

Watsonville Residents & Greenaction Defeat Plasma Arc Incinerator Proposed Next to Buena Vista Migrant Farm Labor Camp

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors Votes Unanimously to End the Project -- November 18, 2008

Watsonville, CA – Santa Cruz County’s controversial plan to build a plasma arc incinerator for treating garbage was rejected in a unanimous vote of the County Board of Supervisors today. The vote came after the company, adaptiveARC, was unable to provide documentation of their claims about the alleged safety of their technology and proposed facility.

The vote by the Board of Supervisors officially accepted the recommendation of the County Public Works Department which wrote a letter recommending an end to negotiations with the company. The letter from the County Department of Public Works confirmed to the Supervisors that “...AdaptiveARC has not been responsive to our request for emissions information...” and other requested information. Information submitted previously by the company to the Monterey Bay Air Pollution Control District and the Board of Supervisors that allegedly was emissions data from a pilot plant in Mexico was deemed totally inadequate by the Air District. The Air District had also rejected the company’s claims that the technology had no emissions at all.

Watsonville residents first learned about the project from Greenaction, and were angry that the company and county agencies failed to inform them. The plasma arc facility was proposed to be located at the Buena Vista landfill, next to the migrant farm labor camp housing hundreds of Spanish-speaking residents.

Community members formed the Pajaro Valley Coalition for Environmental Justice to fight the project. Greenaction provided technical information about the dangers of plasma arc, including documenting that this

technology does have toxic emissions and similar facilities have been problem-plagued. The local Sierra Club chapter, Natural Resources Defense Council, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives and the Watsonville Brown Berets also joined the effort. Together the groups also exposed the fact that while the project was being portrayed as a pilot project for small amounts of garbage, the company admitted on their website that their plan was to have a large facility that would eventually import garbage from other counties.

“We applaud the county’s action to end negotiations with adaptiveARC, which failed to provide answers to our community about their unproven technology,” said Luis Alejo of the Pajaro Valley Coalition for Environmental Justice. “This decision will protect the health and air quality for the people of the Pajaro Valley.”

“The defeat of this plasma arc incinerator in disguise is a great community victory that will protect the health of residents,” said Bradley Angel, Executive Director of Greenaction. “Our communities need more recycling and waste prevention, not incinerators in disguise that will pollute the air, threaten the health of residents and use low-income communities of color as dumping grounds.”

From: *Pajaro Valley Coalition for Environmental Justice & Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice*