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Protesters urge state regulators to reject permit for Dalton landfill

By Josie Albertson-Grove New Hampshire Union Leader
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Protesters opposed to the proposed Dalton landfill gather during a rally in front of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services on Friday.

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UNION LEADER

About 100 people gathered outside the state Department of Environmental Services office in Concord on Friday afternoon, urging regulators to block a proposed landfill in Dalton, not far from Forest Lake State Park.

The proposed 137-acre landfill has met fierce opposition from local residents and conservationists since it was proposed in 2019.

Protesters said they worried about chemicals from the landfill entering the water, like the May discharge of leachate from a Bethlehem landfill owned by the same Vermont-based company, Casella Waste Systems. And they chafed at the idea of taking trash from other states.

The company has argued that the state needs another landfill to keep up with demand, and have said the proposed Dalton landfill would serve New Hampshire's needs for another 40 years.

Protesters were skeptical of the need for additional landfill capacity in the state, and urged the Department of Environmental Services to deny the permits Casella needs to build the landfill.

"The truth is, New Hampshire doesn't have a capacity issue. We have an out-of-state trash issue," read a statement submitted by state Sen. Erin Hennessey (R-Littleton), who did not attend the rally but asked for her statement to be read aloud.

Protesters said nearly half of the trash that would end up at the Dalton landfill would come from other states. Wayne Morrison of Whitefield said New Hampshire's trash-generation does not necessitate another landfill here. The landfill, he said, would not benefit New Hampshire.

Protesters also said they worried the department would not review the full scope of the company's plans for the site, after asking Casella to submit an amended application for the permit with information about just one of the three "phases" the company has proposed for the Dalton landfill.

Other protesters said they worried about the state park near the proposed landfill site, and said they worried a landfill would pollute the area.

Adam Finkel of Dalton, who is an adjunct professor of public health at the University of Michigan, said he is skeptical of any promise that a landfill at Dalton would never leak or fail.

"I will remember my days in Forest Lake, swimming to the dock with all my cousins, boating with Grampy, fishing with my brother," said Berkley Parenteau, 12, of Norfolk, Mass. whose family spends time on Forest Lake. "I want my own kids to have these memories too. I want my future to include a beautiful, pristine Forest Lake the way it is now."