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SENECA COUNTY

DEC issues eight-year permit renewal to Seneca Meadows landfill

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The state Department of Environmental Conservation has renewed Seneca Meadows landfill's facility operating permit for eight more years, two less than the landfill had applied for and eight more than some residents had hoped.

The Solid Waste Management Facility permit was issued on Oct. 31, and allows for the fulfillment of airspace permitted by the DEC in 2007, according to a release. It also now covers the landfill's tire recycling facility.

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"Following a rigorous review of Seneca Meadows Inc.'s (SMI) permit application for the renewal of its Solid Waste Management Facility permit to continue operation of the Seneca Falls landfill, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has determined the application to be in compliance with all State rules and regulations governing waste management practices and all operations at the facility fully protective of public health and the environment," the DEC said in a statement to The Citizen on Monday. "The renewed permit includes several new conditions to reduce odors and ensure proper facility management."

The DEC said those measures are included in the landfill's already existing Comprehensive Odor Control Plan and include things like installation of horizontal gas collection lines and additional surface emission monitoring. The landfill will be required to submit monthly updated odor complaint log charts and summaries. The DEC also stipulates that Seneca Meadows will pilot an off-site odor assessment program.

"DEC will continue to provide strict oversight of the facility, including an on-site monitor, to ensure all conditions of the permit are met to protect public health and the environment," the DEC added.

But some local residents don't think that's enough.

Douglas H. Zamelis, an attorney out of Cooperstown, represents the Concerned Citizens of Seneca County Inc. and Waterloo Container Company, a close neighbor of the landfill.

"The permit renewal shows who DEC is protecting, and it's clearly not the good people of Seneca County," he told The Citizen in a phone interview Monday.

Prior to the permit renewal, Zamelis sent a letter to the DEC's Region 8 headquarters on Aug. 17, objecting to a permit issuance.

Following a Freedom of Information Law request, Zamelis said he'd found the DEC had over 2,000 written odor complaints. The landfill, he wrote, often concludes investigations of these reports with "'Odor equipment check and adjusted', which addresses the problem no more effectively than the Wizard of Oz twisting knobs behind the curtain."

When asked about what next steps his clients may be pursuing regarding the permit renewal, Zamelis said he is not able to comment at this time.

Kyle Black, district manager of Seneca Meadows, said the permit renewal was great news for the team.

"They work hard every day to operate our facility with the excellence and precision that has earned us national recognition," he said in a release. "As always, we will work in full compliance with State and federal regulations."

According to Seneca Meadows's application, in 2015 the facility served 47 counties in New York, including some Cayuga County municipalities. It also received trash from some places in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania and Canada. The landfill takes in about 6,000 tons of trash per day.

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