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Where should landfills in NH be located? Lawmakers are still trying to decide on the rules

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*Daniela Allee / NHPR*

Lawmakers in the New Hampshire House's Environment and Agriculture Committee were split evenly Tuesday in a vote on a [bill](#) that could determine where future landfills are located in the state.

The bill would establish a formula for deciding how far a new landfill would need to be from a river, lake or coastal water body. That distance would be based on the rate that

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groundwater travels; the landfill would need to be far enough away from a water body that it would take groundwater five years to travel there.

That's meant to protect those water bodies from contamination that could be carried from the landfill in groundwater.

Current rules say landfills need to be 200 feet away from bodies of water.

Gov. Chris Sununu [vetoed a similar bill](#) in 2022. Republican Sen. Kevin Avarad [argued](#) that bill was specifically targeted to a landfill development proposed by Casella Waste Systems in Dalton.

Avarad is now sponsoring a separate [bill](#) in the Senate that would implement different rules relative to landfill setbacks.

Democratic Rep. Catherine Sofikitis spoke in favor of the House's landfill setback bill. She said it was time for the legislature to institute protections, especially for communities that live near landfill projects.

"We can tout lack of regulations. We can deregulate everything. But things don't come the way of small people, of the small towns that don't have the big budgets to protect themselves," she said.

Others on the committee, including the committee chair, Republican Rep. Judy Aron, called the bill "one-size-fits-all."

"For me, this has been particularly difficult because I do believe that change has to be made. But I also want to be very careful with the change that we do make," she said.

The legislation will come before the full house without a recommendation from the committee.

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