

HB 1478-FN - AS AMENDED BY THE HOUSE

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2026 SESSION

26-2908  
08/05

HOUSE BILL

***1478-FN***

AN ACT requiring the department of environmental services to revise the rules for proposed new landfills.

SPONSORS: Rep. Potenza, Straf. 19; Rep. J. Aron, Sull. 4; Rep. Barbour, Hills. 35; Rep. Burroughs, Carr. 2; Rep. N. Germana, Ches. 15; Rep. Gruber, Ches. 16; Rep. S. King, Coos 4; Sen. Fenton, Dist 10; Sen. Ricciardi, Dist 9; Sen. Rochefort, Dist 1

COMMITTEE: Environment and Agriculture

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ANALYSIS

The bill requires the department to modify rules to avoid significant harms to human health and the environment, and changes the enabling statute of the department of environmental services solid waste division to require the department to consider health and the environment when making future rules.

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Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.  
Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struckthrough.]~~  
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

*In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-Six*

AN ACT requiring the department of environmental services to revise the rules for proposed new landfills.

*Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:*

1       1 Statement of Purpose. The general court finds that protecting the health and safety of New  
2 Hampshire citizens, drinking water sources, and our environment, including drinking water wells,  
3 perennial rivers, lakes, and coastal waters, from contamination is of utmost public interest.  
4 Therefore, based on legislative intent informed by public and expert testimony from New Hampshire  
5 citizens and key stakeholders, the department of environmental services' 800 rules for proposed new  
6 landfills are found to be insufficiently protective in certain sections. The following provisions provide  
7 the department with direction, policy changes, and purpose in rulemaking.

8       2 New Subparagraph; Waste Management Rules. Amend RSA 149-M:7 by inserting after  
9 paragraph XV the following new paragraph:

10       XV-a. Relative to the safe management of solid waste. Such rules shall promote the  
11 hierarchy established under RSA 149-M:3 and shall develop and enforce siting, design, operation,  
12 and closure requirements.

13       3 New Paragraphs; Groundwater Protection. Amend RSA 149-M:9 by inserting after paragraph  
14 XV the following new paragraphs:

15       XVI. No solid waste permit shall be issued by any division of the department for the siting of  
16 a new landfill if any part of the actual solid waste disposal area is proposed to be located sufficiently  
17 close to any existing drinking water well, perennial river, lake, or coastal water of New Hampshire,  
18 as defined in RSA 483-B:4, XVI, such that groundwater on the landfill site would be able to reach the  
19 water body within 5 years of migrating off-site due to any leak, spill, or other failure.

20       XVII.(a) The department shall establish a site-specific setback distance for any proposed  
21 new landfill from any drinking water wells, perennial river, lake, or coastal water of New  
22 Hampshire, as defined in RSA 483-B:4, XVI. The setback distance shall be sufficient to prevent any  
23 contaminated groundwater at any part of the landfill footprint or leachate storage or piping  
24 infrastructure from reaching any existing drinking water wells, perennial river, lake, or coastal  
25 water of New Hampshire within 5 years. The setback distance shall be calculated as follows:

26       (1) The applicant shall hire a hydrogeologist who has never worked with or been  
27 contracted through a third party with any applicant's current or previous projects, at the applicant's  
28 expense, to estimate based upon adequate and representative on-site field testing of both the landfill  
29 footprint and leachate storage or piping infrastructure, the velocity of groundwater in both surficial  
30 geological deposits and bedrock. The velocity shall be estimated by calculating the 95th percentile

1 upper confidence limit of the mean measured rate, using the formula recommended by the United  
2 States Environmental Protection Agency at EPA 600-R-97/006.

3 (2) The 5-year distance-of-travel estimate shall be calculated by multiplying the  
4 velocity, in units of feet per year, by 5.

5 (3) The setback from any existing drinking water well, perennial river, lake, or  
6 coastal water of New Hampshire shall be the greater of the 5-year distance-of-travel estimate  
7 calculated in subparagraph (2) or 1,500 feet.

8 (b) No permit shall be issued by any division of the department for the siting of a new  
9 landfill that fails to conform to the setback distance as calculated using the method set forth in  
10 subparagraph (a).

11 (c) In this section, "new landfill" excludes any expansion or modification of any landfill  
12 facilities on any site where, as of January 1, 2025, a RCRA Subtitle D landfill exists that has  
13 received all permits necessary to operate at present and is currently operating under such permits at  
14 the time it files an application to expand.

