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## House committee narrowly recommends advancing landfill siting bill

By: [Amanda Gokee](#) - March 4, 2022 11:52 am



The bill would create a buffer between new landfills and water bodies, like Forest Lake in Dalton. (Amanda Gokee | New Hampshire Bulletin)

A bill that would create a buffer between landfills and waterways was recommended by the House Environment and Agriculture Committee in a 10-9 vote on Wednesday.

Rep. Walter Stapleton of Claremont was the lone Republican to vote alongside committee Democrats in favor of advancing the legislation – one of many bills this session addressing solid waste after legislation to create a buffer between state parks and landfills failed last session. Those efforts emerged from a fight in the North Country over Casella’s proposal to site New England’s first new landfill in over a decade in Dalton.

[House Bill 1454](#) takes up that same issue, but focuses on water bodies instead of state parks and uses a different mechanism to determine an appropriate setback. The bill would create a buffer between new landfills and water bodies to prevent pollution from entering state waterways. The current buffer is 200 feet, and under this bill that would still be the minimum allowable distance. But siting would also have to factor in how quickly groundwater from the landfill could enter the nearby body of water, ensuring it would take at least five years. Committee Democrats argued this would be enough time to mediate potential contamination before it could enter a nearby waterbody.

Committee members who voted against the measure said the issue should be taken up in a study committee bill already passed by the committee – [House Bill 1049](#).

Those in support of the legislation said it would provide some protection to citizens in the North Country and that the issue of water contamination was too urgent to put off any longer, pointing to the high rate of cancer in Merrimack and other parts of the state struggling with water contamination.

The bill will now move to a vote before the full House.

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