



Modern Landfill on Kreutz Creek Water Quality

October 25, 2022

YORK, Pa. (Oct. 25, 2022) – Modern Landfill cannot speak to the quality or accuracy of the sampling data provided by the alliance, nor to the methodology it used.

Regulatory oversight of our operations is rigorous. Modern Landfill has been treating wastewater at a permitted on-site facility since 1988. The treated effluent is monitored regularly, and the results are provided to DEP each month. Modern Landfill is fully compliant with the consent agreement it signed with DEP in August 2020.

To meet ever-more stringent state and federal standards, construction is underway on a new \$23 million plant with advanced treatment methods recognized as capable of treating PFAS. That investment reinforces our commitment to operate the landfill in a manner designed to protect public health and the environment. The new plant will be operational in mid-2023.

We care about the environment, and we care about our neighbors. We will continue to manage our operations safely and responsibly, and in full compliance with regulatory standards.

York County has a problem: Where to put its trash

York County has a trash problem — or, rather, it will soon

Modern Landfill, which takes in the majority of waste countywide, is expected to reach its capacity in 2025, and Lower Windsor Township ended negotiations in 2020 on a proposed expansion that would extend the life of that facility.

The next best alternative, a plan put forward by the York County Solid Waste Authority to reopen a former landfill in Hopewell Township that was designated an EPA Superfund site, disintegrated amid community opposition during a public meeting last week.

That meant it was back to the drawing board for the YCSWA, which is left with two options: Try to restart efforts with Lower Windsor officials to expand the Modern Landfill or look elsewhere — possibly to a landfill across the state line in Maryland.

But David Vollero, the YCSWA's executive director, said shipping York County's trash out of state isn't the preferred option.

"[With the] cost of transportation when it comes to disposing, the further you take waste from source, the more it costs," Vollero said. "I can't predict future gas prices, so to quantify price is hard other than projecting it."

After a vote last week by the Hopewell Township Board of Supervisors not to reopen the Hopewell Landfill, Vollero said the YCSWA does not consider that landfill a viable option. It's still in the process of determining where else it could turn in the event Modern Landfill's expansion never materializes, he said.

And it's not clear that Lower Windsor Township is willing to revisit a proposed expansion to the Modern Landfill, which would increase the site's capacity from 42 million cubic yards to 66 million cubic yards of trash.

Lower Windsor Township officials did not respond to requests for comment.

In December 2020, the township Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to end negotiations with Republic Services, the landfill's owner, following significant push back from neighboring property owners who expressed concerns about the aesthetics and possible smell of a larger landfill in their back yards.

Tim O'Donnell, Modern Landfill's general manager, said it's difficult to set a firm timetable on when the landfill will reach its capacity because all trash settles over time because the vast majority of household trash arrives as incinerated ash.

But the company's best guess, he said, is that the current landfill will need to be capped sometime in 2025.

The top of the landfill offers a preview of what that will eventually look like: It is not an exposed mountain of trash and waste, but one covered by a thick layer of fresh dirt. Standing there, workers can look out across the lush green landscape of Windsor and Lower Windsor townships, where the landfill is located.

Current host agreements with the municipalities allow Republic Industries to build and maintain the Modern Landfill and in return provide services such as free trash collection and recycling services, tipping fees and other sources of revenue to the townships.

Modern Landfill currently returns a \$2.1 million combined host fee to Windsor and Lower Windsor townships, according to Republic. Lower Windsor Township receives \$900,000 a year, the Modern Landfill website states. If the landfill closes, those municipalities will lose that annual income — a factor that was discussed during Lower Windsor’s prior deliberations.

The current Modern Landfill sits 70% in Windsor Township and 30% in Lower Windsor Township. Republic Industries owns the land in Lower Windsor Township that it wants to expand into. However, much of that land is zoned agricultural, O’Donnell said. The zoning change was a key part of the negotiations that were cut off in 2020.

Republic Industries is still open to negotiations, O’Donnell said, but unless Lower Windsor Township comes back to the table, no expansion can happen.

Without an expansion, the only way to keep Modern Landfill open is by lowering the amount of waste taken in each year. The less waste taken in, the more slowly they reach capacity, extending the site’s lifespan a few years past 2025, O’Donnell said. If the landfill keeps accepting waste at the current rate, it will hit capacity in 2025 and need to be capped.

The landfill has expanded five times in the past 42 years, O’Donnell said. The proposed expansion would take up 122 acres, about half the size of the current property, and extend the landfill’s estimated lifespan by 25 years.

While the next stage of searching for future waste disposal sites begins, some York County residents are looking for ways to reduce their individual waste output.

Eleanor Boggs Shoemaker, a Hopewell Township resident, used her time at the township meeting last week to address ways the community could prevent waste accumulation. She advocated for reusing and recycling more household waste.

“Let’s think what we can quit using in order not to have so much stuff to get rid of,” Shoemaker said.

Although YCSWA’s goal is to transport and dispose of municipal waste, Vollero said he encourages individuals to learn ways they can reduce their personal waste output.