

Casella solid waste application for Dalton landfill denied; DES cites 'dormancy'

BY: CLAIRE SULLIVAN - APRIL 3, 2025 5:42 PM



For years, local residents have rallied against the project, citing its proximity to a pristine lake and forest, and related fears about how the landfill would impact the environment and public health. (File photo by Amanda Gokee/New Hampshire Bulletin)

This story was updated on April 3 at 6:10 p.m. to add a comment from Casella.

A Vermont-based company's proposal to build a landfill in a tiny, northern New Hampshire town took a major blow this week.

The Department of Environmental Services issued a "denial by dormancy" Thursday to Casella Waste System's solid waste permit application for its proposed landfill in Dalton. This permit is one of several sought by the company for the project, and without it, the project cannot go forward.

The company has 30 days to file an appeal with the state's Waste Management Council. Jeff Weld, Casella's vice president of communications, said the company had received the letter and was considering its options.

For years, local residents have rallied against the project, citing its proximity to a pristine lake and forest, and related fears about how the landfill would impact the environment and public health. Republican Gov. Kelly Ayotte joined them in their efforts, vowing in her inaugural address in January that the landfill would not be built. At the same time, solid waste management across the state has come under greater legislative scrutiny, especially after the state approved hotly contested updates to its landfill regulations in December.

A permit application becomes dormant when the applicant fails to submit required information requested by the department within a year of first being notified that the application is incomplete. For Casella, that one-year mark came on Feb. 28, according to a letter sent to the company Thursday by Mike Wimsatt, the agency's solid waste management division director.

A dormant, incomplete application "shall be deemed denied without further action by the department," per the letter.

Wimsatt said the application remained incomplete for a number of reasons. For one, it lacked a "site report that demonstrates that the location of the proposed facility complies with all applicable siting requirements and that the site is a suitable location for the proposed facility ...," according to the letter. Additionally, "the maps,

figures, and hydrogeological report” submitted by the applicant in 2023 had not been updated to show compliance with the state’s regulations that were updated in December, Wimsatt said.

Legal agreements submitted by the company “failed to fulfill application requirements because they were heavily redacted and referenced other legal agreements, which were not provided,” Wimsatt said.

The company also had not submitted “copies of the documents that demonstrate that the applicant and their successors and assigns will have a legal right for the use of the properties as proposed in the application,” which the state requires, according to the letter.

For those who have invested years in fighting the landfill, it was a moment of optimism. But for many, the work doesn’t end in Dalton. Adam Finkel, a former federal regulator and Dalton resident who has advocated for solid waste reform in the state, pointed to pending legislation to bolster the state’s landfill siting requirements and other aspects of the recently updated regulations that raised deep concerns last year.

“Very happy that DES has done the right thing, but it doesn’t in any way, large or small, deter me from the larger goal,” Finkel said, “which is making sure that no community in New Hampshire ever has to deal with this kind of inept vanity project in a terrible location, unneeded, ever again.”