

## Long battle over: DeWitt County OKs landfill agreement



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CLINTON — The DeWitt County Board approved an agreement Thursday that ends a long and expensive dispute with owners of the Clinton Landfill over whether to store toxic waste in the facility that rests over the Mahomet Aquifer, a source of drinking water for much of Central

Illinois.

The County Board voted 11-2 for a settlement with Clinton Landfill Inc., which is owned by Peoria Disposal. Under the agreement, the county will be paid a little more than \$1 million in previously unpaid tipping fees, and the company cancels any plans to bring polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) industrial waste to its DeWitt County landfill.

The County Board and Peoria Disposal also approved a new host agreement that includes a slightly lower per-ton tipping fee to be paid to the county. The fee went from a graduated scale with a top rate of about \$3.50 a ton to a flat fee of about \$2.50 a ton.

While the per-ton fee was reduced, the county still should net about \$1 million a year because of an anticipated increase in volume, according to landfill lawyer Brian Meginnes. That is about what it collected under the previous agreement, which lapsed last year as part of the ongoing permit dispute.

The proposal to store PCBs at the facility south of Clinton has drawn growing opposition from residents of Central Illinois since it initially was put forward in 2008. Last year, then-Gov. Pat Quinn ordered the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to rescind its permit for the waste plan, and the U.S. EPA dropped its consideration of a permit based upon the state's action.

After the election last fall replaced some of the strongest opponents of the permit on the County Board, the landfill company approached the county about resolving the legal divide.

“The company decided after seven years that sometimes it’s smarter to move on and take a new direction. We decided it wasn’t really worth it,” said the lawyer.

DeWitt County State’s Attorney Dan Markwell explained the terms of the agreement to the board.

The two board members who opposed the settlement — Sherry Brown and Terry Hoffman — unsuccessfully proposed postponing a vote on the issue until the agreement was placed on public display for a month.

Doug Graves, a member of the Mahomet Valley Aquifer Authority, praised the county for its actions.

“It’s been a long struggle for all of us. I think the appropriate thing is being done,” said Graves.

Bill Spencer, president of WATCH (We’re Against Toxic Chemicals), a grass-roots group organized to oppose PCB storage at the landfill, said he still has issues with the settlement and wanted more public input before its approval. Spencer said, however, he was pleased the group’s objective had been achieved.

“I’m really happy that people pulled together and expressed their feelings. The people wore them out,” said Spencer, who plans to continue working on waste-related issues.

Clinton Landfill Inc. will focus its efforts of municipal waste and recycling, said Meginnes.

“We’d like to put this behind us,” he said.