

May 8, 2024

TO: Chief Frank J. DelGiudice, United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

FROM: Jon Swan, Founder, Save Forest Lake

RE: Permitting for the proposed Granite State Landfill, USACE File Number NAE-2021-02240)

Good Afternoon Chief DelGiudice:

I write to urge the US Army Corps of Engineers to DENY the permit application submitted for the proposed Granite State Landfill (GSL), USACE File Number NAE-2021-02240. This project will disturb approximately 148 acres of forested wetlands habitat, add 25.5 acres of impervious surfaces, and destroy 11.5 acres of wetlands. As described in GSL's application, this current project is just one part of a much larger landfill development project that GSL intends to build and operate. In 2020, when GSL first submitted its wetland application to the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES), GSL explained that the landfill will be developed in at least three phases, disturbing 181 acres, with a total of 135 acres of landfill capacity and impacts to more than 17 acres of wetlands. I implore you to evaluate all of the impacts associated with the project as a whole. GSL's attempt to divide up and segment the project into smaller parts hides the true scope, scale, and severity of the landfill and its impacts. Such segmentation is not permissible by USACE, as we were told during a September 1, 2021 zoom meeting with USACE representatives.

I am certain you have received a lot of correspondence from the public, most certainly requesting that you deny this permit application. I'm truly wondering how much of an impact this will have on your determination. Does it matter to USACE that there is overwhelming opposition to this project, not only from those of us who live here, but also from across the State of New Hampshire, and beyond? Does it matter to you that those of us most assuredly impacted negatively from this development were here first? My wife and I chose to settle in Dalton, near Forest Lake, in 2014, as we were drawn to the scenic beauty of the area, its pristine waters, fresh air, and peace and quiet. This was to be our retirement home. What about our rights as property owners, to enjoy the use of our property free from nuisance? This proposed development represents a clear and distinct threat to the health and safety of the public, including our quality of life, and our state and region's tourism and outdoor recreation industries. Does USACE care that we have extensively tested our private drinking water wells, as well as Forest Lake and Alder Brook, revealing that the ground and surface water in the vicinity of the proposed landfill has NO PFAS CONTAMINATION? We have clean water, perhaps one of the few areas in the state that can make such a claim, and we want to keep it that way! Please, listen to the people who live here, we do not want this landfill. Please, do the right thing and deny the permit application.

Another reason why USACE should deny this permit application for this proposed development is that the design of the facility itself is flawed and outdated. While I would urge USACE to examine the reasons why the applicant is unable to expand it's current landfill operation in the

neighboring Town of Bethlehem, I would also request that you take into consideration the environmental conditions, particularly the widespread contamination of PFAS and other compounds detected in the various groundwater monitoring wells at NCES, all of which lies within the watershed of the Ammonoosuc River. The proposed GSL facility is meant to replace the NCES Landfill, and is based on the same design, which is decades old, and is partially to blame for the widespread PFAS contamination at that facility. I have attached a copy of the GSL facility design, with my edits and notes added in red, green, and blue. Like the NCES facility, GSL is designed in similar fashion, with leachate being piped approximately 3000 feet OUTSIDE of the protective, double-lined landfill, to the infrastructure area, where leachate handling will occur. This is a serious FLAW, in that this entire area lies outside of the lined landfill, thus it is less protective of the surrounding environment, and, is the area where accidents can, and will, happen. I would also note that the 3000 feet of leachate piping will cross UNDER Douglas Drive, UNDER the 100 or so tractor-trailers and heavy-duty trash trucks traveling back and forth across the property.

