



MEDIA RELEASE

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SIERRA CLUB TO ASK COURT FOR COMMUNITY PROTECTION

RE-OPENED LANDFILL POSES ENDANGERMENT TO HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT

NEW ORLEANS – The Sierra Club’s Delta (Louisiana) Chapter has announced its plans to ask the court to stop the City of New Orleans from dumping Katrina debris at the city’s previously closed Gentilly landfill.

"Dumping toxic debris in an unstable landfill is completely irresponsible," says Leslie March, chair of the Sierra Club Delta Chapter. "Given what the people of New Orleans have been through, their government should be putting safety first, especially when there are better options available."

A recently-released report commissioned by the Federal Emergency Management Agency says that FEMA could face liability if the Gentilly landfill is later designated an environmental hazard. The report says that the weight of the waste being dumped at Old Gentilly - more than four million cubic yards to date - could undermine the stability of the nearby levee.

“Very simply, there is a concern that relatively weak natural foundation soils underlying the Gentilly Landfill may be overloaded by ongoing waste placement and become unstable,” the report says. “In particular, there is a potential that affected soils

may include foundation soils below the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet levee and extend out as far as the MRGO canal face.”

The city-owned landfill, referred to as “Old Gentilly,” was shut down nearly a quarter century ago after being identified by federal regulators as a possible hazard waste site. Taxpayers have spent millions in clean-up. The site was re-opened by the state after Hurricane Katrina as an emergency dump for construction and demolition debris.

The Sierra Club says it will provide the 90-day notice of intent to sue to the City of New Orleans, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the company that manages the landfill, AMID/Metro Partnership LLC.

The Sierra Club contends that in accepting Katrina waste, the Gentilly site is in violation of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the federal law governing the handling, transportation and disposal of solid waste.

The notice charges that the landfill violates RCRA’s open dumping rules and federal standards for municipal solid waste landfills, and that waste has been disposed in a manner that may present significant dangers to public health and the environment.

“The re-opening of the landfill is the starkest example of how Louisiana is bending environmental laws to deal with the immensity of the storm's residue,” says the Sierra Club's March. “We are concerned that all the waste going into Old Gentilly landfill will end up becoming a Superfund site like the Agriculture Street landfill that will cost taxpayers to pay twice for this cleanup when there are safer, cleaner alternatives. We should make sure that our clean-up efforts don’t come back to haunt us. That is why we have filed this notice of intent to sue.”

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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.