

Waste disposal

by STARR MOORE

Battalion Reporter
Garbage is a problem for most societies, but in Brazos County, disposing of it is particularly nasty.

Politicians have a problem maintaining sanitary landfills. Environmentalists have a problem deciding whether a landfill is the best means of disposing of solid waste. And rural residents have a problem getting their garbage to a landfill.

A sanitary landfill is a piece of land where solid wastes are dumped, compacted and covered.

Brazos County has four of these sites, one used by College Station, one by Bryan, one by the county and one by Texas A&M University.

The College Station landfill, two miles south of the city limits, may only be used by residents of the city and those builders who have generated their waste in College Station.

However, the builders must pay a fee of \$2 for a truck load of solid waste and \$5 for a load larger than truck size.

Bryan's landfill site on Sandy Point Road off of FM 2818 may be used free by residents of Bryan and for a fee by all other residents of Brazos County. \$1 for a pickup truck load, \$2 for a trailer that is 8 feet and under, \$3.50 for a trailer 8 to 16 feet long and \$6.25 for a trailer over 16 feet.

The University's landfill is off FM 2818 on the West Bypass beyond

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Easterwood Airport, and may be used only by the University and those builders working on the campus who have a contract with the University which allows them to dump their waste for a fee.

The county landfill in Millican may be used by all residents and builders of Brazos County at no charge.

However, Millican is 16 miles one way from the south end of Bryan.

"Millican is very, very inconvenient," former county commissioner Randy Sims said.

He said if it were convenient it would be too close to those who live near the site. In other words, people need landfills and want them to be convenient, but don't want them near their homes.

Sims said a landfill site was to be opened west of town off Jones Road about five years ago, but was never approved because the local land owners objected.

Donald S. Foster, who owned 780 acres near Jones Road at that time, said: "I'm glad we were able to block it. ... Very few people want that by their land."

But, Sims said, the proposed site was to have been leased from a man who was getting no use out of the land at that time.

He said it was gully land that could have been productive soil when the life of the landfill was over, which would have been in about five years.

Landfills fill in gully land and cover it with a new surface, allowing the land to be used for a variety of purposes, often playgrounds, parks and golf courses.

County Commissioner Bill J.

Cooley said the real problem in establishing a landfill is getting a permit from the Texas Department of Health to operate one.

The people within the immediate area of the proposed site must be notified by the Department of Health and invited to attend a public hearing concerning the matter.

He said the soil must be fairly impermeable, the site must not be too close to a river or underground water supply, the site must be out of the way to the flood plains and the site must be far enough from airport runways so birds hovering over the site won't create a traffic problem for airplanes.

Cooley said it's possible to satisfy all these requirements and then find the land is too expensive for the county to purchase.

Cooley said proper maintenance is almost as difficult as obtaining a permit.

"I don't care how well you run them, how well you police them, you're going to have undesirable traffic. You're going to have odors, rats, birds," he said.

Cooley said that like sewer plants, landfills are not glamorous, but are needed.

He also said funds are needed to maintain landfills properly, but county government does not have the power to assess fees.

"Landfill operation is a county function and should be a tax-supported function instead of a fee supported function," Cooley said.

He said the County Commissioners' Court used to set aside a fund of \$15,000 a year, which provided for an employee to work a 40-hour week to police the area.

Now Cooley has to use money

from his road and bridge fund to pay for the maintenance of the present landfill.

There is often no one there and garbage cannot be properly separated, he said.

"Landfills are not a very popular thing in this courthouse," he said. "I'm probably the only county commissioner that favors county involvement in sanitary landfills."

He said he pioneered the site at Millican, which is in his precinct and serves the whole county.

He said the south part of the county where Millican is situated is the fastest growing part of the county,

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and the people he represents demand an operating landfill. Sooner or later, the other four commissioners will have to face the fact more landfills are needed, he said.

However, County Commissioner Walter W. Wilcox said it's hard to help people in the rural areas if they won't help themselves. He said they want a landfill, but not near their homes.

Wilcox said the reason the landfill fund, which came out of the county commissioners' expenditures, was withdrawn was because the landfill was not managed to its fullest. He said the equipment was neglected and torn up.

Wilcox said Cooley can "keep it up however he can—it's his problem... he can close it, charge for it or make it pay for itself."

Dr. Kirk Brown, associate profes-

sor of soil and crops sciences at Texas A&M, said the problem does not concern landfills — it is landfills.

"Landfills are an abomination," he said. "We are building a time bomb for future generations."

He said all products of modern society will end in a landfill where they will slowly digest under anaero-

bic conditions (absence of oxygen) which produce the most mobile and toxic substances.

Also, he said, no buildings should be constructed on top of these sites for fear of explosion if any harmful gases have seeped to the surface.

Brown said two years ago in Niagara Falls, N.Y., groundwaters

became polluted from a landfill and seeped into the basements of homes and the playgrounds of schools which had been built over the site. It created a high level of disease, death and birth defects.

"Sanitary landfills are not sanitary at all," Brown said.

Brown said that at the Millican

site, drainage water leaks into a stream which eventually empties into the Brazos River.

The two major alternatives to landfills are incineration and recycling of solid waste — both more expensive than the landfill system.

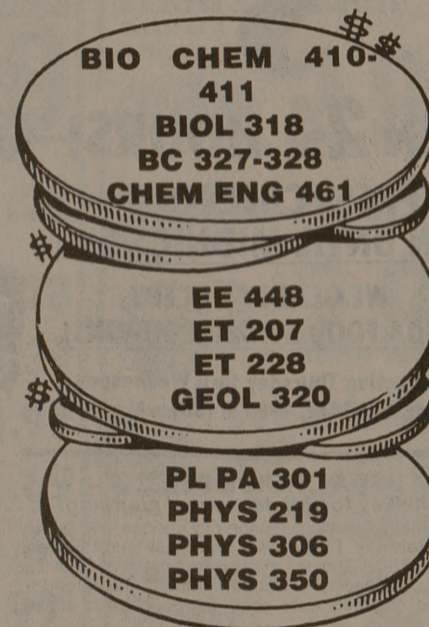
When these landfills are full, new sites will have to be found and approved.

Landfills a problem in themselves

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