The infrastructure area and leachate piping outside of the lined landfill area are similar to the current operations at the NCES Landfill, following the leachate storage tank consolidation project, which was completed and operational in March of 2000. Leachate mismanagement has been partially blamed for the widespread groundwater contamination found in NCES monitoring wells. Since the leachate consolidation project, the following leachate incidents have occurred at NCES:

March 2, 2001-leachate forcemain leak detected

April 30, 2001-leachate spill from overflow of 1000 gallon leachate storage tank, volume unknown

February 12, 2003-leachate forcemain pipe broken during cleaning

June 29, 2003-lightning strike results in overflowing of underground leachate storage tank, releasing between 75- 200 gallons of leachate

March 3, 2006-leachate release of 5036 gallons during truck loading accident

May 12, 2006-leachate release of 1049 gallons due to leachate loadout equipment malfunction

July 4, 2006-Casella Construction damaged Stage III leachate tank forcemain containment pipe

August 2, 2006-Overnight rain event cause Stage II Phase II secondary sump to overflow

August 3, 2006-Casella Construction overflow of Stage III leachate Tank A

August 7, 2006-Casella Construction damages Stage II leachate forcemain, releasing at least 650 gallons of leachate

October 12, 2006-early morning rain event nearly overtopped the Stage II Phase I berm, resulting in the infiltration of stormwater into the exposed Stage II Phase I notch area and subsequent pumping of the contaminated stormwater to leachate storage tanks

June 7, 2007-overflow of Stage II Tank A leachate storage tank, releasing 200 gallons

November 10, 2017-Between 500-1000 gallons of leachate released during cleaning of force main

May 1-3, 2021-largest release of leachate in NH history, 154,000 gallons

April 19, 2024-Leachate Hauling Emergency Circumstance, due to City of Concord leachate disposal restrictions. There is concern that, because leachate at NCES, like GSL, needs to be removed by tanker truck for disposal, facility design and operation may not be able to keep up with the vast amount of leachate being generated. In 2023, NCES generated over 11 million gallons of leachate. In the 1st quarter of 2024, NCES reports that over 5 million gallons were produced, thus on pace to generate 20 million gallons. Where will all of that leachate go, particularly if WWTPs are forced to restrict intake due to new EPA rules relative to PFAS, particularly in light of the new designation for PFOA and PFOS as hazardous?

**According to the USACE public notice:**

*"The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit which may reasonably accrue from the proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered, including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are:*

**conservation:** The conservation commissions of Dalton, Bethlehem, Whitefield, and Littleton have all provided letters urging denial, due to the significant environmental impacts this project represents. Further loss of forested, wetland habitat and loss of wetlands functions are valid concerns, all of which have been documented extensively in the reports submitted to NHDES for the GSL wetlands permit application. Keep in mind, too the state park forest is a mere 200 feet away.

**economics:** An industrial development of this nature is incompatible with the scenic beauty and pristine environment which attracts so many tourists and outdoor enthusiasts, key drivers of the North Country economy. The stigma associated with a new mega-landfill in the heart of the White Mountains, only 6 miles away from the current NCES Landfill, coupled with the heavy influx of trash-related vehicles, and a 2nd landfill sited along the Ammonoosuc River, upstream of the Town of Littleton and its flourishing river district, will cause significant economic harm to the region and the state.

**aesthetics:** Defined as pleasing in appearance, dealing with the beautiful, or improving appearance, I would refer USACE to ask the residents in the Town of Bethlehem if they feel the

30-year growth of the NCES Landfill is aesthetically pleasing to the eye. I can tell you their answer, it is considered a blight on the community and the landscape. Mount Casella, as it is often referred to with great contempt, can be seen for miles away, including from the Canon Mountain Aerial Tramway.

***general environmental concerns:*** I feel with all of the reports provided to USACE and NHDES, regarding specific environmental concerns, USACE should have a pretty clear picture relative to what folks are concerned about, as the landfill development poses a significant threat to the surrounding environment, public health and safety, and overall quality of life. This development will compel many, like myself, to contemplate moving elsewhere. Who wants to live near an operating landfill? Would you take your children or grandchildren to Forest Lake State Park, to enjoy the public beach or hike in the forest, only to be reminded of its presence nearby, via odor and noise? Yearly, we are treated to the sights and sounds of our loon population at the lake. Will predatory landfill birds chase them off? Will those birds then defecate in our lake, causing cyanobacteria blooms as a result of the extra loading?

