

County scraps Greene Valley area as impound lot location

By **Katie Foutz**

STAFF WRITER

DuPage County officials nixed plans for a vehicle impound lot near Greene Valley Forest Preserve on Tuesday, said County Board member Thomas Bennington, R-Downers Grove.

The county Public Works Committee decided the county-owned wastewater treatment plant site in Woodridge was inappropriate for the impounded vehicle storage lot for the DuPage County sheriff's office and municipal police departments.

Earlier this month, the committee agreed the site also was unfit for an outdoor shooting range for area law enforcement agencies. The sheriff must move the current range to make way for the DuPage County Technology Park under construction at DuPage Airport in West Chicago.

Residents, environmental groups and public officials opposed both uses of the Woodridge site. The property borders a residential neighborhood in Woodridge and Greene Valley Forest Preserve near Naperville, between Route 53 and the East Branch of the DuPage River.

Carol Roegner, spokeswoman for DuPage County Sheriff John Zaruba, said last week the sheriff had abandoned the idea of relocating either the practice shooting range or the vehicle impound lot there.

The sheriff had not seen the committee's resolution or been told what happens next, Roegner said Tuesday. However, the decision sounded like good news to him.

"He's happy for the citizens surrounding Greene Valley because the site never should have been considered in the first place, and we certainly didn't have any intention to hurt the environment or adversely affect anyone who lives there," she said.

DuPage County Chief Operations Officer Greg Wilcox said the Woodridge location was "probably the best site" on county property for the shooting range or impound lot. He didn't know if the county would purchase property for those purposes.

"We don't need it," Wilcox said. "(The sheriff) needs it. He'll decide."

Wheaton resident Ruth Najacht, spokeswoman for the volunteer environmental group Preserve the DuPage County Forest Preserve District, said in a statement that to protect the forest preserve from detrimental development, the group now hopes the county will return about 12 acres of Greene Valley Forest Preserve it received in a 2002 land swap.

In return, the Forest Preserve District gained about 30 acres of county-owned land along the Des Plaines River in southeastern DuPage County.

Najacht said the group will continue to fight a separate proposal for the Forest Preserve District to build a public sport shooting and archery range.

Contact staff writer Katie Foutz at kfoutz@scn1.com or (630) 416-5216.

01/21/04