

Spray opponents lobby school board

By KEVIN HANSON
The Courier-Herald

Those who oppose the spraying of septic waste in the woods near Carbonado continue to organize and plot their strategy, just as the district is taking a wait-and-see attitude.

At the center of a lingering storm is an arrangement between the White River School District and Cascade Northwest, a company that drains private septic tanks and manages a fleet of portable toilets. Needing a way to dispense of its waste, the company negotiated with the district to spray treated "septage" in a district-owned tree farm just south and east of Carbonado.

Residents of the area quickly banded together to fight the idea, directing much of their displeasure at the school district.

A group rallied outside the district headquarters last week, while

five citizens — Jay Argo, Mardel Chowen, Jill Cartwright, Mike Boyington and Dan White — addressed school board members. The district had asked the opposition to be brief, as a public meeting is planned for the not-too-distant future.

The five let the board know their unhappiness and shared their disappointment that more research wasn't carried out before the agreement with Cascade Northwest was finalized.

Reading from a prepared statement, President Susan McGuire said the school board "recognizes the issue surrounding the proposed septage project on its 2,000-acre tree farm property has become very sensitive."

She said a public meeting, tentatively set for the Wilkeson Elementary School gymnasium, will bring together representatives from Cascade Northwest and

Pierce County. Public comments, she said, will be welcomed at that meeting.

It was subsequently learned the district hopes to host the meeting sometime in January.

"The district is taking a neutral stance on this," Assistant Superintendent Roger Marlow said in an interview the following day. "We'll let the state and county figure it out."

The septage proposed for spraying is not prohibited by governmental agencies, but opponents are adamant in their belief that not all facts are known and that some of the available information is flawed. The primary concern is that septage spraying is proposed for an area sprinkled with small creeks that feed larger waterways, which eventually provide drinking water for the Wilkeson and Car-

bonado areas and flow into salmon-bearing streams and rivers.

The White River School Board will be hearing again from Cascade Northwest during a study session planned for 6 p.m. Nov. 28 in the district board room. The public is free to attend such sessions, but can only observe, not comment.



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