

Quebec Municipalities Want Onsite Leachate Treatment

Quebecers Ask Act 250 Panel To Expand Permit Review To Look At Leachate

- Robin Smith
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The blue section of this map marks the proposed expansion at the landfill in Coventry.



Operators show a cell under construction at the landfill in Coventry during a site visit in 2014. Casella is seeking to expand the landfill. (File Photo)

COVENTRY — Quebec municipalities around Lake Memphremagog want the Act 250 commission to investigate how leachate from the state’s only operating landfill is handled.

Modern technology, Quebec municipalities say, would allow the operator to treat the liquid waste collected from the lined landfill on site and not at a waste water treatment plant in Newport City on Lake Memphremagog, along with plants in other communities.

The District 7 Environmental Commission is considering a permit amendment application by Casella to expand its New England Waste Services — Vermont (NEWS-VT) landfill in Coventry. Casella wants to add 51 acres to the landfill for another 10 years of operation. Casella is also exploring whether on-site leachate treatment is possible, officials said last week.

The commission held a hearing in May and issued a recess order seeking more information. The recess order requires Casella to get its solid waste permit first, update its landscaping plans and address other issues.

The commission is also deciding whether to grant party status late in the process to Henry Coe, a member of the new group called DUMP (Don’t Undermine Memphremagog’s Purity) and one landfill neighbor.

Casella opposed adding new parties at this late date in the process.

On Wednesday, a Vermont attorney for the Municipal Regional Council of Memphremagog (MRC), which is a party in the Act 250 permit review, responded to Casella’s opposition. MRC also reiterated concerns

about treating leachate at the Newport plant on the Clyde River near where it flows into Lake Memphremagog.

About 180,000 people in Quebec get their drinking water from Lake Memphremagog or downstream.

MRC complains that neither the commission's recess order nor the response by Casella addresses MRC concerns. MRC wants the commission to seek more evidence about leachate sampling.

MRC pointed to a letter about leachate treatment it sent to the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, which is reviewing Casella's application for its new solid waste permit allowing expansion for the next 10 years.

"As an alternative to relying on municipal wastewater facilities, MRC suggests that the (department) and NEWS-VT consider a dedicated leachate treatment facility at the Coventry landfill," MRC stated in its letter.

"With advances in treatment technology and using design standards specific to leachate, such a facility could be a more effective long-term solution. The Coventry landfill will operate for many more years, and leachate treatment must continue during the closure period.

"Currently, leachate is trucked to facilities in Vermont, New Hampshire and New York. Over the 50-plus year lifetime of the facility, on-site treatment would save countless transportation miles, reducing emissions and other transportation impacts. On-site treatment might use advanced technologies best suited to treat and remove leachate contaminants, and therefore produce a high quality clean water," MRC stated.

MRC asked again for the opportunity to raise these issues as part of the Act 250 permit review.