15 (d) In this section, "site" means a single parcel or adjacent parcels, owned in its entirety  
16 by a landfill operator or its affiliates as of January 1, 2025, including a site where one or more public  
17 utility easements traverse the site.

18 XVIII. The department shall not issue a permit for a new landfill unless the applicant  
19 conducts subsurface investigations in sufficient numbers and locations to properly describe the  
20 surficial stratigraphy and the bedrock beneath and adjacent to the proposed solid waste boundary, at  
21 least to the depth of any aquifers currently used to provide drinking water to residents. Pump tests  
22 shall be conducted at selected locations as needed to evaluate aquifer yield and connectivity of  
23 bedrock fractures using the department's database of the location and depth of private drinking  
24 water wells.

25 XIX. No permit shall be granted for a new landfill unless undisturbed in-situ soils for 20 feet  
26 immediately beneath the footprint and underneath all leachate storage and transfer infrastructure  
27 have a maximum saturated hydraulic conductivity of  $1 \times 10^{-4}$  centimeters per second(cm/sec) or  
28 less. If the above in-situ soils do not meet the maximum hydraulic conductivity criterion of  $1 \times 10^{-4}$   
29 cm/sec, no amount of imported soil can overcome such deficiency, and the tract shall be deemed  
30 impermissible for use as a landfill.

31 XX. No permit shall be granted for a new landfill unless the subgrade below the liner  
32 consists of soil with a saturated hydraulic conductivity of  $1 \times 10^{-4}$  cm/sec or less.

33 XXI. All references to number-year storm events regarding new landfill permitting  
34 requirements in relation to design, construction, and leachate management shall have the minimum  
35 value of a 50-year storm margin of safety.

36 4 Permit Denial. Amend the introductory paragraph of RSA 149-M:9, IX to read as follows:

1 IX. The department [~~may~~] **shall** deny a permit application under this section to a person if  
2 any of the following applies:

3 5 Rulemaking. The introductory paragraph of RSA 149-M:7 is repealed and reenacted to read  
4 as follows:

5 The commissioner shall have the responsibility and authority to adopt rules, under RSA 541-A,  
6 that are necessary to protect the public health and the environment with an ample margin of  
7 safety relative to this chapter, including rules relative to:

8 6 Effective Date. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

**HB 1478-FN- FISCAL NOTE  
AS INTRODUCED**

AN ACT requiring the department of environmental services to revise the rules for proposed new landfills.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

<b>Estimated Political Subdivision Impact</b>				
	<b>FY 2026</b>	<b>FY 2027</b>	<b>FY 2028</b>	<b>FY 2029</b>
<b>County Revenue</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>County Expenditures</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Local Revenue</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Local Expenditures</b>	\$0	Indeterminable Increase \$10,000 to \$600,000	Indeterminable Increase \$10,000 to \$600,000	Indeterminable Increase \$10,000 to \$600,000

**METHODOLOGY:**

This bill requires the Department of Environmental Services (DES) to revise its landfill siting, design, operation, and closure rules, including new setback, groundwater travel-time, subsurface investigation, hydraulic conductivity, and staffing requirements for all new landfill proposals.

DES states this bill will result in an increase in local expenditures. The impact varies depending on whether a municipality currently owns or operates a landfill and whether it chooses to expand an existing landfill or propose a new one. DES provided the following ranges:

1. Municipalities that own a non-RCRA Subtitle D landfill and seek to expand it
  - Estimated additional cost: \$10,000 to \$100,000 per year
  - These costs stem from expanded subsurface investigations required under the bill.
  
2. Municipalities that own and operate a landfill (any type)
  - Estimated additional cost: \$100,000 to \$500,000 per year
  - This cost reflects the bill's requirement that landfill facilities maintain on-site personnel 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, from the start of waste acceptance through final closure.
  
3. Municipalities that do not currently own a landfill but seek to site a new one
  - One-time siting cost: \$10,000 to \$100,000 for expanded subsurface investigations and groundwater work.

- Annual operational cost: \$100,000 to \$500,000 per year for mandatory on-site staffing requirements.

DES notes that no counties currently own or operate landfills, therefore, there is no county fiscal impact.

**AGENCIES CONTACTED:**

Department of Environmental Services