***wetlands:*** This development will destroy 11.5 acres of wetlands and 3,256 linear feet of streams. Wetlands play a crucial role in flood control, as the Town of Littleton would be most directly impacted by the loss of these wetlands and their role in flood control. Wetlands are also an essential habitat type for most plant and animal species. The Dalton and Bethlehem Conservation Commissions, along with the Ammonoosuc River Local Advisory Committee (LAC), have all provided extensive comment on the value of these wetlands and why we do not wish to see them destroyed.

***cultural value:*** Forest Lake is one of the state's ten original state parks. People get married here, overlooking the Presidential Mountain Range in the White Mountains. Family properties have been passed down for generations. There is a lot of love and pride in being blessed to be able to live amongst such majesty. A landfill will ruin that.

***fish and wildlife values:*** The extensive amount of wetlands surrounding the proposed landfill drain into Alder Brook, which feeds into the nearby Ammonoosuc River. Warm water impacts resulting from landfill operations will have a significant, far-reaching impact on fishery operations as well as wildlife value, again, due to the extensive impacts to upstream wetlands and forested habitat. Values will be significantly decreased as a result of this development. Fish as receptors for PFAS compounds, potentially consumed by fishermen, should also be taken into consideration by USACE in its determinations.

***flood hazards:*** Again, the Town of Littleton will be greatly impacted by the loss of wetlands in their role in flood control.

***flood plain value:*** I would expect flood plain value would be greatly degraded as well, as the values would decline due to loss, and even worse, byproducts of the landfill, including contaminants from leachate releases and warmer surface water runoff.

***land use:*** Private and public land use will be significantly impacts by this development simply due to its nature and the stigmas attached to it. As the facility grows with expansions, so will the

impacts to land use. Fears about quality of life, health, and safety will be raised, and also potentially realized, resulting in even greater, negative impacts to land use. Would you buy my house, knowing our well had detections for PFAS and maybe other landfill-oriented contaminants? Would you picnic at the free, state park beach, with the smell of rotten eggs wafting about, coupled with the "beep-beeps" of trucks backing up to dump their loads of out-of-state trash? The clanking of metal.

***navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion:*** Other than the potential for shoreline erosion along the Ammonoosuc River, as a result of flooding, due to the loss of wetlands.

***recreation:*** Dad: "Come on, kids, we're going to Forest Lake State Park today for a cook out! Don't forget to grab the trash out of the garage to bring to the dump!"  
What could go wrong with tourism and outdoor recreation by siting a landfill 2700 feet from the water's edge of the lake?

***water supply and conservation:*** Not only have property owners tested their private wells surrounding the vicinity of the proposed landfill, so has the applicant. No detections for PFAS at the site, as well as within the surrounding community.

***water quality:*** *Again,* No PFAS. Forest Lake is one of the cleanest lakes in the state, and perhaps the nation and world. Why on earth would we allow for it to be harmed?

***energy needs:*** I have significant energy needs, after 5 years of fighting to stop this ridiculous, dangerous project. I'm exhausted! Please, help us stop the madness, once and for all!

***safety:*** I would say that adding 100 tractor-trailers and heavy-duty trash trucks into the rural traffic pattern we all really enjoy will represent a serious safety risk for the populous. These roads in particular, are windy and have limited line-of-site. This project also represents a safety risk in that with all of that trash, more predatory animals like bears will flock to the area due to their attraction to trash.

***food production:*** If anything, I would say maple producers could be potentially impacted down the road, as would any nearby farmstands, simply because there's an active landfill nearby, and atmospheric emission of contaminants potentially entering the food chain would be cause for concern.

***and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.":*** We, the people, do not want, nor do we need, this landfill. I hope that is clear to USACE, NHDES, and EPA. DENY the permit applications.

*In order to not get sued a third time by Casella, I need you to understand that all of this is my opinion, based on my research and experience.*

**Thank you!**

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