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Hollister, CA

Resource Recovery Park Still Hot Topic

by *Leslie David* on Tue, 05/28/2013 - 11:07am

Community isn't convinced County's location for Recovery Park site makes sense.



John Smith Road with proposed Resource Recovery Park acreage to right of fenceline. **Hubbell family property is where cattle graze just beyond.**



Jack Hubbell (John Holbrook Hubbell) getting the ground ready to plant barley in December of 1953.



Portrait of a ranching family. Photo taken in approximately 1951. From left **Roy Hubbell**, **Sally Hubbell Silva**, **John Robert Hubbell** and **Jack Hubbell**. Sally Hubbell Silva and her daughter Tammy Jackson are still involved in the family ranch and share a fenceline with the proposed Resource Recovery Park.



Holbrook and Hubbell family picture. Taken in about 1944. From left, Sullivan Burr Hubbell, Roy Hubbell, Jack Hubbell and Sally Hubbell (Silva). Burr was not the great grandfather that purchased the ranch. E.E. Holbrook first purchased the ranch.

John Basanese, who lives along John Smith Road, stands before San Benito County representatives one more time and says about the [John Smith Road Landfill](#) area with controlled frustration, "You have been fixing it with band aids and it doesn't seem to help." The big crowds have died down, but Basanese is one of a dozen or so people who have come out to quiz the group about the landfill and their proposed Resource Recovery Park. Although word has been passed around that the project "is a done deal", a core group of citizens have refused to take it lying down.

At the County Scoping Meeting on March 13th of this year, John Basanese explained to San Benito representatives that he heard the speed limit on John Smith Road is set at a 55 miles per hour. He stated that it is an unsafe speed for the road and asked that someone check on where the limit is posted. He expressed his concern for the reduced air quality and increased traffic the project would cause. He told the representatives that his wife has health problems related to the amount of diesel trucks and dust on the road. Basanese questioned the County's concept of making the John Smith vacant land a "moneymaker". He also asked how long the landfill would continue to operate. Basanese, who lives on John Smith Road stated,

“You have been fixing it with band aids and it doesn’t seem to help. Ninety-nine percent of the people opposed the Resource Recovery Park”. In closing he wondered outloud what the County is doing with to all the previous comments made by concerned citizens. Lost in the jumble of EIRs and Draft EIRs and Amended EIRs, people in the audience were left wondering where they were in the "process".

In 1995, [the County bought 133 acres of land](#) across the road from the John Smith Road Landfill for \$500,000 or \$3,759/acre. It had been used for cattle grazing and is surrounded by ranchland on three sides. According to Mandy Rose with the San Benito County Waste Management Department, the intention was to buy the piece across from the landfill for expansion. Gradually the idea developed that in the meantime, the County could make use of it for resource recovery. Recognizing the direction the waste management field was going, it made sense to weed through trash and re-use some of it instead of bury all of it in a landfill. This work is being done at the landfill site on a small scale today but another possible location for the RRP is across the road on County owned property. For the last five years, the San Benito County has worked to convert 30 acres of the site currently zoned for agricultural use, to a special kind of zoning called proposed Resource Recovery Park. The County's hope is to own the land but have a separate entity operate the business. However, since the County began pursuing the plan, there have been citizens who feel the project has serious issues.

Tammy Jackson, who's family has a ranch just across the fence, has written letters and stayed up late at night reading the over 1,400 page Environmental Impact Report trying to understand why the County would pick this spot to partner in the recycling business. At the most recent Scoping Meeting on the proposed facility **Jackson asked, if the project were approved, "Who would police the property and make sure that waste and materials were handled properly?"**

Jackson's family has operated the neighboring ranch since around the turn of the century. Back then, it was known as the Wells Fargo Ranch because horses used on the stagecoach would lay-up and rest until their next trip. After working it for a while, [E.E. Holbrook](#) was able to buy the ranch. [Ethel Holbrook Hubbell](#), the second generation to be on on the land and Tammy's great grandmother, raised her family in this spot. [Tammy's grandfather, Jack Holbrook Hubbell](#) was there when the county decided to put a landfill next door. He spoke out against it at public meetings but was unable to stop it. Ironically, with outside jobs and ranchwork to do, [Tammy and her parents, Shorty Silva and Sally Hubbell Silva](#) have been in the same position as the last generation, going to every meeting possible and trying to stay up with the governmental process. They are just one example of the people who have spoken and written to the county asking it to reconsider the plans for a Resource Recovery Park.

At the Scoping Meeting, Tammy asked questions about the County's plan for industrial type operations at the site. She pointed out that the agricultural people in the area do not want a lot of light and noise at night. She asked that, if the project went forward, all the recycling, reuse and re-manufacturing be done inside to keep noise levels down and keep trash inside. Jackson pointed out a similar site in Merced that has a lot of planting to hide the

resource recovery operation. Repeating what others have asked at previous public meetings, she asked about the condition and safety of John Smith Road today and what to expect if the project were to proceed.

John Eade, who lives in the Santa Ana Valley, pointed out that for many of the landowners nearby, this project could mean a multi-million dollar loss in land values. He stated that his property looked over the area. Eade asked the County what their proposed Resource Recovery Project had cost so far. Eade pointed out that consultants and expertise are very expensive on a project that currently has “no takers”. Eade stated, **“We have a bankrupt County that is on a wild goose chase for something you don’t know will even make money.”** He asked Mandy Rose, Director of the Integrated Waste Management Department to provide the group with an accounting of what has been spent, what they plan to spend to get the project ready for a customer and what contracts they hope to get.

Lisa Tobias pointed out that the property is below the existing John Smith Road level and hard to visually minimize the resources and equipment on the site. **Tobias gave examples of other recycling and resource centers in town and described the Resource Recovery park as a likely “eyesore”.** Tobias was one of several speakers to point out that John Smith Road and the Landfill entrance are poorly maintained already, creating doubt about additional maintenance.

At the end of the meeting **Mandy Rose, with the County's Waste Management Department told the group that she would get figures on how much the project has cost the County so far.** She agreed to provide the figures to one of the participants at the meeting asking her to share the information by email to past attendees of Resource Recovery Park meetings. Rose explained that the funds for this project would not be coming from tax dollars but an account with approximately 4 million dollars in it from landfill fees. (See accompanying article "[Citizens Ask, Does It Make Cents?](#)").

To Date, the EIR for the Proposed Resource Recovery Park, is now over 1,400 pages long. The report in paper form is unaffordable for most at over \$30. At the same time, a large percentage of San Benito County residents still do not use the computer for this sort of information.. **Final EIR Proposed Resource Recovery Park** <http://cosb.us/wp-content/uploads/Resource-Recovery-Park-Project-Volume1>.

A **revised EIR** on the Proposed Resource Recovery Park addressing a new zoning designation of Resource Recovery Park overlay is expected mid-May or June. All other aspects of the original Final EIR will be updated in this revised final EIR. **Many citizens have commented on the original draft and final EIR for the RRP and Integrated Waste Director, Mandy Rose has stated that those comments are still on record and will be included with additional public comment on the revised on the EIR.**