



## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

June 22, 2006  
For Immediate Release

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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### ***SIERRA CLUB ANNOUNCES INTENT TO SUE GROUP SAYS LANDFILL IS CLASSIC ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM***

**NEW ORLEANS** – The New Orleans Group of the Delta (Louisiana) Chapter of the Sierra Club has announced its intent to sue the City of New Orleans, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency over their handling of a landfill in New Orleans East.

The intent to sue (I need a little paragraph in here that explains what the intent to sue means – 90 days for corrective action? I don't understand this part yet.)

The environmental organization says that the landfill site, located at 16600 Chef Menteur Highway, is not properly safeguarded to prevent incoming ground water seepage.

“The ground water will mix with environmental toxins contained in Katrina debris such as asbestos from torn down houses and as much as five million gallons of waste from paint cans, bottles of chlorine bleach, drain cleaners and other contaminants,” says Leslie March, chair of the Delta Chapter. “As the contaminated ground water accumulates, it will be pumped into an adjacent canal that flows into a largely Vietnamese community less than one mile away. It will also contaminate Bayou Sauvage, the largest urban wild life refuge in the United States, located only 80 ft away.”

The landfill is designated to be 100 acres, 30 feet deep and another 80 feet high. Three other landfills appropriately safeguarded against ground water exist nearby.

New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin claimed “emergency powers” and circumvented public hearing processes and safety standards to designate the site as a landfill. The Vietnamese community in New Orleans East is leading the fight against the landfill with the support of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Louisiana Environmental Action Network.

The landfill was temporarily closed pending conversations about testing of the debris in the landfill. Mayor Nagin said the landfill would be closed until testing has been completed, however, trucks began to dump debris at the site within hours of the mayor’s re-election early in May.

“The decision to use the site as a landfill is a classic case of environmental racism,” says March. “The dispute raises questions about environmental justice because the site is near residential areas with a large minority community. Besides the mostly Vietnamese community of Village de l'Est, much of eastern New Orleans is majority African-American. The New Orleans City Council also passed a resolution last month urging Nagin to close the landfill.”

March says she hopes the mayor should recognize the will of the people, as well as legal pressure, and close the landfill immediately.

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The Sierra Club's 750,000 members work together to protect communities and the planet. The Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. The Delta (Louisiana) chapter of the Sierra Club has more than 3,500 members and has been active in local conservation projects for more than 30 years. For more information, contact the organization’s website: [www.louisiana.sierraclub.org](http://www.louisiana.sierraclub.org).