

Norridgewock's Crossroads Landfill

Expansion: The DEP volunteers Maine's rivers as regional dumping ground

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It is critical that Mainers come together to protect the Kennebec river region against current threats from waste, development and energy industries. From the CMP corridor to the near extinction of wild Atlantic salmon due to damming, it seems that the Kennebec region is being attacked from all sides.

Crossroads Landfill in Norridgewock.

Right now, a waste company called Waste Management Inc (WMI) has applied to expand its Crossroads Landfill facility in Norridgewock, ME. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) published a draft "approval with conditions" decision recently to license the new "Special Waste" landfill for expansion, and is taking public commentary only until May 4th. Depending on the information provided in Public Comments, the DEP may revise the licensing decision. Therefore, we need Mainers to contact the Maine DEP in opposition to this landfill expansion by Tuesday, May 4th at 5pm. You can send your comments to victoria.h.eleftheriou@maine.gov, Deputy Director, Bureau of Remediation and Waste Management, and reference "Approval with Conditions for Waste Management license application #S-010735-WD-YB-N".

The new landfill would be approximately 1/2 mile east of WMI's current Crossroads landfill, and located significantly closer to the Town Water supply and within 3000 feet of the Kennebec River, according to Don't Waste ME's Hillary Lister. The expansion would make a 48+ acre landfill that would accept "Special Waste" - which may include incinerator ash, sludge, oil and solvent contaminated soils, asbestos, medical and laboratory waste. The remainder of the waste will be construction and demolition debris, oversized bulky waste, and commercial and residential municipal solid waste. Approving this new landfill site would create new capacity in Maine for out-of-state waste.

It is deeply concerning that the DEP is poised to approve WMI's expansion, which would threaten the drinking supply, air quality, and general health of so many living in the Kennebec region, as well as aquatic life downstream from Norridgewock. According to Maine law, to qualify for a license for landfill expansion an entity must demonstrate that the proposed facility and its operations will provide substantial Public benefit, and

will not pollute any water of the State, contaminate the ambient air, create a nuisance, or constitute a hazard to health or welfare. WMI's application does not provide adequate information to demonstrate that the proposed waste facility will not pollute groundwater, contaminate ambient air, create a nuisance, or constitute a hazard to health or welfare.

In fact, it's certain that the expansion would have devastating effects on water quality and be a hazard to the health and welfare of the area's citizens and ecology. One need not look further than the Penobscot River for an example of the effects of "special waste" on water quality. The 1.3 Million gallons of landfill leachate being dumped into the Penobscot each month by ND Paper (via the Juniper Ridge landfill) is concentrated with toxins from exactly the same kind of waste and debris that would come to the proposed Crossroads Landfill expansion site.

Millions of gallons of toxic leachate per month would be created by the new landfill, with amounts increasing as sludge waste streams grow. Leachate would be trucked to wastewater treatment facilities which are authorized to discharge into the Kennebec. Already, WMI contracts with Sappi Paper in Hinkley to take up to 400,000 gallons per day of landfill leachate, and the Anson-Madison Sanitary District to take up to 56,000 gallons per day. This would only increase with the expansion of WMI's intake capacity.

The expansion would invite even more out-of-state waste into Maine. Many of the waste materials that would be allowed at the new landfill are currently banned from deposition in other northeast states and provinces where they originate. Adding major landfill capacity with no enforceable limits on growth will only serve to make it more profitable for more affluent northeast communities to dump in Maine landfills instead of managing their own wastes. WMI's application does not demonstrate how the company would be in compliance with the licensing criteria requirement of compliance with the State's Solid Waste Management Hierarchy.

Why is Maine volunteering its rivers and landscapes as dumping grounds for other states? Especially at a time when restoration of the Kennebec is critical to saving Wild Atlantic Salmon from extinction in North America, the DEP needs to do everything in its power to protect this watershed.

The threat to Maine water is unquestionable. The proposed location of the new landfill is surrounded by water within a mile on all sides. To the north are wetlands and Bombazee Brook, and the Kennebec River runs to the north and east of the facility. Mill Stream is located to the northwest, west, and south of the proposed landfill, within 1/4 mile or less of the proposed new site. Building the landfill would also require destruction of 10 acres of wetlands.

As States take action to prevent PFAS contamination of drinking water, increasing volumes of PFAS-contaminated sludge and leachate are already being sent to Maine landfills. After the wastewater treatment facility in Lowell, Massachusetts refused to keep taking wastewater from Waste Management's Turnkey landfill in New Hampshire, hundreds of thousands of gallons of PFAS-contaminated leachate were shipped up to the Anson-Madison wastewater facility, where it received minimal treatment before being dumped into the Kennebec.

The DEP license would not require landfill leachate to be tested or treated for PFAS/PFOS, even though the landfill would be approved to take in large volumes of PFAS/PFOS-contaminated sludge (as has been occurring at the current landfill.) In 2019 tests of Kennebec River fish by the DEP, the testing location beneath Shawmut dam, located downstream of the Waste Water Treatment Plant on the Kennebec where the majority of the current WMI landfill leachate is discharged, was also the site of the highest levels of PFOS in fish, with levels more than double those of any other test location.

Furthermore, the application is not clear whether there are adequate stormwater management systems planned for the new landfill. Wetlands serve to regulate and control flooding. It is not clear if removing a major wetland will impact water movement in cases of major storms. Historic floods in this area have resulted in significant movement of stream and riverbeds. The license application does not address how the surrounding waters will be protected from contamination in cases of major storms and floods.

The well monitoring and assessment of hydrogeology referenced in the WMI application is based on site evaluations, paid for by the company, done during a period of severe drought, and this is not necessarily representative of long term water levels or water flow patterns. Independent reviews of hydrogeology and longer term study of water flow patterns and well monitoring is needed to accurately evaluate the impact of the proposed landfill on aquifers. The application does not show that the company has demonstrated compliance with the licensing criteria that no unreasonable risk that a discharge to a Significant Ground Water Aquifer will occur.

There are also a number of fire and gas risks that have not been adequately evaluated. In both 2020 and 2018, two acres of the northeast corner of Crossroads Landfill caught fire from a spontaneous combustion of construction/demolition debris chips that were being used as a cover. These incidents resulted in a toxic plume of smoke, and with the expansion this type of incident is likely to increase. The Fire Prevention Plan does not address the fact that an increase in landfill size will also increase the volume of materials, including hot loads of ash and combustible CDD waste. The license conditions contain no requirements to repair a landfill liner or pipelines damaged by fire.

For all these reasons and more, we encourage allies to submit comments in opposition to the expansion of Crossroads Landfill, which is really more like the establishment of a new and more destructive landfill than the already existing harmful landfill. The DEP has not done sufficient environmental impact evaluation for this expansion, nor allowed enough time for public input.

More information on the WMI's application is available at:
www.maine.gov/dep/waste/crossroadslandfill/index.html