

GUDE LANDFILL CONCERNED CITIZENS
15461 INDIANOLA DRIVE
DERWOOD, MD 20855

Testimony Before the Montgomery County Council
January 22, 2009

Good evening, my name is Julia Tillery.

Since County officials can't or won't tell you what's leaking at the Gude Landfill, we will. Cyanide, lead, mercury, benzene, and 24 other toxic substances are oozing from the landfill at levels so high, the EPA says they exceed the Maximum Contamination Limits--sometimes by TEN FOLD.¹

This came as quite a shock to us in the neighborhood. We just got the lab data.

Not the County. They've watched these lab results come in year, after year, after year. Local officials say it's O.K., as long as we don't drink it.² You heard them say as much tonight. The creek near the landfill feeds Rock Creek; both are contaminated³. Eventually, toxins flow into the Chesapeake, leaving our community. That's pollution control in Montgomery County Maryland. And that's why we went to the State, to get action.

We live next to a landfill with waste TEN Stories high⁴, producing lots of landfill gas. The County captures some of the gas, but estimates that 40% of it---simply escapes⁵.

Methane, carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulfide, these are things you do NOT want to inhale. The County is buying a two million-dollar engine to convert a small portion of gas into energy. We

¹Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, lab analysis of monitoring wells, 2001 to 2008.

²Stephen Lezinski, Peter Karasik, Montgomery County DEP, Letter to Nick Radonic, President Derwood Station South Homeowners Association, October 20, 2008, p. 4

³Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, Rock Creek Watershed Restoration Action Plan, July 2001

⁴Montgomery County Maryland Smart Growth Initiative Background Information, <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/puitmpl.asp?url=/content/exec/cpus/gude.asp>

⁵Peter Karasik, Montgomery County DEP, Letter to Royce Hanson, Montgomery County Planning Board, October 31, 2008, p. 1

asked for scrubbers, and filters, because the engine will add dioxins and other particulates to the air we breathe. The County admits that, but won't buy scrubbers or filters, because, we were told, toxins in the gas won't damage the machinery⁶. Our health? Not relevant.



The County needs to park 500 school buses⁷, to clear space for a park for future residents, and Gude Landfill looks good. Our community has been waiting for a park at the landfill for decades⁸. Instead, we could get pollution equivalent to 57-THOUSAND cars⁹, that's according to the EPA, not the Internet. The emissions are heavier than air; they'll roll right down the hill, and right into our homes.

What about the methane? Experts tell us it turns buses into sources of ignition¹⁰. That's from the University of Maryland, not the Internet.

What about all the chemicals? Is each bus going to be decontaminated as it leaves the landfill? Or is someone going to tell parents cyanide at ten times the limit is O.K.?

One official tells us the County will do something with the toxic hazards, WHEN IT BUILDS a bus depot. That is not acceptable.

⁶Peter Karasik, Montgomery County DEP, Letter to Royce Hanson, Montgomery County Planning Board, October 31, 2008, p 2, 3.

⁷David Dise, Director, Montgomery County Department of General Services, e-mail to Julia Tillery, January 20, 2009.

⁸Upper Rock Creek Master Plan Approved & Adopted, April 1961, updated July 2004.

⁹Governor Christine Todd Whitman, Administrator, U.S. EPA, remarks at Pin Oaks Middle School, Bellaire, TX, May 27, 2003. *"In fact, I've seen one estimate that suggests that one school bus here in Texas emits as much soot in one year as 114 cars."* 500 (buses) multiplied by 114 (cars) = 57,000 cars.

¹⁰Dr. Gary K. Felton, Environmental Science and Technology, University of Maryland, e-mail to Julia Rockler Tillery, October 10, 2008. *"There have been examples of compaction and traffic on a landfill causing methane to re-route and collect, leading to an explosion. I do have some concerns about putting a bus parking lot on the landfill. This is essentially making sure that there is an ignition source in close proximity to a methane source. Furthermore, traffic on a tarmac will cause dynamic loading on the landfill, which has the potential to release methane."*

In the last few weeks, most of you have seen the feasibility study that had been kept quiet. It says the County should look elsewhere because it would be far too costly, and there are far too many problems at the Gude Landfill¹¹. The State of Maryland warns that developing the landfill could make a bad situation, WORSE¹². That is not acceptable.

We don't need another study, to tell us what the first study makes very clear. And we don't need to waste more money on a terribly ill-conceived idea.

What we do need, is for our public officials to take a stand, and take action to protect us from the toxic waste NOW. We need a clear demonstration that Montgomery County puts our health and safety first.

¹¹SCS Engineers, Feasibility Study to Relocate County Facilities to Gude Landfill, November 2, 2007, Revised August 21, 2008

¹²Ed Dexter, Administrator, Solid Waste Program, Maryland Department of the Environment, e-mail to Peter Karasik, October 18, 2007.