

October 17, 2019

Via electronic mail and hand delivery

Committee to Study Recycling Streams and Solid Waste Management in New Hampshire
Rep. Karen Ebel, Rep. Megan Murray, Rep. John O'Connor, and Sen. David Watters

Dear Rep. Ebel, Rep. Murray, Rep. O'Connor, and Sen. Watters,

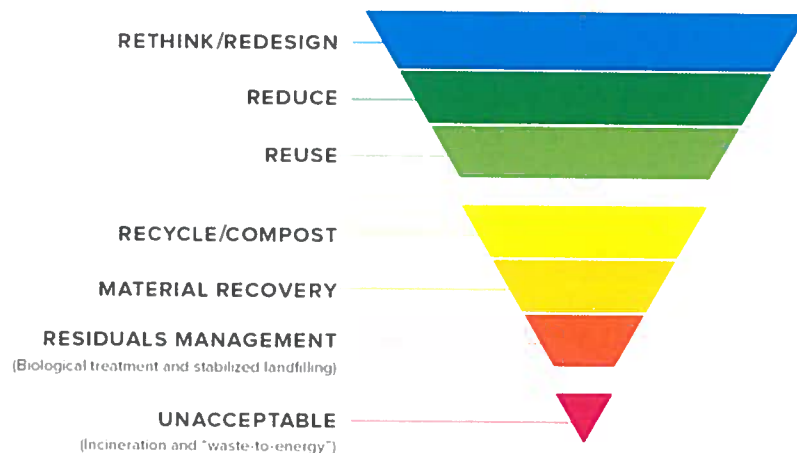
Comprehensive conservation and recycling programs protect the environment and create jobs. Given what we know about the impact of human activity on the atmosphere, it is not acceptable to throw valuable resources into landfills and incinerators, with or without energy recovery. Casella, Wheelabrator, and Waste Management of NH run facilities that displace the value of resources by making waste itself a commodity. This mindset encourages high volumes of waste and inevitably leads to expansion plans that polarize and threaten communities. There are much better options, ones that eliminate the idea that waste is a normal function of society. The future is zero waste, and your committee can help us get there.

According to Zero Waste International Alliance (ZWIA, <http://zwia.org/>), "zero waste is the conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of products, packaging, and materials without burning and with no discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health."

The ZWIA website provides links to affiliates, policies, and educational materials. Here you can access YouTube videos, reading materials, and a calendar of zero waste conferences and events. Localities large and small around the world are proving that zero waste works.

The Zero Waste Hierarchy below is a helpful visual guide. Go to <http://zwia.org/zwh/> to access it online, along with related sections that address "Guiding Questions," "Guiding Principles," and "Definitions."

THE ZERO WASTE HIERARCHY 7.0

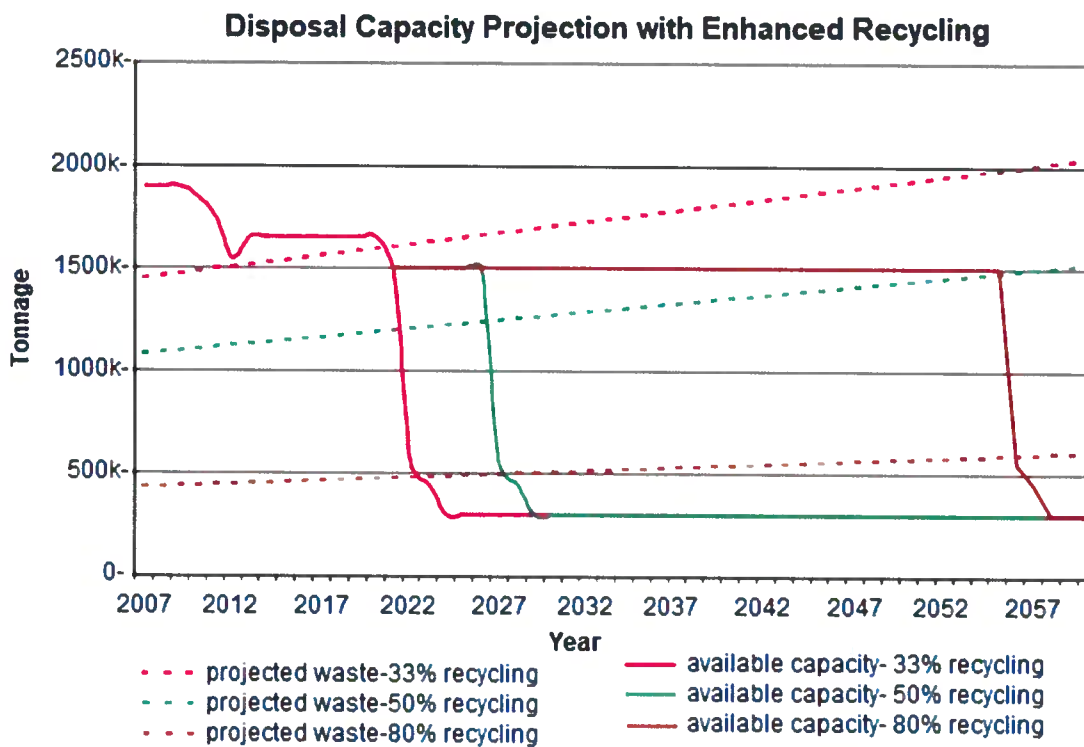


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Keeping food and yard waste out of landfills and incinerators is a major piece of any zero waste policy. According to ZWIA:

The easiest, first step that can produce significant climate results RIGHT NOW is to STOP landfill-produced methane. Simply by getting COOL-Compostable Organics Out of Landfills (COOL)-we can prevent potent methane emissions AND build healthier soils (www.zwia.org/campaigns).

Here in New Hampshire we know that aggressive reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting programs can mitigate the manufactured “landfill capacity crisis.” A fine example is the following graph by David Sussman of New London, NH and formerly of Wilmot, NH. The graph shows landfill capacity with various degrees of diversion.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

We urge the committee to support zero waste planning in New Hampshire. The General Court needs to provide sufficient resources to the Department of Environmental Services and to municipalities for the implementation of forward looking zero waste policies. The status quo is a dead end and detrimental to future generations.

A wise mentor once said: “Waste is a verb, not a noun. It is something we do.” Let’s undo bad habits and get on board with promoting systems that protect people and the planet.

Sincerely,



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Additional resources:

1. Environmental Protection Agency. *Managing and Transforming Waste Streams-A Tool for Communities*. September 30, 2019. Accessed October 16, 2019.
<https://www.epa.gov/transforming-waste-tool/examples-and-resources-transforming-waste-streams-communities-1-50>
2. National Public Radio. “‘Waste’ Examines the Global and Local Afterlife of Recyclables.” Interview with Kate O’Neill, author of *Waste* (Polity Press, 2019). September 12, 2019. Accessed October 16, 2019.
<https://www.npr.org/2019/09/12/760128833/waste-examines-the-global-and-local-afterlife-of-recyclables>
Waste includes a discussion about how resources are extracted from the ground in order to make new products. Extraction is an important part of the life cycle of most consumer products, and it can have adverse environmental, public health, and socio-economic impacts.