

August 2021 Crossroads Comments S-010735-WD-YB-N

To Whom It May Concern,

I submitted comments of concern in regard to making Waste Management's Crossroads Landfill larger and am therefore eligible to offer additional input related to this matter, which is being appealed to our Board of Environmental Protection by the Conservation Law Foundation. I have appealed before the BEP at least five or six times related to the State's Juniper Ridge Landfill here in Old Town, and am thus familiar with the process and landfill operations. I urge the Board to side with the appellant in this matter, lest Maine be subjected to ever more dangerous wastes and emissions. I also request that the Board demonstrate how seriously they are considering the new landfill request by convening a Public Hearing on this matter. Due to Covid concerns the process for Public Participation was shortened and there was no opportunity for citizens to express their concerns and bring new evidence forward.

This WOULD BE a new landfill, separated by one half mile from the existing Crossroads dump. This is why I do not refer to this as an "expansion". This matters a great deal to those of us who believe in the democratic process and rule of law. 1989 landmark legislation mandated that there would be no new commercial landfills in Maine. The legislature did a serious favor for WMI by bending that law and voting to allow for expansion of Crossroads (and not others). I was present for discussion on this legislation in front of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and I assure you that there was no talk of siting a separate landfill at that time. If there is a dire need for more landfill space in Maine (and I contend that there is not), then WMI is entitled to introduce legislation to that effect.

If this DEP permit is allowed to stand, it will mean that both of the active huge landfills located in Maine will have been born from unseemly circumstances, a black mark on Maine's regulators and officials. The other active landfill, the state-owned Juniper Ridge Landfill, is operated as a commercial landfill by Casella and was obtained via a rigged bid system. Many people consider Mainers to be inherently honest and upfront in our dealings. This action would contradict others' faith in us.

Of particular concern are the sources and nature of wastes destined for Crossroads. WMI has a huge landfill in Rochester, New Hampshire that is within a dozen or so miles of the Maine border. Yet about one third of wastes to be disposed in Norridgewock come from out of state and are thus bypassing another WMI facility. Why is this, given the expenses involved in trucking huge weights over 100 miles further? Apparently, some wastes that cannot be landfilled in our neighboring state(s) because of their hazardous nature are allowed to be dumped at Crossroads and given a less lethal sounding "special" classification. This also may violate Maine's mandate that our State Waste Hierarchy must be followed in order to be left in Maine. Due to the lack of enforcement or information from the sources of these materials, I contend that this violates our Hierarchy.

Another black mark on the matter under appeal is that despite the highly dangerous nature of the material to be piled in perpetuity, the very best technology will not be deployed. Only a single liner system is being required and this makes no sense in this day and age. Even the expanded area of JRL is double-lined. We know that it is a fact that All Liners Leak. At least with a double liner the process should be delayed. This is the year 2021 and the highest quality technology needs to be applied in all matters related to extremely toxic materials. Sadly, this does not appear to be the case.

Leachate is also an issue. Leachate from the current Crossroads dump is disposed at multiple sites along the majestic Kennebec River. These facilities receiving the poisonous dump juice are not equipped to deal with the chemical stew. What becomes of the PFAS, the lead, arsenic and multiple other toxins present in leachate? Does it magically disappear, or end up in life forms that depend on the River? There are indications that there is bioaccumulation of toxins present in the Crossroads waste stream taking place. Remember that the standard DEP license contains a phrase including words like "...and will not pollute ANY waters of the State." This doesn't just mean the threats to ground and surface waters directly adjacent to the landfill, but to ANY waters in Maine, especially the Kennebec.

Unfortunately, there is a legacy of inadequate management oversight by both the permittee and Regulator at this landfill. The history of the Crossroads landfill includes a massive collapse which breached engineered systems. More recently, there was a fire in materials being stored at the dump that resulted in toxic fumes spewing for days on end. During this time there was no regulatory presence testing the quality of the air citizens were trying to breathe. Have things changed? How can we be confident this will not happen again?

There are also concerns related to Climate Change. For starters, DEP rules only mandate that landfill facilities be built to withstand a 25 year precipitation event. What happens when the 100 year flood occurs? The polluted stormwaters would overflow the systems and flow into adjacent wetlands, thus violating the license's prohibitions on polluting off-site. In addition, it is my understanding that measurements of escaping greenhouse gases such as methane are only taken over covered areas of the landfill's surface. What about emissions over the active portion? Additionally, bringing about one-third of the wastes from beyond Maine's borders sends massive amounts of atmosphere-altering chemicals skyward.

Given the deceitful nature of actions leading to this application and the technological shortcomings that would impose major environmental threats to Maine citizens, I urge everyone to work towards granting this appeal and then working more diligently to reduce the volumes and toxicity of wastes being disposed of in Maine and elsewhere.

Respectfully yours,

Edward S. Spencer

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