

Reduce Waste, Don't Bury It at Bourne Landfill

By Rosemary Dreger Carey, January 12, 2022

Despite a trend toward landfill closures in the state, a 25-acre

https://www.townofbourne.com/sites/g/files/vyhlif7346/f/uploads/final_public_hearing_notice_for_2-2-22.pdf

expansion of the Bourne landfill is working its way through the approval process. The expansion would provide additional capacity for solid waste from Falmouth and Bourne, as well as allow for continued importation of incinerator ash from SEMASS in Rochester, Massachusetts. Eighty five percent of the new landfill capacity would be reserved for toxicant-laden ash, to be buried in perpetuity atop the Cape's sole-source aquifer.

The Bourne landfill expansion was recently green-lighted by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, and earlier by the Cape Cod Commission despite significant opposition led by the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF). A "site suitability determination" will be made by the Bourne Board of Health [at its public meeting on February 2, 2022. A 14-day public comment period will remain open until January 26th.](#) Despite the advanced stage of the approval process, the project still deserves input from the public for a number of reasons.

From a climate change perspective, the landfill expansion would hamper near- and long-term progress toward the Cape's net zero goals. Committing to "burn-and-bury" solid waste management practices would allow continued operation of SEMASS, one of the state's highest greenhouse gas emitters. It also would increase burial of organic materials and thus the release of methane into the atmosphere for decades into the future, at a time when we need to be cutting emissions dramatically. Methane is 80x more potent as a greenhouse gas than CO2.

Equally troubling, the landfill sits atop the Upper Cape Water Supply Reserve, a source of drinking water for residents and visitors. Groundwater contamination at the landfill has already forced the closure of water supply wells. Permanently entombed pollutants contained in buried trash and ash—including forever chemicals like PFAs, or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances—run the risk of leaching into our water supply.

Members of the public still have the opportunity to express opposition to this project and advocate for protective measures and systemic changes to waste management on Cape Cod. At minimum, the Board of Health should require landfill operators to step up environmental monitoring and public reporting, stop burying organic materials, and help increase recycling and composting rates across the region.

Cape Codders—especially residents of Bourne and neighboring communities—interested in participating in the Board of Health process are encouraged to call Kirstie Pecci, director of CLF's Zero Waste Project, at 617-850-1717. To [submit a public comment](#) send an email to: health@townofbourne.com or send a hard copy to: Town of Bourne, Board of Health, 24 Perry Avenue, Buzzards Bay, MA 02532 for receipt no later than January 26, 2022.