

New Hampshire Bulletin

Activists appeal to governor to block Senate's proposed landfill regulations

BY: MOLLY RAINS - APRIL 17, 2026 2:05 PM



Gov. Kelly Ayotte talks with a North Country resident during an event on Friday, Apr. 17. Ayotte reiterated her commitment to preventing the siting of a landfill near Forest Lake, in Dalton, at the event. (Photo by Molly Rains/New Hampshire Bulletin)

Activists, neighbors, local leaders, and state legislators gathered on the shore of Forest Lake in Dalton Friday morning to look over the placid lake and reiterate their commitment to fighting landfill proposals for their region.

Nature was in cooperation: The sun began to break through clouds during the ceremony, and a resident loon yodeled a backing soundtrack to some of their remarks.

But though the scene was calm, the debate around the future of trash and landfill siting in the North Country is far from over. And on Friday, activist Wayne Morrison, president of the anti-landfill advocacy group North Country Alliance for Balanced Change, appealed to Gov. Kelly Ayotte to oppose legislation he said threatened the group's mission.

Residents of Dalton were [stirred in the late 2010s](#) by a landfill proposed near the town's Forest Lake, home to lakefront camps, year-round homes, and a state park. Last year, the New



From left: Wayne Morrison, president of North Country Alliance for Balanced Change, and Tom Tower, vice president, listen to remarks from Gov. Kelly Ayotte alongside other locals at an event at Forest Lake State Park April 17. (Photo by Molly Rains/New Hampshire Bulletin)

Hampshire Department of Environmental Services denied the permit application from Vermont-based Casella Waste Systems, though the company has appealed that decision.

Meanwhile, the company has made moves elsewhere in the North Country to propose new landfills or expansions, including by proposing an expansion at the site of an existing and [contentious](#) Casella landfill in Bethlehem, which the town has opposed, and talk of a potential transfer station in nearby Carroll.

Ayotte has been outspoken in her opposition to the siting of a landfill in Dalton. She maintained that on Friday.

“I said it before I was elected. I said it in my inauguration. I just said it recently,” she said. “We are not going to locate a landfill at Forest Lake.”

Ayotte has previously pushed for a site evaluation committee that she said would create a more effective, locally informed route to evaluate proposals for landfills. But though the governor directed the Legislature to charter such a committee, attempts to find a version that both the House and Senate can agree on [have so far been unsuccessful](#), with the two bodies disagreeing on elements including what degree of local control communities should have in the siting process for expansions or new landfills.

The two bills Morrison mentioned on Thursday, [House Bill 707](#) and [House Bill 1189](#), encapsulate that debate. The bills are similar in many ways, with both calling for a site evaluation committee. But one of their differences that has generated discussion relates to local control.

The Senate’s amendment to HB 707 would preclude towns from using local regulations and zoning to prevent the siting of a landfill within their borders, while HB 1189 would not. Legislators and Bethlehem residents [have said](#) they believe the passage of HB 707 would facilitate an expansion of the existing Casella landfill in their town despite local policies and contracts that would otherwise preclude such an outcome.

On Friday, Morrison echoed that and said the North Country needed Ayotte’s support to block the bill.

“That bill is tailored to try and drive an expansion in the town of Bethlehem,” he said. “... Governor, we ask you to ensure that the bill never goes into law.”

He also pledged support for HB 1189.

After the event, Ayotte said she would continue to push for a site evaluation committee that included local voices.

“That’s very important, and I do think especially on issues like landfills that impact not only environmental issues, quality of life, economic issues for communities, it’s important that local voices be heard,” she said. “... Any legislation would be viewed in light of making sure that local voice, through the site evaluation committee ... that there’s a strong mechanism for that.”



📷 Berkley Parenteau, 16, watches the governor’s remarks during an event at Forest Lake State Park on Friday, Apr. 17. Parenteau said she has been involved in the fight against landfill siting in the North Country since she was 9. “I just care, and I think so many other people do, too. There’s such a community around here, there’s such a family around here, and it’s really important that we keep that going,” Parenteau said. (Photo by Molly Rains/New Hampshire Bulletin)