

Hill of Garbage . . .

Garbage Mountain: 8th Wonder

by JIM TINDALL

It's garbage as usual in southwest DuPage County at the Blackwell Forest Preserve.

Close to 125 scavengers and garbage trucks pass by the weigh station daily to make their personal contribution to a hill that, in ten more years, will stand about 150 feet high and cover nearly 20 acres.

With the next two weeks, DuPage County Forest Preserve Commission members will vote on the final land use of the preserve. It is likely that the final plans will include hiking paths, hiking trails, a marina, picnic areas, a family campground, a bathing beach, an outdoor amphitheater, two lakes and, of course, the winter sports hill for skiing and tobogganing.

In a feature story 11 months ago, The Register reported "There's a Mountain in Your Garbage Can." After a recent visit to what is affectionately called "The Eighth Wonder of the World" by landfill employees, a reporter filed this item. "The mountain is still there, and it's growing."

WHILE "PROGRESS on the ski hill is certainly clearly evident and noteworthy, work on the nearby lake must be labeled amazing.

Just 11 months ago the 75-acre lake, shaped like a boomerang, was nothing more than a dead pool. An unfinished dam below it that. (See accompanying "before" photo.)

Last week, in contrast, its green banks sloped gently down to the shore. Bluffs and hills broke up the rolling landscape, and the water, several feet deep in places, rippled gently in the breeze.

When the water deepens bluffs and smallmouth bass will make a home there.

The second lake, much smaller, was almost nonexistent a year ago. Now, behind a dam, a waterway is being carved out of nothing. There will probably be a small island in the middle.

The project is being run jointly by the Public Works Department of DuPage County and the Forest Preserve District, and there are definite organizational boundaries over which representatives of both organizations are reluctant to step.

The forest preserve people operate out of a small silver trailer. The public works department lunches in its green trailer which is next door, but still separate.

THERE ARE TWO sources of income for the project. One is the landfill revenue — scavengers pay fairly low rates, relative to other landfills, for the right to dump their refuse in the Blackwell Preserve. The other source of cash is the sale of rough gravel to contractors by the Forest Preserve District from a spot about half a mile down the road from the entrance to the landfill.

Most trucks entering the landfill stop and weigh in. Their rate depends on the number of cubic yards of rubbish they have on board. Drivers of smaller trucks, cars and station wagons present themselves at the weigh station and announce their load. Make appliances cost a dollar to dump. Wood or concrete is a minimum of 50 cents, and so on.

Some of the smaller operators would like to be able to dump for less. Said one man dressed in coveralls, "No, I need to work for the public works department and the whole thing. How 'bout letting me dump this stuff for 50 cents."

"Not 'ing doing," said the weigh station operator, who collected \$1.20 for the load.

Behind the weigh station operator on the wall is a Victorian sign topped off with two flesh-colored cupids that reads, "Dump, sweet Dump."

THE LANDFILL enjoys the regular business of some 15 to 20 large garbage collection firms; however, some county officials are slightly concerned about the flow of garbage into the project.

Naturally, the forest preserve district would like to finish the job as soon as possible, but the landfill is suffering a little because private landfills seem to be siphoning off a significant portion of the county's rubbish flow.

After the weigh-in, the trucks follow a well-traveled dirt road up to the ski hill. A bulldozer operator directs each driver to dump in a certain spot.

The rubbish they haul in is moved into place and then compacted by the bulldozer.

From out of the underbrush roars a massive Euclid bulldozer equipped with a heavy-duty earth-shovel that booms three six feet high. The Euclid stops a lot of earth on the fresh garbage and sprays back for more. The bulldozer spreads the fresh earth.

(Continued on Page 6)



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