**Hawaii Garbage Will Stay in Paradise for the Foreseeable Future, Judge Rules**

**By Nina Shapiro**
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​A federal judge granted a preliminary injunction yesterday that prevents Honolulu's garbage from coming to a Washington state landfill any time soon. U.S. District Court Judge Edward Shea made the ruling at the [request of the Yakama Nation](http://blogs.seattleweekly.com/dailyweekly/2010/07/hawaii_garbage_faces_new_obsta.php)and several environmental groups, which say that the trash would likely carry "exotic" plants and animals that could harm the local ecosystem.

"I think this is probably the end of the story," says Michael Lang, conservation director of [Friends of the Columbia Gorge](http://www.gorgefriends.org/), one of the groups that sued over the matter.

Actually, one might have thought that the end of the story was last week. That's when the Hawaiian press reported that the city of[Honolulu was drastically altering its contract with Hawaiian Waste Systems](http://www.kitv.com/news/24735891/detail.html), the Seattle-based company that was supposed to ship the city's garbage across the Pacific. Due to constant delays, those plans were off, the press announced. Instead, [Hawaiian Waste Systems](http://blogs.seattleweekly.com/dailyweekly/2010/08/www.hawaiianwastesystems.com) would take the city's garbage to a local incinerator and landfill. (Apparently, both have room for more trash after all, despite concerns to the contrary.)

Still, Lang's group and its allies pressed on. Their suit, filed against the U.S. Department of Agriculture, accuses the federal agency of doing a shoddy job when it evaluated the [environmental impact of importing trash from paradise](http://www.regulations.gov/search/Regs/home.html#documentDetail?R=0900006480a7f5ac). The USDA's assessment--which took years--found that such garbage would not harm the area around the [Roosevelt Regional Landfill](http://www.rabanco.com/regional_landfill/default.aspx), located along the Columbia River near the Oregon border. With that assessment still on record, Lang says, Honolulu could at any time have changed its mind and decided to ship garbage to the mainland after all.

Late last month, the Richland-based Shea issued a [temporary restraining order](http://blogs.seattleweekly.com/dailyweekly/2010/07/federal_judge_says_keeps_hawai.php) preventing any shipment of trash until today. His latest ruling now renders such shipment impossible until a final decision is reached about whether the USDA's environmental assessment is valid. Shea did not set a date for a full hearing on that question, but said it would be no sooner than January, according to attorney Tom Buchele, who represents the environmental groups that are suing.

Issuing the injunction by telephone, Shea also indicated that the plaintiffs had a good chance of success, according to Buchele. (He later issued written findings. See pdf of [Shea's order](http://media.seattleweekly.com/5278360.0.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).) Thus, Lang is crowing, premature as it might seem, that the case is as good as over. The USDA could not be reached immediately for comment.

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