

https://www.caledonianrecord.com/news/local/governor-greets-landfill-oppositon-reaffirms-hers/article_0df0aab8-cdf9-5261-86d6-42555debb028.html

Governor Greets Landfill Oppositor, Reaffirms Hers

To Date, Opposition Group Has Spent \$1 Million In Fight

Robert Blechl rblechl@caledonian-record.com Staff Writer
Apr 18, 2026

1 of 9



Gov. Kelly Ayotte on Friday visited Forest Lake State Park to greet opponents of a proposed landfill and to reaffirm her own opposition. Left to right: Sarah Doucette, of Whitefield and a member of the North Country Alliance for Balanced Change; Ay NCABC president Wayne Morrison, of Whitefield; and NCABC vice-president Tom Tower, of Whitefield. (Photo by Robert Blechl)

DALTON — New Hampshire’s governor visited Forest Lake State Park on Friday morning to greet more than 60 residents and opponents of a landfill proposed beside the lake, to reaffirm her own opposition, and to preserve a local voice for communities when it comes to siting or expansion.

As they listened to distant loon calls on the lake, their message was clear — fight to keep the North Country from becoming a dumping ground for other states’ trash.

Gov. Kelly Ayotte was joined by District 1 Executive Councilor Joe Kenney, state Sen. David Rochefort, R-Littleton, and members of the North Country Alliance for Balanced Change, which has been a leader in the fight since 2019.

10 REASONS WHY YOU MAY WANT TO SELL YOUR PROPERTY TO TANGUAY HOMES

- No 6%, 8% or 10% Commission to Pay
- No Multiple Showings with Little Notice
- No Waiting to See if Buyer Can Get Financed
- No Waiting to See if Property will Appraise
- No Waiting to See if Property Will Pass Home Inspections
- No Cleaning To Do - Take What You Want - Leave The Cleaning Up To Us!
- Sell As Is! No Repairs To Do Before Selling
- Free Storage Available
- We Assist With All Paperwork
- You Choose The Month - Day - Time Of Closing

**Eliminate the stress of selling your house, camp, land or commercial property...
CALL OR TEXT FOR A FREE ON-SITE CONSULTATION
802-624-0305**

www.tanguayhomes.com

EMAIL: tanguayhomes@comcast.net FAX: 802-334-6126 Call For Our Free Recorded Message: 802-334-6643

Turning out, too, were past and present state representatives as well as Select Board members from Dalton, where Vermont-based Casella Waste Systems is proposing a new commercial landfill; from Bethlehem, where the company is behind legislation to undo an existing legal agreement it has with that town in order to expand its landfill there; from Carroll, where Casella has proposed a new transfer station that has led some to voice concerns it would be a gateway to a new landfill; and from Littleton.

“In 1935 — 91 years ago — some very astute CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] folks and state folks got together and decided to make this one of the first eight state parks,” said Tom Tower, vice-president of NCABC. “The place has been celebrated. The views here rival some of the best views in the state ... The North Country is such a special part of New Hampshire and it’s defined by its natural beauty and strong communities and a deep connection people have here to the land and air and water around us. That’s why we live here. But it’s more than us now.”

Millions of people visit the state annually, creating a yearly growth engine of more than \$4 billion and supporting 33,000 jobs, said Tower.

“So the North Country isn’t just ours anymore,” he said. “It’s a big part of New Hampshire. Gov. Kelly Ayotte said New Hampshire’s natural beauty is the bedrock of our quality of life and the foundation of our tourism economy. Recently, during her State of the State address, she made it very clear that places like Forest Lake should never become a dumping ground for out-of-state trash.”

The crowd broke into applause.

When Ayotte was running for governor, Rochefort informed her about the landfill proposal near the lake and invited her to visit it.

She did, viewing the mountains in the distance, walking to the beach, envisioning herself in a canoe on the water.

“I was like are you kidding me?” said Ayotte. “This is the last place we should site a landfill.”

She spoke with others who recounted their experiences at the lake and park.

“The fact that this is one of our first eight state parks tells you that we have long recognized in New Hampshire that this is a very special place,” said Ayotte. “I said it in my inauguration, I said it before I was elected, I just said it recently — we are not going to locate a landfill at Forest Lake. No way, no how. It’s not going to happen. We are going to protect New Hampshire’s natural beauty, and we are also going to protect the local voice in this.”

More applause.

“I’m going to make sure that there’s a local voice, that your views should be considered when there is siting of a landfill or an expansion of a landfill,” she said. “You should have a say in that. You have my support with that and you will continue to have that support.”

“I agree with the governor wholeheartedly,” said Kenney. “We should not be sitting here in Dalton next to Forest Lake State Park. It would be a crime if something like that were to ever happen, and it would be a stain on our legacies as elected officials that we were not willing to stand up and push back against special interests.”

