



Resolution blocked over dredging spoils

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A member of the Saginaw County Board of Commissioners has blocked a vote on a resolution declaring a future disposal site off-limits to anything but dredging spoils from the Saginaw River.

Tim Novak, a Carrollton Township Democrat who introduced the resolution, vowed the 15 members of the board would face the issue again.

"This isn't the last time that we'll see this," Novak said. "The public needs to know what's going into that facility."

The site, known as the Dredge Materials Disposal Facility, straddles Frankenlust Township in Bay County and Zilwaukee Township in Saginaw County, part of which is in Novak's district.

Commissioner Carl E. Ruth, a Saginaw Democrat, using "commissioner's privilege" to send an item to committee, blocked a vote without explanation. Ruth later said it was to give commissioners more time to find out about environmentalists' concerns that Dow Chemical Co. might use the site. Novak wants to assure residents no hazardous or toxic contaminants outside the river shipping channel go into the site, which is now under construction.

Several critics reminded commissioners Tuesday of their fears.

"We are worried once the site is built, it's anything goes," said Frankenlust Township Supervisor Hilda Dijak.

"This project came about too quickly, too quietly and without enough public scrutiny," said Joel Tanner, a Saginaw resident.

Michelle Hurd Riddick, a spokeswoman for the environmental group Lone Tree Council, said now that Dow's interest has become public, it will receive more scrutiny.

A Dow spokesman has said the Midland-based company is exploring the possible use of the site if a regulatory agency orders the chemical giant to dredge contaminated rivers. Dioxin contamination remains a major concern primarily in the Tittabawassee River watershed.

Dow contributed between \$300,000 and \$500,000 to the Saginaw River Alliance, a group of dock owners who gave more than \$1.5 million to the \$5 million project.

The state Department of Environmental Quality, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the county would have to agree to let Dow to use the facility, said Saginaw County Public Works Commissioner James A. Koski.

The DEQ has said it's not an option the agency has considered. In a news release last month, the Corps of Engineers said it has yet to receive a request to deposit material at the site.

Federal and state permits, however, do not allow the disposal of anything other than material from the Saginaw River, Koski said.

Commissioners will review the issue at 4 p.m. Tuesday in the County Governmental Center, 111 S. Michigan. v

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