CITY OF
BLOOMINGTON
MINNESOTA

July 24, 2019

Kevin Kain
MPCA
520 Lafayette Road N.
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Burnsville Sanitary Landfill Expansion – Comments on Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) Scope

Dear Mr. Kain,

Thank you for requesting comments on the Scope of the SEIS for the Burnsville Sanitary Landfill Expansion. The City of Bloomington has significant concerns about the environmental impact of placing 26 million cubic yards of additional waste in a sensitive ecological area. We request that the MPCA fully evaluate all possible impacts, alternatives and mitigation measures associated with the expansion and answer the question whether this sensitive location is appropriate for a very large landfill expansion. Specifically, we request that the MPCA include the following in the SEIS:

1. **Visual Impacts**. The expansion is proposed to increase the height of the landfill to an elevation of 1,082 feet above mean sea level, which is 389 feet above the nearby Minnesota River. The top of the mound will be higher than Mount Gilboa, Bloomington's highest elevation in Hyland Ski Area. The top of the landfill mound will be more than 340 feet higher than the nearest residence in Burnsville, which is approximately 1,000 linear feet from the base of the mound and 250 feet higher than the nearest residence in Bloomington, which is approximately 3,400 linear feet from the base of the mound. We are concerned that the landfill mound will become the dominant and defining visual feature of this portion of the Minnesota River Valley. The SEIS should analyze:
    a. How will the landfill appear at various vantage points and at various times in its construction, including full build out?
    b. In addition to renderings from the locations identified in the draft SEIS Scope, please include renderings showing the appearance of the mound from homes at three locations on the Minnesota River Bluff in Bloomington (slightly to the west of the landfill, slightly to the east of the landfill and directly north of the landfill). Please also include renderings taken from existing trails in the Minnesota River Valley National Wildlife Refuge closest to the landfill.
    c. For all renderings, please assume that no leaves will be on deciduous trees.
    d. How many homes have a direct or indirect view of the landfill?

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e. What is the anticipated impact on property values for homes that have a view of the landfill and for homes that do not have a view of the landfill but are close to it?
f. What impact would the landfill have on users of the nearby National Wildlife Refuge?
g. What is the proposed temporary and permanent cover material of the mound?
h. If grass, what type and will it survive during periods of drought?
i. Will equipment circling up the mound to dump trash outside of daylight hours use headlights and, if so, what impact would those lights have on adjacent uses and aircraft?

2. **Aviation Impacts**. Landfills are notorious for attracting large birds. During a recent visit to the Burnsville Sanitary Landfill, our staff observed numerous eagles, seagulls and other birds. The birds attracted by landfills and corresponding concerns regarding mid-air collisions with birds are the primary reason the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has serious concerns about placing landfills near airports. The Burnsville Sanitary Landfill expansion is proposed near MSP and FCM Airports and directly underneath a very frequently used flyway departing MSP, one of the nation's busiest airports. The tall height of the landfill will bring birds closer to aircraft and may present special concerns.
    a. The FAA uses the 7460 review process to analyze potential impacts to aviation. Given a height above 200 feet, a 7460 review is mandatory. The SEIS should not be finalized until the FAA 7460 review process is complete and the FAA has had a chance to rule on whether or not a major landfill expansion of this height will present an impact to aviation.
    b. The SEIS should analyze the types of birds that are presently attracted to the landfill, the types of birds that may be attracted to the landfill in the future, the flight patterns of such birds and the potential impacts to aircraft given the proposed height of the landfill.
    c. The SEIS should analyze whether a landfill of this volume has been placed under a flyway to a major airport in any other locations and, if so, the extent to which bird strikes have occurred.
    d. The SEIS should analyze the extent to which aircraft safety lighting will be required on the top of the expanded landfill. How many lights will be required? Of what size? What brightness? What color? How often will they be required to blink at night?
    e. The SEIS should analyze liability in the event of an airplane crash due to a bird strike near the landfill.
3. **Groundwater and Surface Water Impacts**. The landfill lies within the Drinking Water Protection Environmental Overlay Zone for Burnsville. It is also immediately adjacent to the Minnesota River, which flows into the Mississippi River, which supplies drinking water to millions of people downstream. The SEIS should analyze:
    a. Within the time period the landfill would be present on site are there any scenarios that could lead to contamination of the groundwater or of surface waters?
    b. What is the likelihood of such an occurrence sometime within the time period the landfill would be present on site?
    c. What would be the environmental impacts of such an occurrence?
    d. How would drinking water supplies downstream of the landfill be impacted?
    e. Is the landfill fully lined today?

