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County to help fund odor study

Residents suspect refining plant is source

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FALLON -- Churchill County commissioners have approved funding for a study into the source of a nasty odor that has residents complaining.

County Planning Director Eleanor Lockwood said the study follows complaints that Bango Oil's refining plant, about 60 miles east of Reno, is the source of the odor. The company has denied the allegation.

The three University of Nevada, Reno scientists who will conduct the study will gather meteorological data, including wind speeds and directions. Lockwood said the study will show how far compounds released from Bango Oil can travel and whether the plant is the source of the problem.

County commissioners approved initial funding of \$35,000 for the study, which could cost up to double that amount. Bango Oil spokesman Tom Clark said the company will help fund it.

"This company firmly believes the odors are not coming from this facility, and anything we can do to help we will. It's the right thing to do," he said. "The allegations won't go away if we don't aid the county."

Clark added the company has removed a thermal oxidizer that some residents complained was the source of the offending odor.

In a related development last week, a three-member panel of the State Environmental Commission upheld the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection's decision in February to issue a revised air quality permit to Bango Oil.

They decided the revised permit would comply with national air quality standards, but the three panel members agreed an odor problem in the area exists.

Two members, Alan Coyner and Jim Gans, went so far as to say they thought the source of the odor was Bango Oil.

"The hearing was not about odors. It was irresponsible for them to say that," Clark said. "We invite those commissioners to come out to the facility to see for themselves."

The revised permit was necessary because the company wants to double its production capacity.

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