

Minot Daily News

White Earth community glad that waste facility won't be built

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By JILL SCHRAMM - Staff Writer

WHITE EARTH Members of the White Earth community are welcoming an energy services company's decision to cancel construction of a controversial oil-waste disposal site overlooking their scenic valley.

Tervita, formerly CCS Midstream Services, announced in January that it no longer plans to build the facility, which would have been placed about six miles east of Tioga, just off U.S. Highway 2 in Mountrail County.

The company stated that it is withdrawing out of respect for the community, which indicated that particular aspects of the proposal would not be compatible with local interests. The State Industrial Commission had approved the facility a year ago and construction initially was to start last year.

White Earth-area rancher Scott Davis credited the letter-writing efforts of many residents and the cautiousness of the Mountrail County Commission toward waste facilities for what he considers a positive outcome.

"It was just not a good spot," Davis said of the location. "Here in the White Earth Valley, I think we have one of the state's treasures."

Residents were concerned about potential contamination of White Earth Creek, which ultimately flows into the Missouri River. They were concerned about odors settling in the valley and drifting into Tioga.

Rose Person, who lives near the proposed site, said truck traffic was a concern. Several trucks an hour would have had to slow down on U.S. Highway 2 and then cross in front of oncoming traffic to reach the site, creating a dangerous situation for motorists, she said.

She also credited the community for convincing the company that the location is not right.

"The people here came together," she said. "You can't say it was just one or two people. I think everybody put in the time that they could, the talent that they had."

The residents also worked with Dakota Resource Council and its Build a Better Bakken effort to make their opinions known.

Trevita's White Earth facility was intended to manage by-products from oil and gas exploration and production. The company hoped to recover oil for resale and dispose of treated wastes in a manner that exceeded standards of federal, state and local regulations.

"We believe the need for managing oil and gas exploration and production waste may someday necessitate a similar facility in Mountrail County, and our goal for that day will be an open and transparent engagement with the community that will achieve success for all parties," Brett Williamson, director of North Dakota operations, wrote in announcing the company's decision.

Trevita, with head offices in Houston and Calgary, Alberta, provides a broad range of environmental services to industry throughout North America, including salt water disposal, waste transfer stations, landfills and treatment recovery.