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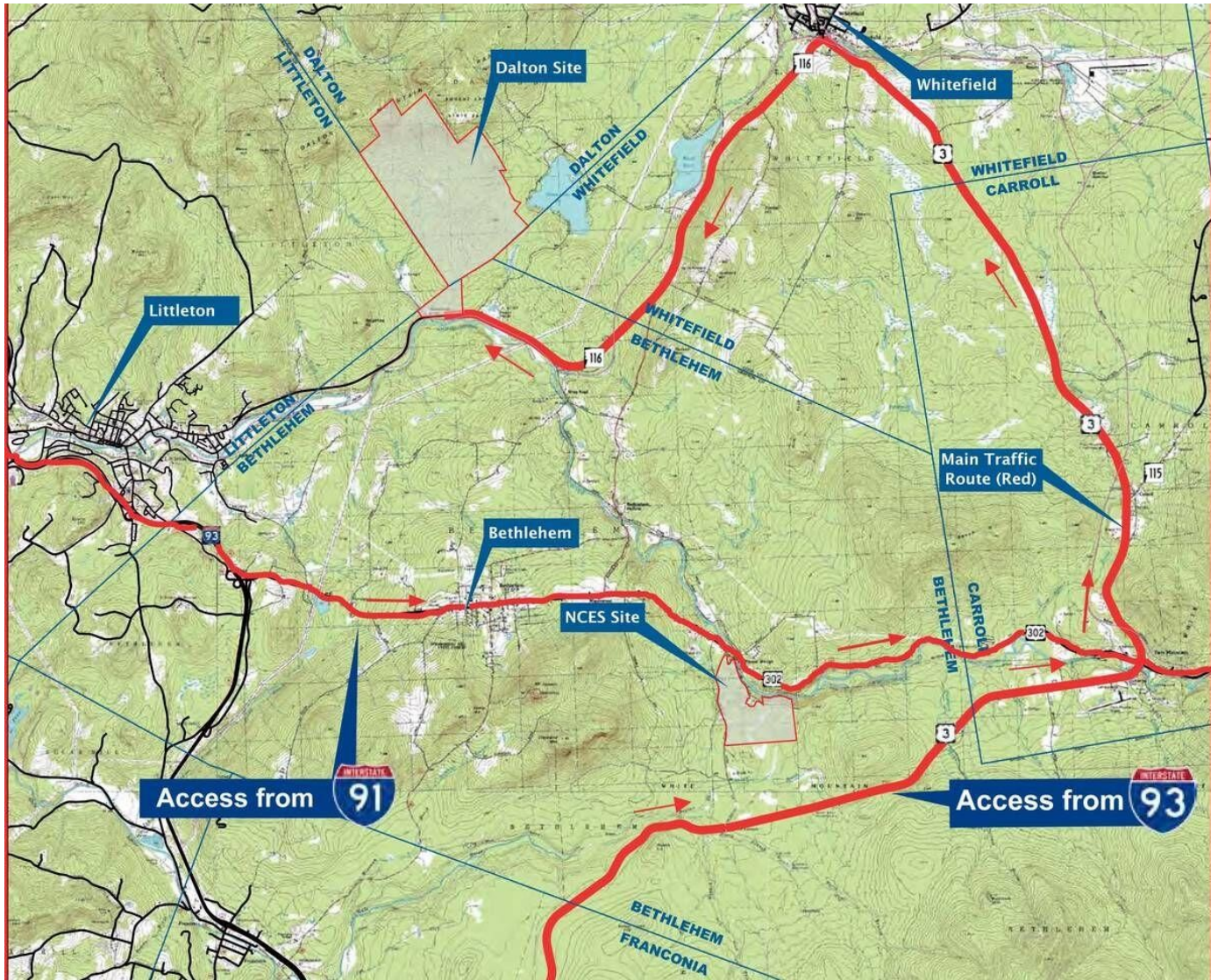
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North Country:More Towns Mount Opposition To Proposed Landfill In Dalton

State Parks Director Expresses New Concerns

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According to a truck routes map provided by Casella Waste Systems to the state Department of Transportation, the proposed route from the north to a landfill in Dalton would go along Interstates 91 and 93 and east along Route 302

through Bethlehem. (Courtesy image)

Voicing concerns about truck traffic and possible pollution of the Ammonoosuc River, more towns, as well as local business owners, are formally opposing the proposed Casella Waste Systems landfill in Dalton.

Casella representatives have dismissed those concerns, saying they are focused instead on Dalton and not on “outside groups.”

Joining the opposition are the Lisbon Conservation Commission, which wrote a letter to the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, the agency that would approve the wetlands permit; the Littleton Conservation Commission, which has now submitted its letter to DES regarding impacts to the river; voters in the town of Carroll who submitted a petitioned warrant article resolution with concerns about truck traffic; a growing number of Littleton business owners, now more than 40, signing on to a petition; and fresh concerns from the state Division of Parks and Recreation.

Lisbon

On Jan. 7, Katrine Barclay, chair of the Lisbon Conservation Commission, wrote to DES regarding its wetlands application from Casella that is currently under review and that the department in November said contained insufficient information that the company needs to provide.

She cited DES’s finding about how “it is not clear how the downstream high-value Alder Brook

wetland complex (which was previously considered for prime wetland designation by the town of Dalton) and ultimately the Ammonoosuc River's water quality, will be protected if treatment of landfill runoff fails or if the landfill liners develop leaks over time."

