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Public Comment Period On Controversial Landfill Development In Dalton Ends

New Hampshire Public Radio | By **Mara Hoplamazian**

Published September 13, 2021 at 12:00 PM EDT



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Berkeley Parenteau, 12, stands in front of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services during a rally against the development of a landfill near Forest Lake State Park.

Monday, Sept. 13, marks the close of the extended public comment period on a wetlands permit application for the [development of a controversial landfill](#) in the town of Dalton.

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The wetlands permit is one of many permits Vermont-based Casella Waste Systems needs to secure prior to moving forward with a 137-acre landfill next to Forest Lake State Park.

Opponents say that the landfill would import much of its trash from other states and pose a threat to the environment around the proposed site. But Casella says a new dump is necessary to expand the state and the region's landfill capacity.

In late August, the Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) drew criticism from landfill opponents when it asked Casella Waste Management to submit an amended application that only addressed the wetlands impacts of the first phase of its three-phase proposal.

After agreeing to submit an amended application on December 15, Casella requested an extension on the review of their application, which would push the deadline for a decision on the permit to December of 2022.

Tom Irwin, director of the Conservation Law Foundation, said an amended application including only the first phase could cause the department to underestimate the project's actual impact if the department doesn't consider the wetlands impact of phases two and three at the same time.

Rene Pelletier, assistant director of water for NHDES, said that his team did not want to entertain a permit for 17 acres of wetlands impact for all three phases of the project without knowing whether the project would receive other necessary permits, including permits from the Air Resources Division and the Solid Waste Division, for its later

phases

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He also said his team felt they didn't have enough information, particularly about the hydrology of the site, to make a decision about the permit without requesting an amended application.

Permitting the landfill would counter New Hampshire's own [policies](#) on solid waste, Irwin said. The state's waste management hierarchy puts landfilling at the very bottom, after other solutions like source reduction, recycling, and composting.

"Committing New Hampshire to yet another mega-landfill will only exacerbate where we are, will only continue to undermine state policies that favor waste reduction and will only continue to make New Hampshire a dumping ground for the rest of the region," Irwin said.

People gathered in front of the NHDES building for a rally Friday, holding handmade signs and chanting "do the right thing."

Berkeley Parenteau, 12, missed a day of school to urge NHDES to deny the wetlands application and preserve the lake that she's growing up with.

"Some of the people who are making the decisions about the landfill most likely won't be around to experience any of the consequences of these decisions, but I will," she said in her speech. "Allowing the landfill to be built on some of the precious wetlands is not doing the right thing,"

NHDES will develop a timeline for the rest of the application within the next couple of weeks, Rene Pelletier said.

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Mara Hoplamazian

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