

Second private landfill opens for public trash

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Covel Gardens, San Antonio's second private landfill, opened Wednesday and will begin accepting consumer trash immediately, officials said.

Operated by Waste Management Inc., the landfill is on the Southwest Side next to Nelson Gardens, the municipal facility that closed earlier this month after more than a decade of operation.

The closure of Nelson Gardens forced City Council to turn to two other private-sector landfills for space where solid waste can be deposited for the next five years while a 2,000-acre regional landfill is located and prepared for use.

One landfill on the far East Side is operated by Browning-Ferris Industries. Meanwhile, the other landfill, in southern Travis County, is owned by Texas Disposal Systems of Austin.

Austin Mayor Bruce Todd has criticized the council for sending its garbage north, but Mayor Nelson Wolff responded Wednesday.

In a letter to Todd, Wolff retraced the history of Nelson Gardens, which the city shared with Waste Management. He claimed it was prematurely filled because Waste Management hauled in more garbage than it was supposed to.

That is the continuing point of dispute between the city and Waste Management. The company contends it adhered to maximum tonnage limits imposed by the city.

Wolff also advised Todd that the city plans to develop a regional landfill.

Covel Gardens is the first landfill in South Texas that fully complies with strict federal environmental guidelines for landfill construction that go into effect in October. Solid waste collected from commercial customers and smaller incorporated cities that contract with Garbage Gobbler was deposited Wednesday at Covel Gardens. Officials reported "brisk activity."

Officials have estimated 430,000 tons of trash will be dumped annually at the landfill. Consumers who wish to unload household waste may do so at a cost of \$5 per truckload, up to 1 ton per load, officials added.

Covel Gardens also will have an on-site recycling center where a variety of materials may be dropped off for reuse and won't be emptied into the landfill, officials said.

Items to be accepted for recycling include aluminum, corrugated cardboard, glass, newsprint, plastic, scrap metal, tin, tires and white goods such as refrigerators that no longer work.

In the future, used oil filters also will be accepted, but not used motor oil.

The hours of operation are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday and 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. Covel Gardens will be closed Sunday. Donation

For its first month of operation, Covel Gardens will donate 25 cents from each truckload to the Beautify San Antonio organization, officials said.

"We're very excited to have the most environmentally secure landfill in South Texas," said Stan Weik, Waste Management spokesman. "We believe the donation . . . is an appropriate way to celebrate a first-rate environmental initiative."

Covel Gardens will be dedicated in an Oct. 8 ceremony that will feature John Hall, chairman of the Texas Natural Resource and Conservation Commission, as the guest speaker.landfills

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