

REGIONAL

Maine doesn't want Massachusetts's trash anymore. That's a problem for construction debris

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Massachusetts is about to have a several thousand-ton problem.

In the early 2000s, Bay State leaders became concerned about landfills, namely how quickly they were filling up. To fix the problem, a law went into effect in 2006 banning the disposal of most construction debris in landfills, including asphalt pavement, brick, concrete, metal and wood. Gypsum board was later added to the list.

But the law was a Band-Aid. The waste was still being created and had to go somewhere – and for the past decade and a half, the answer has been Maine, specifically Juniper Ridge Landfill in Alton, outside Bar Harbor.

Truckload after truckload of debris has been carted to the Pine Tree State, due to a loophole in their law allowing it.

That's coming to an end. No state wants to be another state's dumping ground and as of Feb. 1, 2023, Maine isn't going to take it anymore. A new law will essentially close the landfill to all construction and debris waste coming from outside Vacation Land. And other states are expected to follow Maine's lead.

What's going on here: This MA neighborhood was supposed to be protected. Now a fossil fuel plant is being built

This has left Massachusetts with a voluminous problem. For perspective, in 2019 the Bay State exported nearly 2 million tons out of a total 5.5 million tons of collected trash to other states, according to Department of Environmental Protection data. And of the 19 landfills in Massachusetts, 11 have been closed, according to the DEP.

So what comes next? Where do the kitchen cabinets pulled from your house during the remodel go? Or what about all of the trash being created by a development project in town? Where does the waste go when one property is demolished to create something new?

In a five-part series, WickedLocal.com explores the decision, the impact on Bay State residents and what the future might hold as Massachusetts, once again, finds itself staring down a looming solid waste crisis.