

## **Will it be a New Year of Responsible Waste Solutions for Orange County?**

When we go against the flow of life, blocks to movement arise left and right. When something is "right," resistance falls away and doors open easily.

This effect seems to be at play concerning the proposed waste transfer station (WTS) in rural SW Orange County. The original premise – that the county needs a WTS because the landfill is closing – was perhaps relevant years ago. But the current of life is moving very swiftly in a new direction as we awaken to the imminent danger of rapid climate change. It is a 20th Century idea to move trash far from its source on fossil-fuel burning trucks to dump in other regions.

21st Century thinking is about responsibility and green solutions. Kofi Annan said, "If we are going to go on living together on this earth we must all be responsible for it." And Al Gore has been urging us for some time to pay attention to the rapid rise of greenhouse gases that must be reversed immediately for survival. All of a sudden the idea of hauling and dumping waste does not FIT with life.

This is not the right path. So great resistance has arisen.

The commissioners might think it is irresponsible to change their decision on a WTS. I submit it is irresponsible NOT to change course in light of the larger picture. We must look with clear vision towards the future to address the current situation, locally and globally.

As their Solid Waste Advisory Board suggested, to start on a course towards sustainable waste management using Waste to Energy (WTE - making electricity from trash), the county must start now working with power companies and neighboring counties. There may be many ideal sites for a clean burning WTE plant as we move to focus on regional renewable energy production.

Private waste vendors can serve the county in any interim time, hauling to existing local waste stations or landfills. Half our trash is already outsourced. It's simple to take the rest, at a significantly lower cost to the taxpayers than building a WTS that is already environmentally obsolete.

The community – including citizens, power companies, waste and WTE vendors – stands ready to help. All the commissioners need to do is accept assistance.

What's worse? To see that times have changed since this task began and that it's best to change course to make the right choice for constituents and the planet? Or be stuck with a \$10+ million concrete mistake that blights a quiet rural and farm community forever, while increasing air pollution with carbon emissions, increasing ground and drinking water pollution with fuel and leachate runoff, maintaining our dependency on foreign oil, and forestalling movement forward to renewable energy?

This is not a NIMBY issue. It is a global issue.

Orange County commissioners and this particular decision are caught in the crucible of monumental change. It's important to clearly see the choices available at this crossroads. There is no sense in fixating on an outdated plan. The county and its citizens can work together towards fiscally responsible, sustainable waste solutions for the long term.

It's not just a new year, but a new era of global awareness.

Virginia Leslie

Chapel Hill

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In harmony with the Tao,  
the sky is clear and spacious,  
the earth is solid and full,  
all creatures flourish together,  
content with the way they are,  
endlessly repeating themselves,  
endlessly renewed.

When man interferes with the Tao,  
the sky becomes filthy,  
the earth becomes depleted,  
the equilibrium crumbles,  
creatures become extinct.

The Master views the parts with compassion,  
because she understands the whole.  
Her constant practice is humility.  
She doesn't glitter like a jewel  
but lets herself be shaped by the Tao,  
as rugged and common as stone.

Tao Te Ching 39

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