   f. What is the impact of placing additional waste above any unlined areas?
4. **Odor and Air Quality Impacts**. The SEIS should analyze:
   a. Over what geographic area will odors from the landfill expansion (either rotting trash or methane venting) be perceptible?
   b. Over what geographic area will odors from the landfill expansion (either rotting trash or methane venting) rise to the level of an annoyance?
   c. How long will methane venting of the landfill take place?
   d. Will methane venting or other odors have a negative impact on public health or exceed any recognized maximum threshold?
5. **Flood Impacts**. The SEIS should analyze:
   a. What is the largest flood that can be realistically anticipated within the time period the landfill would be present?
   b. What impacts would occur with a flood of that size?
   c. Could the landfill become eroded or otherwise lose its integrity due to catastrophic floods or repeated floods?
   d. What would be the environmental impacts of catastrophic floods or repeated floods?
6. **Noise Impacts**. The landfill expansion will generate noise through vehicles dropping off waste, through vehicles moving the waste up the mound and through vehicles adding cover materials. Conveyers shifting waste from nearby landfills may also generate noise. The SEIS should analyze:
   a. How many vehicles will visit the site per day?
   b. How many vehicles will be used to dump trash into the mound and to cover the trash?
   c. How many vehicles will be operating on the mound on a typical day?
   d. What hours will the landfill be active each day?
   e. Will there be any variation to the schedule for weekends or holidays?
   f. Over what geographic area will noise from the expanded landfill be audible?
   g. Where are the noise contours surrounding the landfill on a peak day and how do they relate to noise sensitive surrounding uses?
   h. How would the increased noise impact wildlife that lives near the site?
7. **Wildlife Impacts.** The adjacent Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is one of the largest urban refuges in the United States. It is an important area of traverse for migratory bird species, as well as serving as habitat for many animals, fish and birds. The SEIS should analyze:
   a. What are the impacts on wildlife, especially endangered and sensitive species?
8. **Escaping Trash Impacts**. At other landfills, we have observed that certain types of trash, especially paper, are sometimes caught in the wind prior to being covered and blow to surrounding areas. The SEIS should analyze:
   a. Will wind-blown escaping trash be a concern?
   b. Given the height of the landfill and prevailing winds, where is wind-blown escaping trash likely to land?
9. **Transportation Impacts**. The SEIS should analyze:
   a. How many trips per day will the expansion generate and over how many years?
   b. What routes will the trips use?
   c. What impact will the trips have on traffic levels?
   d. What impacts will the trips have on roadway lifespan?

e. What secondary impacts will the traffic generated have on air quality and traffic related noise?

10. **Environmental Justice Impacts**. The SEIS should analyze:
    a. Whether the proposed landfill has a disproportionate impact on minority or low income populations?
    b. Whether all potentially affected communities have had full and fair participation in the decision making process?
11. **Vibration Impacts**. Vehicles dumping trash and shifting earth on the mound will create vibration at surrounding uses. The SEIS should analyze:
    a. What level of vibration will be created on a peak day?
    b. Over what geographic area will the vibration be observable?
    c. To what extent are there vibration sensitive uses within that area?
    d. What will the impacts be on surrounding vibration sensitive uses and structures?
12. **Rodent Impacts**. The SEIS should analyze:
    a. Will the expansion attract or, when brought in with waste, become home to rodents?
    b. Will rodents migrate to nearby neighborhoods?
    c. If so, what will be the impact?
    d. Will poison be used to kill rodents on site?
    e. If so, which poison and at what level of effectiveness?
    f. What is the environmental impact of that level of poison use on groundwater, on birds of prey and in general?
13. **Blasting Impacts on Mound Integrity**. The landfill site is immediately adjacent to a quarry where blasting frequently occurs. The SEIS should analyze:
    a. What level of earth movement at the landfill site will be created by blasting in the adjacent quarry?
    b. What impacts adjacent blasting may have on the structural integrity of the mound and its proposed liner?
14. **Consistency with Local and Regional Plans and Requirements**. The SEIS should analyze:
    a. Is the proposed expansion consistent with federal and state agency plans and requirements, including U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources?
    b. Is the proposed expansion consistent with the Metropolitan Council's regional plan?
    c. Is the proposed expansion consistent with applicable watershed district plans and requirements?
    d. Is the proposed expansion consistent with applicable county requirements?
    e. Is the proposed expansion consistent with the Burnsville Comprehensive Plan and applicable zoning standards? If not, what amendments are required?
15. **Financial Impacts**. The SEIS should analyze:
    a. What fees and taxes will be paid to Burnsville? To Dakota County? To State Agencies?
16. **Recreational Use Impacts**. Burnsville plans indicate a long term recreational use once expansion of the mound is complete. The SEIS should analyze:
    a. Given the ongoing methane venting and slopes, will the mound be compatible with future recreational use?