"The town of Lisbon's drinking water comes from two wells located adjacent to the Ammonoosuc River," wrote Barclay. "There have been issues with contamination of these wells in the past. The conservation commission is concerned how Lisbon's water quality would be further impacted by the proposed project. Please take this into account in your review of the application."

Littleton

On Monday, Tom Alt, of the Littleton Conservation Commission, wrote DES's wetlands division to say that a major part of a conservation commission's responsibility is directed at protecting wetlands.

"At the same time, we acknowledge the fact that the proposed project would seriously impact the local communities in socio-economic and other ways," he said.

Although the landfill footprint would be in Dalton, the property extends into adjacent towns, including Littleton, where the entire Adler Brook drainage flows into, said Alt.

Casella proposes impacting or destroying more than 16 acres of wetlands for the project, 150 feet of perennial stream, 1,350 feet of intermittent stream, and five vernal pools; impacts that he called "seriously large."

"In Littleton, the LCC has dealt with many wetlands permits and the fact remains that even with such 'tools' as compensatory mitigation, permanently impacted wetlands are destroyed wetlands," wrote Alt. "And when a project such as a landfill is involved, the destruction can travel far outside a landfill's footprint."

Alt cited DES's mission to "help sustain a high quality of life for all citizens by protecting and restoring the environment and public health in New Hampshire. The protection and wise management of the state's environment are the two main goals of the agency."

"The Littleton Conservation Commission strongly opposes the approval of the landfill project involving NHDES [wetlands permit application from Casella] and proposes that NHDES abide by

its own mission statement to deny this project,” he said.

Casella Focus On Dalton

The proposed privately-owned, commercial landfill beside Forest Lake State Park would accommodate at least 14 million tons of waste during a lifespan of about 40 years, according to Casella’s estimate of about 360,000 tons of trash buried annually.

According to the company’s proposed host community agreement presented to the town of Dalton, up to nearly half of all waste imported to the North Country during the life of the landfill would be from out of state and at least 51 percent from New Hampshire.



“Our necessary focus is to engage, inform, and have a conversation with the citizens of Dalton and their elected town leaders,” Casella spokesman, Joe Fusco said Wednesday. “We have been encouraged by a growing number of residents and supporters who are making their voices heard, asking important questions, and seeking to understand the opportunity and long-term benefits for Dalton.”

Notable about the list of commissions expressing their concerns is that none are in Dalton, he said.

“What we are seeing in Dalton is a curiosity about the project and the very substantial community benefits we have proposed,” said Fusco. “Despite the strong-arm tactics employed by one individual in town and agitation by outside groups, more and more residents are learning the facts and coming to the conclusion that the Granite State Landfill can give the town an economic boost it has never experienced before.”

Serving on the Dalton Conservation Commission are Douglas Ingerson Jr., the property owner who stands to gain as yet untold millions if he sells all or some of the 1,900 acres surrounding the landfill site to Casella.

State Concerns

Despite support by some residents in Dalton, some state officials are now weighing in on the project that would involve the cutting of about 180 wooded acres.

In a letter issued Tuesday to DES, Phil Bryce, director of the state parks division, expressed concerns about water pollution, the lifespan of the landfill liner, and trash from the landfill blowing into the 397-acre Forest Lake State Park, one of New Hampshire's 10 original state parks that is currently being eyed for a future campground.

"We would not want the landfill to impact water quality in the lake and in the Park for the short term or any time in the future," wrote Bryce. "How do we know the landfill will not affect groundwater in perpetuity? ... We have concerns regarding the impact of noise, odors, and pest animals (seagulls) on our visitors today at the beach and our visitors in the future with the addition of a campground in another portion of the property, particularly if the campground is closer to the landfill ... How can we be assured that there will be no negative impacts on the park site or visitors resulting directly and indirectly from the trash?"

Carroll

Residents in the nearby town of Carroll have submitted a petitioned article for town meeting asking to see if the town "will vote to declare its opposition to a new landfill site in Dalton" that "would have negative consequences for Carroll."

Impacts stated in the article are "tractor trailers importing out-of-state trash and toxic landfill leachate on our road with these trucks making round trips," "higher rate of tractor trailers on Routes 3 and 302 and with that comes noise and increased danger of accidents and toxic spills," "the odor, litter and leaks that come from those trucks," "environmental impacts on the Ammonoosuc River, area lakes and groundwater," and "the effect this will have on our tourism and lives of residents."

If approved, the warrant article would be forwarded to governor, Executive Council, state

senators and state representatives, and DES.

Trucks

As for the truck route, Fusco said, “We can think of no reason that truck traffic would use anything but the main north/south artery for trucks in the North Country, Route 3.”

According to a map and narrative the company provided in its own traffic study submitted to NHDOT (Department of Transportation) in September, however, one “Littleton bypass” route includes eastbound Route 302, from I-93’s Exit 40, through Bethlehem for truck traffic arriving from the north on interstates 93 and 91.

According to the map, trucks arriving from the south on I-93 would enter Route 3 at Exit 35 and go through Carroll and pass the Whitefield Elementary School and downtown Whitefield.

Access through Bethlehem would pass the Bethlehem Elementary School and downtown Bethlehem.

In January 2020, Casella engineer John Gay told DOT representatives that there would be about 100 total tractor trailer trucks accessing a landfill in Dalton daily.

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