Decades ago, the popular lake drew a visit from a famous actress, Elizabeth Montgomery, star of “Bewitched,” he said.

“You come, you enjoy it, you bring back good memories,” said Kenney. “So anyone who comes to Forest Lake State Park in the future should always return home with good memories because we’re going to keep it free of any landfill that would even think of being here.”

“When Kelly Ayotte and David Rochefort came to the lake, they made it very clear — not on my watch,” said Tower. “Sen. Rochefort has made this a campaign priority, and since he was elected, he hasn’t backed down.”

“When there was talk about putting a landfill here, it just didn’t make any sense,” said Rochefort, a native of Lancaster who visited the lake with his friends as a youth, has many stories, and has taken his own children there.

“This isn’t a political issue,” he said. “This is a personal issue for me. Having been here, grown up here, lived here, chose to come back here and raise my family here, this is an asset that New Hampshire has, and our natural resources are our biggest asset. We need to work to protect our natural resources, and New Hampshire has a great history of doing so. The Weeks Act [of 1911], which established the national forest system, was enacted because someone in the North Country said we had to protect our natural resources. We’ll keep fighting.”



“And we’re going to win,” said Ayotte, who thanked Tower and NCABC president Wayne Morrison for their leadership in the fight.

Take any fourth-grader and ask if the park is a good place to put a landfill, and the answer would be no, said Morrison.

“This is not a complicated issue,” he said. “It’s not about science or technology or all kinds of studies. This is just basic common sense. You don’t put a landfill near a state park, a river or a lake. We’ve been fighting for seven years since then. We didn’t choose to be in this landfill fight. A multi-billion-dollar, for-profit, out-of-state waste company brought it to our door.”

NCABC set to work educating itself and local communities about solid waste and related laws and went to the statehouse with solutions and ideas for reform, said Morrison.

“An unnecessary landfill in Dalton is not just a problem for the North Country,” he said. “Because of the leachate that it generates, it’s a statewide issue and creates all kinds of burdens and risks to leachate management systems and wastewater treatment plants. It poses an ever-increasing risk to lakes, rivers, and drinking supplies all the way to Nashua. It’s a statewide issue. A landfill in Dalton isn’t just about the 900 people who live in Dalton. It’s about every resident in the state having safe drinking water and our tourism being protected.”

To date, the fight has required NCABC to raise more than \$1 million to hire lawyers and scientists, said Morrison.

“And all of that, and all the people around here, was to avoid being bullied into an unneeded development project whose primary purpose is to benefit a single company’s profit line and shareholder equity, and largely from importing trash from out of state, mostly from Massachusetts,” he said. “Meanwhile, it is New Hampshire communities who will absorb all the environmental and quality-of-life impacts and assume all the inevitable long-term economic, human health, and wildlife risks. One of the best things I heard you say, Governor, is that the North Country is a gem. We cannot let it become a dumping ground for out-of-state waste.”

While there will always be trash and a place to put it, the state does not currently need a landfill and should not expand landfills unless it has to, said Morrison.

Kenney voiced support for House Bill 1189, which would create a new solid waste site evaluation committee to decide what the state will do with its future solid waste.

Morrison, too, supported HB 1189.

Morrison advocated against House Bill 707, a bill that also sought a new site evaluation committee, but was “hijacked” by several state senators to include language that would strip local control and roll back legal agreements that cap landfill expansions, such as the 2012 agreement that Bethlehem entered into with Casella.

“That bill is tailored to try to drive an expansion in the town of Bethlehem, despite repeated votes opposing any expansion,” said Morrison. “There are legally binding contracts to prevent that very outcome. Governor, we ask you to ensure that bill never goes into law.”

The crowd applauded.

“The only outcome that makes sense, governor, not only for the North Country, but the state of New Hampshire, is that there be no landfill in Dalton and no expansion in Bethlehem,” said Morrison.

Updates

In recent weeks, Senate Bill 593, which was similar to HB 707, was amended by its sponsors to remove the language seeking to dissolve existing legal agreements between towns and landfill companies and to instead enable the use of solid waste management funds by solid waste management districts.

And although Casella has told its shareholders that it is moving ahead with its Dalton proposal, the state denied its permit application in April 2025.

Casella appealed that decision and sued the state.

A records review shows that Casella has agreed to delay and continue the court proceedings and the appeal before the New Hampshire Waste Management Council to later dates.

In January, Casella paid nearly \$2 million in fines for mismanagement of leachate, also known as garbage juice, and for other violations at its landfill in Bethlehem, the largest such civil penalty issued to a solid waste company in New Hampshire history. The civil action also cited the 154,000-gallon leachate spill in Bethlehem in 2021, which was the state's largest leachate spill.

On Thursday, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection announced that it fined the Oxford Transfer Station, a Casella subsidiary, more than \$20,000 for several violations related to that state's solid waste regulations.

**Good things happen
when we work together.**

[Learn More](#)



Robert Blechl