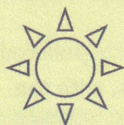


## TALKIN TRASH



# Mindful Surroundings Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1 *LANDFILLS* Editor: Jane Jensen

Do you know  
where your trash  
goes?

Did you know fires  
at landfills can be  
smoldering for  
years before they  
are noticed?

Collecting trash on  
highway shoulder  
costs Minnesotans  
about \$2 Million per  
year.

According to Minne-  
sota Pollution Con-  
trol projections, state  
residents will get rid  
of 10 million pounds  
of televisions and  
another 10 million  
pounds of com-  
puters, monitors,  
laptops and printers  
this year alone. <sup>2</sup>

Did you know land-  
fill liners are only  
1/10 of an inch  
thick?

The U.S. has 3,091  
active landfills and  
over 10,000 old  
municipal landfills,  
according to the  
Environmental Pro-  
tection Agency.  
However, in the  
“good old days,”  
every town (and  
many businesses and  
factories) had its  
own dump. <sup>3</sup>

## Did Obama Overlook Waste Management?

Some waste management companies think he has— in 2007, 450 landfills and 87 incinerators produced about 24 million megawatt-hours of electricity: about 2 days of total U.S. electricity use. So why did Obama exclude the trash management from \$60 billion in energy grants and tax breaks? Will we see more trash dumped and shoveled? Obama didn't ‘forget’ or ‘ignore’ trash generated energy— he excluded it to create a situation that doesn't rely on the generation of new trash. The best solution is to generate less trash <sup>1</sup>

## The Politics of Illegal Dumping: An Environmental Justice

Research supports that communities of color and low-income neighborhoods are disproportionately burdened with a range of environmental hazards, which include polluting industries, landfills, incinerators, and illegal dumps. In his article, Pellows argues that there is little understanding of the complexity involved in the decision-making that produces these unequal outcomes. He argues that many other factors that contribute to environmental justice are not always so clear but much more complex. He illustrates his framework by analyzing illegal dumping in communities of color in Chicago, Illinois. For over a hundred years Chicago's garbage solution has been politically driven and financially lucrative for those parties in power. An example was a story called Operation Silver Shovel which was used to demonstrate how a successful recycling businessman bribes the local aldermen by paying them cash



**“Landfills are dirty and smell. The best solution is to generate less trash.”**

to illegally dump solid waste in a Westside Chicago, predominately African-American and Latino neighborhood. The average income of residents is well below the national poverty level. Pellows describes how African-American and Latino aldermen have little influence or power in city government, and it was not surprising the bribes were taken. Industrial companies do bribe resident in a method known as “Divide and Conquer,” hoping all they see is the potential of economic benefits. Residents who oppose the dumping continue to fight but nothing changes until the power of grassroots organizations assist to confront the stakeholders. Pellows argues that the issue is not environmental racism based on white communities versus communities of color but a problem with understanding the stakeholder's political power, motivation and understanding the interracial dimensions against the communities. <sup>4</sup>

Comments by newsletter editor: “I feel the author brings up some interesting theories but clearly does not address the overall corruption of government. I agree that the economic benefits are hard to resist for low income residents but I believe the real problem is isolation of government from citizens. If government officials and industrial mega millionaires are on the take, how can you single out communities of color and low-income neighborhoods? The article does not offer a strong argument because the statistical analysis did not tie in with the quantitative analysis of the political corruption issue as it pertains to environmental justice; it did provide good examples of the institutionalized injustice issues in Chicago”.





# What's in My Neighborhood?

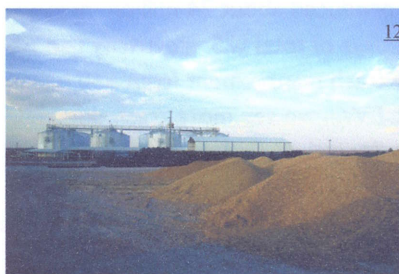
## Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup (VIC) Program

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) provides technical assistance and administrative or legal assurances for individuals or businesses seeking to investigate or cleanup contaminated property through the Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup (VIC) Program. Property buyers, sellers, developers, bankers, development agencies, local government, and other voluntary parties work with VIC staff to bring contaminated land back into productive use. <sup>10</sup>

**"Get involved in your neighborhood"**  
In 2009, Minnesota had 21 landfills accepting Mixed Municipal Solid.



Learn More about VIC Program at [www.pca.state.mn.us/cleanup/vic.html](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/cleanup/vic.html) or call 1-800-657-3864.



How do I search in Minnesota? <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/wimn/index.cfm>

## MINDFUL SURROUNDINGS -

### PAGE 2 LANDFILLS



#### DEFINITION

**Brownfields** are lightly polluted former industrial sites, with the

potential to be developed into public open spaces for parks and recreation, or "greenfields". <sup>6</sup>



The MPCA was created in 1967 to monitor waste. Dumps existing prior never held a valid permit and were not restricted to any type of waste. A 2001 assessment has approximated 1,800 dumps, most are near small towns and communities in Minnesota. <sup>13</sup>

## Reexamining Environmental Justice: Metropolitan Texas

Researcher Yandle and Burton claim Robert Bullard, environmental researcher, lacks historical data and sound statistical testing methods to prove that environmental racism occurs in metropolitan Texas communities. Yandle and Burton argue that current data does not accurately take into account the historical data, or demographics of people living in the site landfill when they was first constructed. They argue the data misrepresents the demograph-

ics thus concluding there is not an environmental injustice issue. What Yandle and Burton did not consider is what Robert Bullard calls, "ethnic churning". Historically government officials select landfill sites based on "community of least resistance". Yandle and Burton claim the site locations were in areas of poor white citizens in metropolitan communities. Interestingly, census data during the earlier siting was inaccurate, not all citizens were counted. <sup>8</sup>



#### DEFINITION

**Ethnic Churning:** When neighborhoods have undergone rapid demographic transition in their ethnic and racial composition it weakens the social and political networks that undergirds a community's capacity to organize and influence landfill site decisions. <sup>7</sup>

**"Census Demographics in Texas before the Civil Rights Movement were inaccurate. Communities of Color were not counted".**

## Trash Talkin by Editor

Currently, the expense of waste is placed on the taxpayer. Is it fair, or should the cost be shifted to the producer of the product? I think it's time to develop better strategies through government policies to focus on zero waste. We need to consider the type of materials we use to produce items and integrate zero waste philosophies. For example, plastics

should be taxed according to material composition. Plastics were not available as a beverage container 30 years ago, most soda were sold in recyclable glass or cans. Today, the majority of plastic products are petrochemicals (crude oil and natural gas) based. Why do we continue to fall victim to oil? We allow the industries to control our government by lobbying research agencies. These agencies dictate federal funds directives and mandate policies

that benefit the interest of the political party in power. Why do we waste research dollars on oil technologies? Its an educational crime to allow private industrial donations/foundation accounts to benefit researchers career and donators profits. It's hard to believe after all this research and development we throw 90% of plastic water bottles in landfills. Wake up people! We have surrendered our creativity to profitability and compromised our planets health and well-being. <sup>14</sup>

**"Wake up people! We have surrendered our creativity to profitability and compromised our planets health and well-being".**





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