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Groups oppose waste site proposal

Environmentalists say area becoming haven for hazardous waste

From Associated Press and Staff Reports

ROSWELL — Environmental groups are gearing up for a fight over a proposed hazardous waste disposal and treatment facility about 40 miles east of Roswell.

Around the state this week, the state Environment Department is holding public meetings as part of its consideration of an operating permit for the facility, which has been dubbed "Triassic Park." The facility would be buried in rock beds formed during the Triassic period.

But environmentalists see the facility as part of a pattern, which includes the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant and a low-level radioactive dump near Eunice, that is overburdening the area with waste facilities as a solution to deteriorated economic conditions.

"That whole corner of the state, we're calling it the toxic mall," said Joni Arends, director of Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety, an environmental group opposing the facility. "They're calling it Triassic Park, but this is a toxic dump, not an amusement park."

Gandy-Marley Inc. officials, who have applied for the permit, say no aquifer exists there, and thick layers of rock would hold disposal bins in place and keep them from leaking.

Environmentalists cite 491 toxic industrial compounds, including leads, mercuries, DDT, arsenic, PCBs, strychnines and benzenes, they say would threaten the health, safety and environment of local ranching and Mexican communities.

Information from Dexter's Conservative Use of Resources and the Environment says up to 42,000 tons of each of these compounds would be dumped each year the facility is open, which is estimated to be at least 25

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years.

The facility would also have 5.2 million-gallon evaporation ponds that would release toxic chemicals, environmentalists say, and 50,000 gallons of water a day would be used, mostly to control dust.

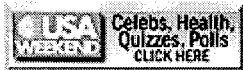
CURE's Victor Blaire contends there has not been adequate notification of this week's meetings. He is also concerned the permit that is being considered suffers from technical flaws and because of its complexity, is inaccessible to the public, especially since it's not available in Spanish.

CCNS and CURE, which works in opposition to nuclear and hazardous waste dumps in the Southwest, are joined by the Water Information Network in advocating against the Roswell-area facility.

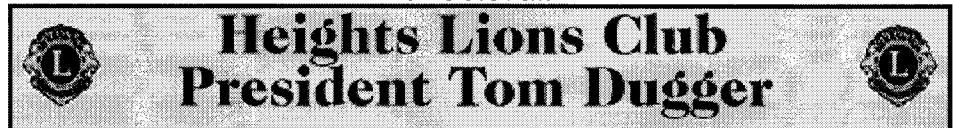
This week's meetings will be held in Santa Fe, Roswell, Tatum and Hagerman. A community meeting will also be held in Hagerman at 5 p.m., Thursday, at the elementary school before the 7 p.m. state meeting.



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