

NHDES Wetlands Bureau urged to reject landfill permit



TARA GILES

Nancy Morrison of Whitefield holds a photo of wildlife at Forest Lake during a presentation given by her husband Wayne, in opposition to a proposed landfill in Dalton. Over 60 people spoke at the Wetlands Permit hearing at WMRHS on July 14.

BY TARA GILES

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WHITEFIELD — On Wednesday, July 14, the White Mountains Regional High School auditorium was packed, as hundreds appeared for a public hearing with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Wetlands Bureau.

Residents from all across the state, and some from Vermont, spoke in opposition for the proposed 189-acre landfill, slated to be constructed in close proximity to Forest Lake. There were a small number in favor of the landfill; however, during any presentation in opposition, the crowd roared and

clapped.

The hearing lasted roughly six hours, and testimony was primarily given by those who feel that 468,000 tons of garbage with roughly 50 percent coming from out of state is unacceptable, especially at the cost of one of New Hampshire's state parks.

During the presentation, Casella engineer Joe Gay stated that studies were done to minimize the impact to the environment and claimed that only 17 acres would be affected next to Douglas Drive. After making that claim, the crowd laughed dismissively.

The next to take the

podium was the founder of Save Forest Lake, Jon Swan. He explained his in depth research over the past two plus years studying Casella Waste Systems.

He began, "It should be noted that this company has never built a NEW landfill on green, virgin land. Based on their long and controversial history of acquiring and operating existing landfills, I have come to the conclusion that they and their engineering 'experts' are incapable of successfully developing and safely operating a brand new landfill, particularly at this poorly-sited location, surrounded by wetlands and two very important bodies of water."

Swan went on to note that in the past 19 months, Casella's operations in Bethlehem have been flagged by DES five times, with one serious environmental incident, involving the release of 154,000 gallons of leachate into the surrounding environment, located less than 1000 feet from the Ammonoosuc River. He went on to note that in New York, Casella

will pay \$750,000 into a settlement fund, and will pay another \$900,000 for odor control measures at the landfill located in Ontario County.

State Rep. Edith Tucker stepped up to the microphone next and explained a letter that was written by Dr. Van de Poll, a certified wetland scientist who had submitted two letters commenting on NHDES Wetland Application for the proposed landfill. He characterized the proposed project as "perhaps one of the worst potential environmental disasters in the Granite State in recent memory."

Tucker said, "Van de Poll points out in a footnote that this project would permanently impact seven times more wetlands than the failed Northern Pass proposal and twice as many vernal pools in an area 23 times smaller."

Van de Poll said that the applicant's statement that 'wetlands impacts have been minimized and the disturbance to NHDES, PAGE A11

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the well functioning wetland complex, avoided', clearly defies all logic and cannot be taken at face value by NHDES.

Chris Quigley, a WMRHS graduate and resident of Forest Lake, said, "It baffles my mind to think any New Hampshire resident, regardless of where they live, would support an out of state corporation to haul in out of state trash, only to dump it 180 feet from the edge of a state park. New Hampshire doesn't have a landfill capacity crisis for New Hampshire trash, Casella has a capacity problem for out of state trash, which they are trying to fix at NH's expense."

Quigley went on to list the many fines and infractions caused by Casella.

Forest Lake resident Adam Finkel addressed the crowd, stating, "Whatever the outcome of this adjudication,

WHEN (not if) both sides litigate your permit decision, the court will be looking for a preponderance of evidence that the decision is "unjust or unreasonable."

Finkel went on to explain why granting this permit would be both unjust and unreasonable. He explained how a state statute requires a "substantial public benefit."

Finkel began, "I offer these comments as an environmental scientist who has been on the faculties of graduate schools of medicine, law, public administration, and public health, and as one of the inventors of modern methods of cost-benefit analysis and quantitative risk assessment. I was the chief rulemaking official at the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration in the Clinton Administration, and the director of all OSHA enforcement and outreach operations in the Rocky Mountain region

under George W. Bush, and have been a member of EPA's Science Advisory Board."

Finkel addressed the panel, "The applicant has estimated that groundwater flows beneath the site at up to 9.5 feet per day. In other words, as little as 20 months to reach the Ammonoosuc, and as little as nine months to reach Forest Lake, in a regime where DES merely requires groundwater monitoring every six months."

He went on to explain a lack of benefits: "It is obvious that there is no capacity 'crisis.' Your own 2019 report makes clear that even if Turnkey closes in 2034, we have 13 years before there is any significant shortfall. And as you know better than anyone, the only reason to project Turnkey (or Carberry) closure is because DES legally can't assume that it will grant a future extension as it has in the past. But we all know



A crowd filled the WMRHS auditorium on July 14 for a public hearing in regards to a Wetlands Permit for a proposed 189 acre landfill in Dalton, right next to Forest Lake.

these extensions are highly likely. Just listen to Sen. Gray testify about how wonderful the Turnkey facility is, how it receives no complaints from anyone."

Whitefield resident Wayne Morrison included beautiful wildlife photos with his presentation. Morrison echoed Finkel's sentiments and stated that the proposed landfill would provide

no benefit to the citizens of New Hampshire and would only suit Casella financially.

Morrison said, "Siting a mega landfill in an environmentally sensitive area, a recreation and tourist destination, with a thriving wildlife ecosystem next to Forest Lake State Park, and the Ammonoosuc River is absolutely as bad an idea as it sounds. All the ratio-

nalizations, technology investments and remediation plans that follow cannot overcome the simple fact that this is an inappropriate, in fact a terrible site for a dump. The destruction of wetlands, vernal pools and woodlands would be the first step in an endless series of compromised that would only serve to degrade and ultimately destroy this pristine area."