

County to study Bango Oil odors

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FALLON - Churchill County will fund a scientific study in efforts to determine the source of an odor near the Bango Oil facility located west of Fallon off U.S. Highway 50.

County commissioners approved spending \$35,000 for partial funding of the study to be conducted by three University of Nevada Reno scientists.

The scientists will gather meteorological data in the area of Bango Road like wind speed and direction and temperature, from points both near the surface and well above the surface. Computer modeling of the topographical variations in the area will also be included.

The team of scientists include Dr. John Sagebeil, environmental affairs manager; Dr. Darko Koracin, director of atmospheric sciences; and Dr. Dana Loomis, professor and director of the School of Community Health Sciences.

Churchill County Planning Director Eleanor Lockwood said the study was initiated following a complaint filed against Bango Oil by residents claiming the company is not adhering to its special-use permit and producing an offensive odor. The Planning Commission directed Lockwood to prepare an investigation report and indicated there were grounds for a show cause hearing regarding the permit.

Lockwood presented her investigation report on the conduct of Bango Oil in its operations of the oil re-refining plant to the Planning Commission at its June 10 meeting. In the report, Lockwood reviewed Bango Oil's special-use permit application to the county, and permits and enforcement actions taken against the company by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection.

The report contains an excerpt from the Oct. 13, 2004, public hearing where Phil Solaro of Bango Oil was asked to confirm that nothing would be emitted from the plant other than water and carbon dioxide. Solaro confirmed that was correct.

However, at a Jan. 28, 2009, public hearing, the NDEP provided a table showing the results of pollutant emissions measured from the facility showing the presence of five pollutants including nitrogen/oxygen compounds, sulfur dioxide, coarse particulate matter, carbon monoxide and ozone. Bango Oil has not exceeded the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for the pollutants, but it reached 50.4 percent of the standard for the coarse particulate matter, or PM10.

"Had the applicant provided more detailed information regarding air pollutants and emissions, this may have resulted in closer examination by the Planning Commission," Lockwood wrote in the report's conclusion.

She stated a re-examination of the special use permit may be justified to determine if emissions from the plant are contributing to the odors smelled by nearby residents.

Sagebeil, who briefed planning commissioners regarding the study of smells, said odors are complex, mysterious and difficult to capture. When a compound leaves a facility, it encounters air turbulence and mixes with ambient air and can add carbons to its makeup, thus changing its odor.

Lockwood said the modeling will show how far compounds released from the Bango Oil facility can travel and at what dilution threshold, or the study may show there is no conclusive evidence footprint odors from the plant are traveling past the fence line.

Lockwood said while Bango Oil has not yet agreed to partially fund the study, the company has cooperated in the past and wants resolution regarding the odor complaints. Because it has invested so much money in the Churchill County facility, Bango Oil has said it would like to perfect the plant to increase production, Lockwood said.

The exact scope of work will be refined at a county meeting later this week, and the final cost of the study could approach \$70,000.

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