17. **Earthquake Impacts**. While seismic activity is not as common in Minnesota as in some other areas of the country, earthquakes can occur. The SEIS should analyze:
    a. What is the largest earthquake that can be realistically anticipated within the time period the landfill would be present?
    b. What impacts would occur with an earthquake of that size?
    c. Could the landfill become damaged due to an earthquake of that magnitude?
    d. What would be the environmental impacts caused by damage to the landfill sustained during an earthquake of that magnitude?
18. **Relocated Waste Impacts**. At public meetings, the owners of the landfill have stated a benefit of the expansion is the ability to relocate waste from the unlined Freeway Dump (with approximately one million cubic yards of waste) and the Freeway Landfill (with approximately five million cubic yards of waste) to the expanded Burnsville Sanitary Landfill. At public meetings, members of the Burnsville City Council have cited relocation of waste as the primary benefit of expansion. The SEIS should analyze:
    a. Whether relocation of waste from the unlined Freeway Dump and the Freeway Landfill to the expanded Burnsville Sanitary Landfill is feasible and realistic.
    b. Whether hazardous waste has been mixed with municipal waste in the Freeway Dump and Freeway Landfill sites and, if so, what impact that has on potential relocation to the Burnsville Sanitary Landfill.
    c. Whether waste placed in the Freeway Dump and Freeway Landfill sites was watered down prior to disposal to reduce its volume and, if so, what impact that has on potential relocation to the Burnsville Sanitary Landfill.
    d. How relocation would occur and the impacts of that relocation (odor, noise, escaping trash, etc.).
19. **General**. The SEIS should address the following general issues:
    a. What approvals and agreements are necessary for this project to commence? Include approvals from governmental entities, from cities, counties, watershed districts, state agencies, federal agencies and others.
    b. How long will the approvals process for the landfill mound take?
    c. If approved, when is filling anticipated to commence and to end?
    d. How long will the landfill remain in existence on the site?
    e. How often will trash dumped on the mound be covered?
    f. How many truckloads of trash will be deposited between periods of covering?

While the analysis requested above will be very helpful in better understanding the impacts of the proposal, it is also critical to consider alternatives to the proposal and to compare the impacts of alternatives to the impacts of the proposal. Where impacts can be mitigated, the SEIS should fully explore those mitigation methods.

20. **Evaluation of Alternatives**. The SEIS should analyze the comparative impacts of all potential alternatives to the proposed expansion including:
    a. No build;
    b. Aggressive waste reduction programs;
    c. Building off-site in a less environmentally sensitive location;
    d. Building on-site at a reduced volume, not to exceed the volume of waste relocated from the Freeway Dump and Freeway Landfill; and
    e. Building on-site at the same volume but at a lower height by increasing the footprint.

21. **Mitigation Measures**. The SEIS should analyze potential mitigation measures for all impacts identified.

Thank you for the chance to provide input on the scope of the SEIS. We look forward to better understanding the impacts and remain extremely concerned about placing this volume of additional waste in a high profile and environmentally sensitive location.

Sincerely,

James D. Verbrugge
City Manager

Copy via e-mail: Bloomington Mayor Winstead and City Council Members