Odors expected to decrease soon

By BOB ANDERSON
Environmental editor

Odors from the landfarming of sewage sludge should “decrease drastically” next week as the last pits at the south treatment plant are cleaned out and the landfarm operators do more mixing of the sludge with the soil, said Jack Ensminger, who heads the city-parish’s environmental division.

The odors have brought complaints from people who live in the vicinity of the plant.

“We hope to be through hauling on Monday, if we don’t have a major rain,” Ensminger said early Thursday.

Within a week after hauling is stopped, there should be no odor problem, he said.

The landowners then will cap the site and plant grass on it, according to Ensminger, who said it is the last time the city-parish will have to send sludge to the site.

The treatment plant is now using a filter press system that removes water from the sludge, which will be sent to Devil’s Swamp landfill or a commercial, industrial waste facility rather than being placed in lagoons, Ensminger said.

Taking the lagoons out of operation should also stop the occasional odors that the plant’s neighbors noticed even when there was no landfarming, he said.

The current landfarming operation has a state permit and the site is being monitored by the city-parish, Ensminger said.

Odors from the operation have angered some residents in the southern part of the city, and Bill Davis of the Department of Environmental Quality said the agency has been getting periodic complaints for the last couple of weeks. He said he advised the operators to spread the sludge over a larger area and do more discing so the sludge gets sufficient air for bacteria to break it down.

Some residents have been concerned the odors may linger all summer, but Ensminger said there that won’t be the case.