

New Hampshire Bulletin

Casella subsidiary to pay \$1.9 million in penalties for alleged Bethlehem violations

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 A driveway provides access to the North Country Environmental Services transfer station and landfill property in Bethlehem, where alleged violations led to a \$1.9 million settlement announced Jan. 12. (Photo by Molly Rains/New Hampshire Bulletin)

The owner and operator of a landfill in Bethlehem will pay \$1.9 million in penalties to the state for multiple alleged violations.

The fine is the largest civil penalty ever assessed for a violation of the state's [Solid Waste Management Act](#), said Attorney General John Formella in [a press release](#) Monday. The release announced the settlement between the state and North Country Environmental Services, Inc., a subsidiary of Vermont-based Casella Waste Systems, Inc., which operates a landfill in Bethlehem.

"I think it's good that they're held accountable for the issues," said Nancy Strand, Bethlehem Select Board chair, in a phone call Tuesday. However, she said, given the size of the companies involved, the penalty amounted to "a slap on the wrist." In 2025, Casella Waste Systems estimated total revenue at about \$1.84 billion, according to [a financial report](#) released in October.

Alleged violations at the landfill include placement of waste outside the permitted limits of the landfill; failure to prevent leaks of leachate, or toxic trash effluent; storage of more leachate than allowed within the landfill; failure to investigate and report certain violations; a hole in the primary landfill liner, which is intended to help keep trash and leachate contained; drilling through another overlay liner; and failing to adequately cover the landfill at the end of a working day.

The consent decree settlement agreement does not contain a judgment on the facts around, or liability for, the alleged violations. But payment of the \$1.9 million penalty, according to the terms of the agreement, will conclude the case around those alleged violations.

The fine is for past violations, and is issued “on top of” costs Casella has incurred to address those on site in Bethlehem, said Christopher G. Aslin, senior assistant attorney general, in an email Tuesday.



■ A dumpster bears the logo of Vermont-based Casella Waste Systems, which operates, through a subsidiary, a landfill in Bethlehem. (Photo by Molly Rains/New Hampshire Bulletin)

“Over the last two years we have invested significantly in improving the operations of the North Country Environmental Services landfill,” said Jeff Weld, a spokesperson for Casella Waste Systems, in an email. “We have worked to address compliance matters at the site by improving our control and monitoring systems, and replacing our management team.”

Wayne Morrison, of North Country Alliance for Balanced Change, wrote in a press release Tuesday that the violations were the result of “a pattern of chronic noncompliance.” The alliance has advocated against a proposed Casella landfill in Dalton and proposed expansions in Bethlehem.

The terms of the settlement may call for North Country Environmental Services, Inc., to expend a portion of the penalty funds on a separate project involving remediating the erosion of landfill debris into the Saco River in Bartlett, at the site of a former municipal landfill. The state is awaiting the results of a study on possible routes for remediation and cost estimates, Aslin said.

Based on the outcome of that study, the state will decide whether to move ahead with the remediation project, he said. The remainder of the \$1.9 million will be paid to the state, according to the terms of the settlement.

The Bethlehem landfill at the heart of the settlement has been the focus of many conversations around waste management in New Hampshire in recent years [and the current legislative session](#). Strand said she hoped the settlement would bring attention to the status of the landfill and the town's concerns.

“I think it’s a positive step because it recognizes the problems, at least some of the problems, that our landfill in particular has had,” she said. “It may help explain to outsiders why we’re kind of wary of the business relationship with (Casella).”