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CECILIA — From a hundred yards away, the first thing that assails your nose is the smell. Whether you can see the crawfish and crab waste dumped behind mounds of more shells — tons and tons of the rotting, fetid stuff over the course of the season — doesn’t matter. The stench closes in from all sides, gagging and choking.

On closer inspection, you notice the flies — the green, fast-flying kind. They swarm around by the thousands with a mind-maddening drone. And there’s the putrid water standing in the areas that don’t drain. And the green ooze covering the moist muck comes out at the matter. The stench closes in from all sides, crews were able to cover all of the waste regularly.

The Department of Natural Resources seems to agree. Staffer Jessica Justus says the Police Jury is permitted to temporarily operate the dump only if it will trench and cover at least every other day — or it must shut down the facility.

Now, at the end of another bountiful crawfish season, the dump is almost full. And Trahan says when it reaches its capacity, the Police Jury should find another site.

“I don’t want it (a new dump) around here,” Trahan said. “Not around my people anymore. They did their share.”

Trahan says it’s the same problem every year — no one complains until the end of the season when the smell is at its worst. By then, he says, the Police Jury can’t do anything about it. During the off season, parish equipment is tied up with other projects and can’t be spared to make improvements on the property.

Although he could not estimate the amount of waste dumped at the site, Trahan said “at least” 20 uncovered dump trucks pass his store each weekday on the way to the site. Area residents say more enter from the levee road.

Police Jury Administrator Nathan Cormier agrees the land can’t be used indefinitely, mainly because it doesn’t drain.

“We had it — it’s a matter of re-digging. But when you bury it, the rotted crawfish just make pools of soft muck,” Cormier said during a recent Police Jury meeting. “It’s very unpleasant,” he added.

Cormier proposes to lease an additional acre to finish out the season, then return the original lease for the bulk of the property to its owner.

But Justus says she doesn’t know if DNR will allow such a move.

“They have to present it to the Environmental Control Commission. That’s their decision. Right now they’re operating a minimal operation — what can barely operate, and what we can barely put up with,” Justus adds. “These dumps don’t meet the guidelines set up by the Blue Book (the department’s code of regulations) — there’s no way they can.”

Meanwhile, some of the residents of about 15 houses within a quarter mile of the dump say they’re fed up with the smell.

Most of the people around here work at the plants and they’re afraid to complain because they might lose their jobs, says Mrs. Joseph Patin.

“They can’t afford to sign a petition (complaining about the smell). It’s terrible. Sometimes you have to stay inside the house,” she said.

The smell is usually at its ripest during the warm, still hours of late evening, Mrs. Patin said. “Some days are worse than others. It all depends on how the wind changes.”

$Piles of rotting shellfish attract are covered with flies.

The problem is compounded by waste thrown along the roadside.