mitigation plan cooperatively agreed upon by representatives from the above resource agencies.

However, BVCA was not fully satisfied with the conditions of the revised permit and again filed a second appeal with the CACC. The second appeal was heard before the CACC on December 8, 1998. At that hearing the CACC directed Public Works to complete analysis of an additional alternative that would utilize the Watsonville landfill expansion site for the soil storage project. Condition of approval A. 12, in the Board approved Coastal Zone Permit for this project, called for Public Works to complete this analysis of dividing soil storage between the sites, as a means to reduce the impacts on the County permitted project site, "Rocha site." The CACC further expanded the scope of this analysis to include studying the feasibility of using the Watsonville site as a stand-alone soil storage project, excluding use of the Rocha site altogether. On January 21, 1999, the Watsonville City Council authorized staff to provide the County with information and assistance in completing this analysis.

A copy of the Watsonville Site Alternatives Analysis is on file with the Clerk of the Board as required by the CACC and under permit condition A. 12. The Watsonville site is a technically feasible alternative based on the available information. However, based on several environmental factors, the Watsonville alternative is not as attractive as the project on the Rocha property, Biotic resource impacts are the most significant differences between the Watsonville site alternatives and the County-approved Rocha site. Biotic impacts associated with the necessary access between the two facilities are far more substantial in terms of the quality and quantity of biotic habitat being impacted by the project. Air quality impacts are greater under all the Watsonville site alternatives, some of which would exceed local and State air quality limits for dust emissions. Use of the Watsonville site is an estimated \$2,700,000 higher in cost than the Rocha site project and would reduce valuable staff and financial resources better utilized for public recycling and waste diversion programs required to meet State mandates. Noise impacts, while not fully quantified, may also be an issue under some of the alternatives considered. A benefit of the Watsonville site alternative would be reduction in agricultural impacts, as the Watsonville site is no longer zoned for agriculture. Increase in the landfill's operational expense and reduction in staff resources for public service programs will also occur under each of the alternatives considered.

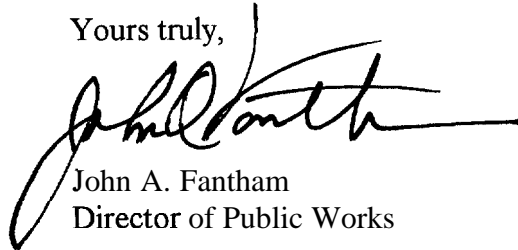
Timing for development of a new project is also important. This essential public service project is needed to extend the useful life of the landfill. Changing the course of this project at this time will impose a financial burden on the solid waste enterprise fund and require a new round of environmental review and permit processes with an undefinable timetable. The County has already incurred an estimated \$500,000 in unanticipated landfill development costs due to the many delays in finalizing this project. The soil storage project construction must commence by the end of 1999 to preclude additional impacts to the solid waste system. There does not appear to be sufficient time remaining to complete a new round of EIR development and re-permitting needed for a new alternative project site.

This project has been in the public review process since release of the draft EIR in November 1996. Since this time the project has undergone an extensive public review process including four public hearings before the County Planning Commission, two public workshops, three public hearings before the County Board of Supervisors, three public hearings before the California Coastal Commission (including the April 1999 hearing), and numerous meetings with resource agency representatives and Buena Vista Community Association representatives. The result of this extensive public review process is a better project. As documented in previous project correspondence, numerous modifications have been made to the project in order to address expressed concerns from both the resource agencies and BVCA. Extensive reviews have been conducted on every reasonable project alternative throughout this public review process. The review of alternatives for this project has far exceeded the legal requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act. The review of the Watsonville site alternatives has been completed at the request of the California Coastal Commission and as required under the pending Coastal Zone Permit, condition of approval A. 12. Based on the results of this alternative review and those preceding it, the Rocha site project, as approved by your Board on October 20, 1998, continues to be the most feasible and least environmentally damaging alternative.

It is therefore recommended that the Board of Supervisors take the following actions:

1. Accept and file this report on the Buena Vista Landfill Soil Management Project.
2. Direct the Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors to draft a letter to the California Coastal Commission acknowledging the Board's continuing approval of the **Rocha** site as the most feasible and least environmentally damaging alternative for the Buena Vista Soil Storage Project.

Yours truly,



John A. Fantham  
Director of Public Works

RPM:mg

Attachment

RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL:

*Acting*   
County Administrative Officer

- copy to:
- California Coastal Commission (w/a)
  - David Koch, City of Watsonville (w/a)
  - Buena Vista Community Association, c/o Jonathan Wittwer (w/a)
  - County Counsel (w/a)
  - Ray Dodson, Public Works (w/a)
  - Kim Tschantz, Planning Department (w/a)
  - Ana Demorest, CH2M Hill (w/a)