

TOXICS ACTION CENTER

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Written Testimony of Toxics Action Center Campaigns Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee Friday, February 13, 2009

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 3, "An Act Prohibiting the Acquisition or Use of Certain Parcels of Land as Ash Residue Disposal Areas"

Simone Mellor, Community Organizer, Toxics Action Center Campaigns

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and members of the Environment Committee:

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 3 "An Act Prohibiting the Acquisition or Use of Certain Parcels of Land as Ash Residue Disposal Areas."

Toxics Action Center Campaigns is a non-profit, public health and environmental organization. Since 1987, we have worked side by side with over 575 neighborhood groups across New England to help clean up and prevent toxic pollution in their communities, and developed numerous long-term citizen leaders for the environmental and social change movements. We are currently working with the citizens group in Franklin, Voice of the People for Franklin to protect drinking water resources, public health, the environment, and quality of life of their town and surrounding area. I am speaking with you today to encourage your support of Senate Bill 3: An Act Prohibiting the Acquisition or Use of Certain Parcels of Land as Ash Residue Disposal Areas.

By passing Senate Bill 3 out of committee, you will take a major step toward safeguarding critical drinking water resources and protecting public health in Franklin, Windham, and other surrounding areas. We believe that the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority should not be permitted to site an incinerator ash landfill in the community of Franklin or Windham. We are very concerned with the environmental damage and public health hazards the incinerator ash landfill could cause.

Ash landfills pose a threat to drinking water and public health of residents living nearby. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), all landfills eventually leak, making it inevitable that what goes in will eventually come out. Incinerator ash can contain dioxins, lead, cadmium, arsenic, and other heavy metals and toxins. As the ash is transported and placed into the landfill there are immediate threats for communities situated along the truck route, near the landfill and downstream on the Shetucket River. The toxins that are part of the ash particles are known to cause serious human health problems. Lead exposure can lead to brain and other nervous system damage and behavioral and learning problems in children, while cadmium has been linked to cancer, kidney problems, miscarriage and stillbirths. Dioxins are one of the most toxic chemicals known to humans and are classified as a probable carcinogen by the EPA.

Furthermore, as incinerator emissions controls have gotten stronger and more effective at preventing toxic chemicals from leaving the smokestack and being redistributed into the air that we breathe, the ash has become increasingly toxic. Ten to thirty percent of the volume of garbage that goes into an incinerator comes

out as ash. Because our waste stream is toxic and includes materials like lead, mercury, and cadmium in electronics, arsenic and chromium often coating waste wood, and dioxins resulting from the burning of PVC, the ash that results is toxic as well. This ash can leak out of dump trucks, become airborne as ash residue dries, and contaminate drinking water. Drinking water in Franklin and communities downstream would be particularly vulnerable. Residents in the area have private drinking water wells right nearby the aquifer and the contamination of these private wells would prove disastrous for the community.

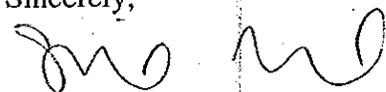
In addition, the landfill would bring 120 diesel trucks each day down narrow, winding residential roads. Diesel truck traffic pollutes the air with arsenic, benzene, cadmium, formaldehyde, nickel, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in the air, each linked to cancer.

The proposed location for the ash landfill is directly on top of a pristine aquifer that is classified GA or GAA by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. This rating means that the aquifer has some of the highest quality groundwater available, and is drinkable without treatment. Siting an ash landfill in this area will almost certainly degrade the quality of water. Ash landfills have a double layer of plastic liners and a leachate collection and containment system. Claims that this technology is "state of the art" and prevents contamination are false. The reality is that all landfill liners eventually leak; evidence shows that plastic degrades over time- it becomes brittle, loses its strength, cracks and breaks apart into fragments. At that point, any protection against the toxic chemicals contained in the ash would disintegrate along with the plastic. In addition, the leachate pipes crumble overtime, clog, and even collapse; therefore, posing a threat to the environment and human health.

All Connecticut residents should have the right to breathe clean air, drink clean water and live in healthy communities. There are many reasons to pass Senate Bill 3, "An Act Prohibiting the Acquisition or Use of Certain Parcels of Land as Ash Residue Disposal Areas." Specifically, I urge the members of the Environment Committee to pass the Senate Bill 3 out of committee to protect public health and drinking water in Franklin, Windham, Sprague and other communities nearby.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,



Simone Mellor
Community Organizer
Toxics Action Center Campaigns