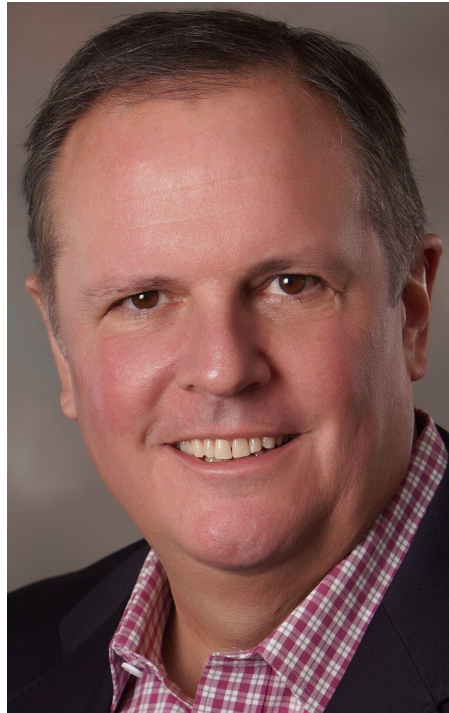


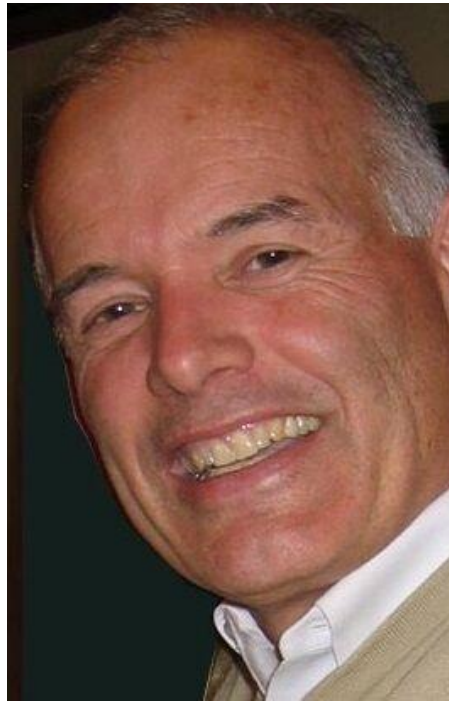
https://www.unionleader.com/opinion/op-eds/tom-tower-and-wayne-morrison-do-we-want-to-be-new-englands-landfill/article_a829de3d-0090-5990-a727-95ac5290ab03.html

Tom Tower and Wayne Morrison: Do we want to be New England's landfill?

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Tom Tower



Wayne Morrison

RECENTLY, the New Hampshire **Supreme Court overturned** a decision that would have closed Casella's troubled NCES landfill in Bethlehem. Casella would have you believe that this decision is a win for New Hampshire, but those with eyes wide open know better. We have already figured out that Casella's business strategy is putting New Hampshire on a glide path that will eventually make the Granite State the dumping ground for all of New England.

The company has been on a merger and acquisition spree for several years gobbling up small solid waste collection operations all over the Northeast. Now Casella needs places to dump all that extra trash. The company has been dabbling in Massachusetts and other states to reanimate closed landfills, but their main target is New Hampshire.

Why? Because of all New England states, New Hampshire has by far the most lax rules and regulations for landfills.

Thankfully the New Hampshire Legislature is starting to pay attention and may finally pass some bills that will rationalize management of landfills here.

In Casella's December 29th press release, they quote CEO John Casella's assumption that the recent Supreme Court decision ensures "continued availability of disposal capacity at NCES and the proposed Granite State Landfill (GSL)...vital to helping the state achieve its goals."

The reality is that keeping NCES open and getting permits to build the GSL landfill is not at all vital to New Hampshire. Our state already has sufficient landfill capacity, with or without either NCES or GSL, for at least 10 years under the most conservative assumptions, and more likely for several decades.

The only thing NCES and GSL are vital to is Casella's goal of finding a place in New Hampshire to dump solid waste from all over New England.

We won't know how much out-of-state waste NCES will take in, but in the past it took in up to about 30%. We do know that Casella's plan is to reserve as much as half of the capacity of the GSL landfill for out-of-state waste. That will likely amount to something approaching 230,000 tons per year or 4,140,000 tons over its 18-year permit life.

The Dec. 31 New Hampshire Union Leader story on the Supreme Court decision contained a head scratching statement: "According to Casella, continued availability of disposal capacity at NCES and the proposed Granite State Landfill in Dalton — targeted to come online near the time when NCES closes — is vital to helping the state achieve its goals of reducing the disposal of municipal solid waste and construction and demolition debris by 25% by 2030, and by 45% by 2050."

On what planet will bringing on line more landfill capacity, half of it dedicated to out of state waste, help New Hampshire meet its goal of significantly reducing solid waste?

What should concern everyone is that Casella's press release never addressed the risks to the health and welfare of New Hampshire residents from continuing use of NCES in Bethlehem and the prospect of a new GSL landfill in Dalton.

Casella is silent on whether the leachate leakage — including PFAS from NCES into the Ammonoosuc River — may be endangering the health and safety of nearby residents, especially those whose water supply comes from the Ammonoosuc River watershed.

And Casella is silent on the risks associated with siting GSL effectively in the middle of a sand and gravel pit, a location that hydrogeologists consider to be the worst type of site for a landfill.

It remains clear that Casella wants to keep NCES open and build GSL to make money for its shareholders, not to benefit the residents of New Hampshire, a course of action that clearly jeopardizes and conflicts with our state's flourishing outdoor recreation economy. More and more

New Hampshire legislators see this every day. And with a new governor coming in 10 months, we fully expect our state's Executive Branch, including the Department of Environmental Services, to see this too.

Mont Vernon's Wayne Morrison is president of North Country Alliance for Balanced Change. Tom Tower, the group's vice president, lives in Whitefield.