

Municipality of Isabela Agrees to Environmental Improvements at Landfill ^[1]

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(New York, N.Y. – September 29, 2015) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Municipality of Isabela, Puerto Rico, have reached a legal agreement that will result in upgrades at the Isabela Municipal Solid Waste Landfill, and a plan to permanently close the landfill by June 2020. Isabela will also implement a recycling and composting program.

“This legal agreement will improve the operation and ensure the proper closure of the Isabella landfill, and will make sure more material will be recycled and composted,” said EPA Regional Administrator Judith Enck. “It is important that every community in Puerto Rico step up its

recycling and composting programs.”

As part of the agreement announced today, Isabela will establish an enhanced, comprehensive recycling program within ten months to eliminate the landfilling of recyclable materials such as paper, metals, plastic and glass, as well as scrap tires, and certain auto parts. The municipality will also establish a pilot composting program for the collection of compostable materials. As part of the initiative, the municipality will provide education and community outreach, targeting households, small businesses, government facilities and other establishments. This educational program will include community workshops to educate the public on the benefits of recycling and composting, as well as guidelines for complying with the recycling and composting requirements.

The Municipality of Isabela has also agreed to make improvements at its landfill, including covering exposed areas on a regular basis and reducing dust. Additionally, the leveling of steep slopes at the site will decrease the chances of storm water runoff and landslides. The landfill is scheduled to be closed no later than June 30, 2020. At that point, the municipality will take significant steps to improve the landfill, including: installing a gas collection system for reducing methane and non-methane emissions from the landfill; capping the landfill to reduce the amount of rainwater filtering into the landfill; and controlling stormwater.

The Isabela Municipal Solid Waste Landfill has been receiving waste since 1978. The majority of the waste deposited in the landfill includes solid household waste, as well as commercial solid waste and construction and demolition debris. Following inspections, the EPA determined that the landfill lacked adequate stormwater controls and a groundwater monitoring system, among other things. Groundwater beneath the Isabela landfill can flow into the North Coast aquifer system, which serves as a public water supply source for municipalities along Puerto Rico’s north coast.

For more information on the management of solid waste in Puerto Rico, visit http://www.epa.gov/region02/cepd/solidwaste_in_puerto_rico.html [2]

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