

## A SMALL COMMITTEE OF LINCOLN COUNTY NEIGHBORS GOES UP AGAINST THE WASTE-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX OF SEWAGE SLUDGE SLINGERS

**R**esidents and organic farmers who live in an area near Davenport, Washington called Mill Canyon feel threatened by proposals to spread municipal sewage sludge on nearly 900 acres of agricultural land uphill from where they live, garden and farm. The area in question includes their natural watershed.

They are alarmed because the Washington State Department of Ecology will likely approve a permit within days that will allow the dumping, despite objections they have formally filed with the agency during its official comment period.

Mill Canyon residents are organizing to prevent the permit application to dump the sludge from being approved.

In 2006, a review of scientific literature on sewage sludge contaminants was conducted by a team of Cornell University researchers. They reviewed data on 516 organic compounds detected in bio-solids. Only nine are regulated. "The results of this work reinforce the need for a survey of organic chemical contaminants in sewage sludges and for further assessment of the risks they pose," the researchers concluded. Meanwhile, more "chemicals of concern" are steadily being added to the long list of unregulated contaminants.

Morton Alexander is a Mill Canyon resident landowner who is very concerned about pollution from sludge, especially because his spring is used by many families in the canyon as a free source of clean drinking water. "Old legislation deemed



*LINCOLN COUNTY, WA: Mill Creek runs through Mill Canyon into the Spokane River. Over the objection of local population, a permit to allow the dumping of municipal sewage sludge on agricultural land is expected to be approved.*

'bio-solids' a 'beneficial resource' and mandated Ecology to promote its use," Alexander said, "making the department a booster of this dubious practice rather than a credible regulator in the public interest."

Mill Canyon residents who consider the risks unacceptable have formed a committee called Protect Mill Canyon Watershed. They have urged the Washington State Department of Ecology to deny the permit. They publish an informative website and participate using news outlets and social media to educate the public about their struggle to keep their environment clean.

"Our fight against this permit resists 'environmental class-ism,' the victimization of a community of low income people. It's representative of how the sludge industry and its partner Ecology operate across Washington. We call for a statewide moratorium on all such permits until light is shed on this dark industry," Alexander said. From the Protect Mill Canyon Watershed website, members of the public may send email messages to the government supporting the

residents' plea to deny the permit and call for a statewide moratorium.

The Department of Ecology, already very late in finalizing the fate of this permit application, has now said it is within days that they will make a final ruling. If Ecology approves the permit, Protect Mill Canyon Watershed will need to raise funds to appeal the decision. The Committee along with its fiscal sponsor, the Columbia Institute for Water Policy, are now accepting donations to their legal fund on the website [protectmillcanyon.org](http://protectmillcanyon.org).



To sign the on-line petition asking for the moratorium, go here: <http://tinyurl.com/no-sludge-on-ag>