



MEDIA RELEASE

April 14, 2006
For Immediate Release

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POLITICS AS USUAL: LANDFILL PERMIT PUSHED THROUGH WITHOUT REGARD TO PROCEDURE OR PUBLIC SAFETY

NEW ORLEANS – The decision by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality to issue an emergency landfill permit to Waste Management of Louisiana is a scurrilous ploy to subvert public scrutiny, says the Sierra Club of Louisiana.

“The decision to issue an emergency permit means the democratic process has been eliminated,” says Darryl Malek-Wiley, environmental justice coordinator for the Sierra Club. “The emergency permit allows Waste Management to begin work on the project immediately, without hearings, without any environmental studies, and without the input of the citizens who live in the area and who would be affected most.”

The landfill, located at 16600 Chef Menteur Highway in New Orleans East, will be able to accept hurricane-related construction and demolition debris. The site is authorized to accept 6.5 million cubic yards, or 7.2 million tons, with the majority of the waste coming from Orleans, St. Bernard and St. Tammany parishes. Waste Management, Inc. the gigantic leader in the waste and disposal industry, applied for the permit in early March.

“Construction and demolition waste includes asbestos-related materials,” says Malek-Wiley. “The site for the landfill has been flooded several times, including most

recently by Katrina. This means that the hazardous waste in the landfill can leach out and end up anywhere. This landfill is just not a good idea.”

Another issue of concern to Malek-Wiley is the selection of a site that sits less than one-half mile from a Vietnamese neighborhood.

“This is a classic case of environmental racism,” he says. “The community of Vietnamese immigrants does not have the financial means to fight a huge corporation like Waste Management. Many do not speak English. I just think it’s terrible that officials in our state government protect the profits of a corporation over the protection of its citizens.”

Malek-Wiley says the decision to grant the emergency permit should be reconsidered.

“I think it is very telling that the emergency permit was granted on the Thursday afternoon before Good Friday, a day when the announcement would likely not get any attention. That’s a good sign to the public that this deal should merit further scrutiny.”

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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.