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## Bethlehem Landfill Operators Find Pollution Leaks

By Amy Quinton

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### Teaser:

North Country Environmental Services, the company that operates the Bethlehem landfill, says its found pollution leaking in the system

### Synopsis:

The owners and operators of the Bethlehem landfill say they have discovered pollution leaking in the system.

The D-E-S denied North Country Environmental Services, a subsidiary of Casella Waste, a permit to expand last December in part because of groundwater contamination.

North Country Environmental Services took the state to court over the issue.

As New Hampshire Public Radio's Amy Quinton reports, the case has now been put on hold.

### Transcript:

Officials at the Bethlehem landfill say that they discovered the problem in late August this year.

General Manager Kevin Roy says that a cap buried in the old landfill had holes in it.

2:01 "there were areas of the cap that were compromised, they had gone into that area several times over the years to do some work, and the cap had been hit you could tell there were areas where it needed to be fixed."

Roy says landfill gas escaped, which contaminated the soil.

He says the leak was located at the junction of the cap and the liner.

DES waste management director Mike Wimsatt says in addition, leachate, which is the liquid that contains contaminants from the waste, escaped as well.

1:12 they did identify a location on the lower portion of the cap over the facility that allowed that leachate to leak into a down chute that conveyed normally clean stormwater from the facility into a detention pond.

The company applied for a permit last year to expand their landfill.

But the D-E-S had denied it in part because they found volatile organic compounds or VOC's in monitoring wells at the site.

2:43 and in fact what this revelation suggests is that we were absolutely correct about that  
2:51

Wimsatt says the DES is expecting a detailed written report from the company and their consultants to identify just what they found and what steps they've taken to correct the leaks.

Landfill General Manager Kevin Roy says they've already taken care of all the problems.

4:59 what we did and what the report will show that we went in and found those imperfections, repaired it, certified it, and buttoned everything back up.

But residents in Bethlehem who have opposed the landfill expansion remain distrustful.

7:17 "I think it speaks to company's credibility."

Selectwoman Jeanne Robillard.

5:00 I don't believe that is the only problem and certainly if there is a leak of this magnitude that would have caused these VOC's and bromide levels in one section that they weren't aware of, what's to say there aren't more.

Robillard says that North Country Environmental Services has long argued that contaminants in the test wells were caused by isolated leachate spills from old tanks in the landfill and not a leak in the landfill liner.

After the company was denied the permit from DES, it filed a lawsuit against the state.

The argument then was the liner was not causing the contamination.

The company still holds that to be true.

2:54 "It wasn't the liner itself, it was the cap, in a closed section of the landfill"

It's a point of contention between landfill opponents and owners.

But whatever the case, North Country Environmental Services has stayed its court case against the DES.

Roy says he expects future monitoring reports to show that contaminant levels are decreasing.

18:07 we believe that to be true because now that we've cleaned all that up and made these repairs we're seeing the trending continue to go down, matter of fact there's some VOC's that are completely gone.

When the DES denied the landfill expansion permit last year, they required the company to come up with a plan to find the leaks and fix them.

The DES says correcting the most recent discovery will now be part of that plan.

For NHPR news, I'm Amy Quinton.

#### Audio file:

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