

# Letters To The Editor

## *Fearmongering*

To the Editor:

None of the New Hampshire voters concerned about the proposal to deposit 18 million tons of (mostly out-of-area) trash next to Forest Lake has ever to my knowledge said or written anything resembling this hypothetical warning: "Danger! If the landfill is built, babies throughout the North Country will be exposed to deadly levels of radiation." That would literally be hysterical, and not in the "hysterically funny" sense of the word.

But Vermont voter and Casella Waste Systems spokesperson Joe Fusco was quoted in the Record last week making several claims every bit as hysterical as the fictitious one above. He needs to stop hallucinating, and retract these and other misstatements he made about HB 177, the pending Senate bill to increase the current 100-foot buffer between new landfills and our NH state parks:

"The bill will ban all new landfills, leaving NH with just one." Fusco must know this is ridiculous. HB 177 merely says that about 9 percent of the 9 million acres within NH—the area within two miles of each of our roughly 70 state parks—can't be used for new trash sites. No one has claimed that NH needs more than about 500 acres in total, at most, of new capacity for the rest of this century, even if we continue to be the preferred dumping ground for states to our south and west. So under HB 177, instead of having about 12,000 times more land for this use than we need, we will have about 11,000 times more. Ho hum.

"The state has a rigorous system to oversee landfill siting." Not our state. While the DES Code

has 25 pages of detailed specifications for landfill design and operation, the section on siting is only 2 pages long. All it does is keep landfills 200 feet (!) away from permanent water bodies, 500 feet from homes, and out of floodplains or earthquake zones. HB 177 fixes a simple omission in this short section, adding a buffer that will give us years (at the typical speed of contaminated groundwater) rather than weeks or months to detect and try to avert the inevitable leaks from modern landfills, before they reach state parks and the lakes and rivers they usually surround.

"HB 177 will increase disposal costs and carbon emissions." The first claim is clearly wrong, as Dalton has already saved money by moving to a publicly-operated landfill over the Casella Bethlehem facility. And I look forward to an explanation of how trucking waste from hundreds of miles away to a remote location reduces transportation. The North Country has many decades of capacity with local hauling trips, as long as it isn't forced to be the regional hub for all others' waste.

The only effect of HB 177 on Casella is to require it to look elsewhere in the state or region for its next project. A sign that says I can't relieve myself in a public pool requires me to walk to the nearest bathroom—an inconvenience, not an "unconstitutional" outrage or "the end of [you-know-what]."

There is lots of room for intelligent debate on how and where to bury, burn, or otherwise manage trash we can't reduce or recycle. It can finally begin if one side of the debate will stop fear-mongering. We're waiting.

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