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## Possible Leakage Found At Landfill

Robert Blechl

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BETHLEHEM, N.H. - The N.H. Department of Environmental Services has found elevated levels of bromide and volatile organic compounds inside several of the landfill's monitoring wells.

The findings come on the eve of a public hearing scheduled for 6 p.m. today at Bethlehem Elementary School. The hearing will focus on a proposal by the landfill's owner - North Country Environmental Services - to construct two 39-foot-high berms to hold an additional million tons of waste that would go on top of the 2.5 million tons already there.

Bryan Gould, attorney for NCES's parent company, Casella Waste Systems Inc., said NCES has been aware of the problem for several years and has actively been working to rectify it. Gould said it is uncertain if the letter will affect the course of the meeting.

In March 2004, the state Supreme Court denied expansion beyond the landfill's current 51 acres. In February 2007, Casella applied for a modification permit to construct the berms, which would entail an upward expansion.

After tonight's hearing, a 30-day public comment period will follow, after which DES will either approve or deny Casella's application. A decision is expected in October. If approved, the landfill would stay open until 2019.

"There are several instances in which ground water monitoring ... has detected VOCs and bromide above established background concentrations, thus indicating that contaminants have been released," Mike Wimsatt, director of DES's Waste Management Division, wrote to NCES's John Gay. "Although NCES has suggested that releases are the result of leachate spills involving past leachate handling systems and practices, and are not due to an ongoing release(s) from the landfill, there is insufficient information to fully support such a conclusion ..."

The findings, taken from an April 2008 ground water sampling, indicate that the VOC concentration is "increasing," Wimsatt wrote.

"This is actually an issue that DES has been watching and NCES and its consultants have been working on for several years now," Gould said. "There was a plan approved in May to address the cause of the bromide and VOCs in some of the monitoring wells. This is really not news to us in terms of what the findings were. Our consultants believe this resulted from a couple of events as opposed to any compromise of the landfill liner system."

State officials also expressed concern about NCES's future liner construction plans.

"The proposed design of the eastern berm, and a portion of the western berm, places the liner under the berm, which potentially allows gas to migrate through the berm and leachate to seep under the berm," Wimsatt wrote.

Additionally, Wimsatt wrote, "The locations and elevations of the two northerly asbestos sites ... do not appear to correspond with the burial location plans."