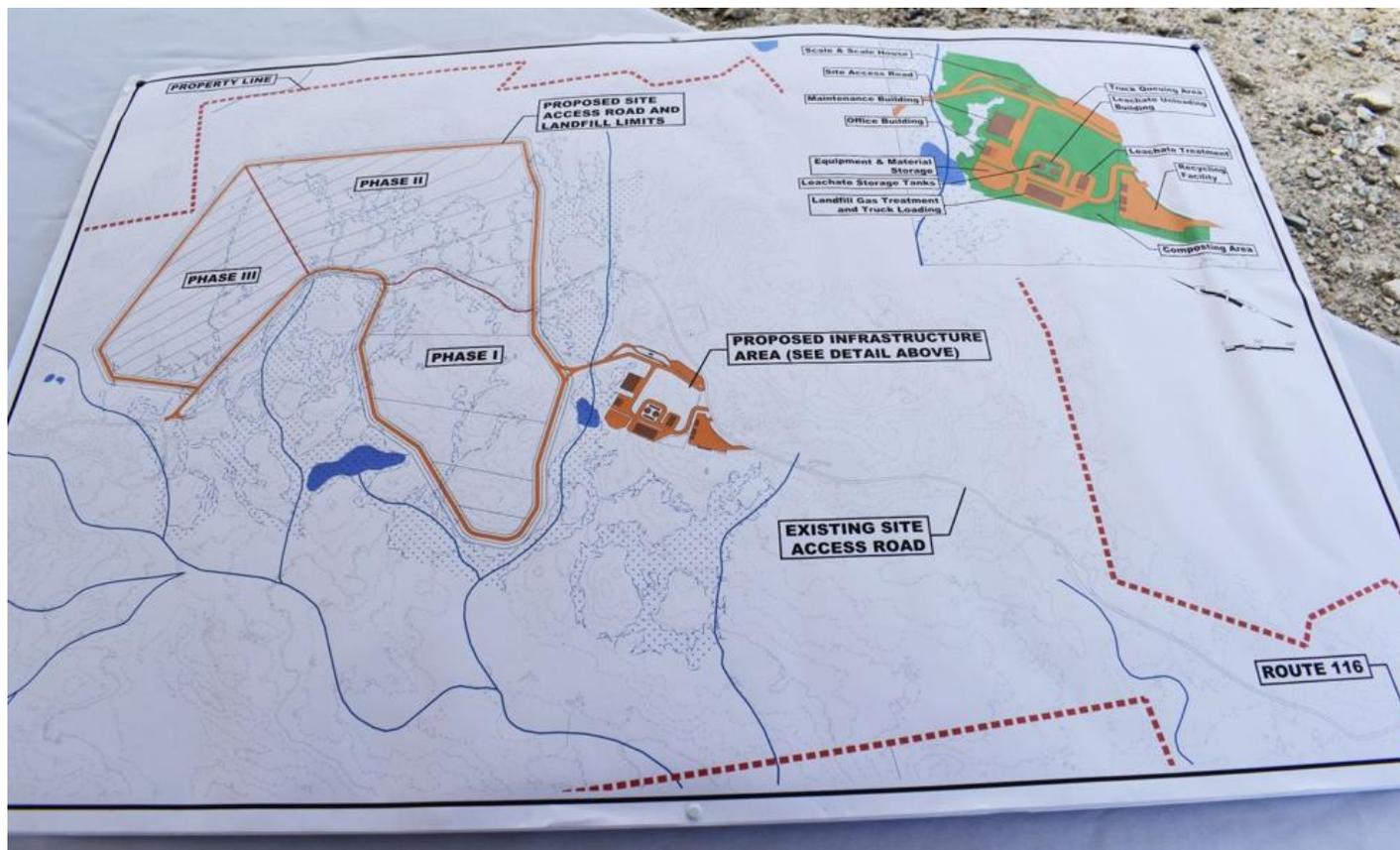


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## Senate approves tougher bill for new landfill sites

By Kevin Landrigan New Hampshire Union Leader  
May 5, 2022



The State Senate on Thursday endorsed a tougher standard to site new landfills in New Hampshire. Critics say it's singularly focused to block a proposed landfill in Dalton near Forest Lake. Here's a drawing of the proposed Granite State Landfill in Dalton. Casella Waste Systems withdrew a state wetlands permit for the project, but is expected to resubmit its request later this year.

CONCORD — The state Senate approved a tougher standard for new landfills in New Hampshire Thursday after several members attacked the aggressive lobbying effort to pass it.

A House-passed proposal (**HB 1454**) would require an independent hydrogeologist to certify that it would take at least five years for any contamination from a new landfill site to flow into a nearby body of water.

The Senate endorsed an amendment from Sen. Erin Hennessey, R-Littleton, that permits landfills to meet only a two-year safety standard if they are built with protections such as thicker linings that go beyond state requirements.

“The real crisis is not requiring a simple and inexpensive test that could haunt our state for decades to come,” Hennessey said

While the legislation would apply to all new projects, opponents maintained the bill is targeted at stopping a proposed landfill from Casella Waste Systems in Dalton.

The landfill would be placed near Forest Lake, which along with Ammonoosuc River is a source of drinking water for Littleton, Dalton and other surrounding towns.

“The rug is being pulled out from people who put in an application,” said Kevin Avard, R-Nashua, who is chairman of the Senate energy panel that opposed the bill.

“They go through the process, but somebody is going to move the goalpost because they don’t want it in their backyard.”

The Senate passed this amended bill, 16-8, and sent it over to the House to consider the changes.

Senate Democratic Leader Donna Soucy ultimately voted for the measure but resented the effort by environmental groups that sought its approval.

For the past three years, opponents of the Dalton project have pushed for legislation that included a failed bill (**HB 177**) that would have created a two-mile setback from a landfill to a groundwater source.

“The process about HB 177 and its successor legislation? The worst I have ever seen, the worst I have ever experienced,” Soucy said.

“I was bullied, I was threatened, I was insulted, and so many of my colleagues were.”

## Foes want bill vetoed

Avard urged Gov. Chris Sununu to veto the bill if it gets to his desk.

“Nobody is going to do business in the state of New Hampshire if this bill gets passed,” Avard said.

Last December, Casella executives withdrew a wetlands permit application critical to its landfill project. The firm, which is expected to resubmit its application later this year, is taking the state's advice to coordinate this process with other state and federal approvals needed for the proposal.

As written, the bill would not apply to existing landfills or any plans to expand those projects.

Groups supporting the bill include the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF), Sierra Club and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests.

"All landfills pollute our air and put our waters at risk of toxic contamination," said Tom Irwin, vice president of CLF New Hampshire. "New Hampshire's lakes, rivers, and coastal waters belong to all of us, and this bill, if signed into law, will dramatically increase protections for these valuable resources. The House, and then Governor Sununu, should support this important legislation."

Officials representing Waste Management and leading hydrogeologists have spoken out against it.

The state Department of Environmental Services has not taken a position.

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