

RENSSELAER ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION

PO Box 228
Rensselaer, New York 12144
RensselaerEnvironmentalCoalition.org
Facebook.com/DunnLandfill
518-227-1570



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CONTACT: Dave Ellis

The Rensselaer Environmental Coalition (REC) calls on Governor Cuomo and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) to take steps to deny the renewal of the operating permit and close the Dunn Construction and Demolition Landfill in Rensselaer, NY before it comes due in July 2022.

The State has confirmed the presence of dangerous PFAS chemicals in the streams and leachate at the landfill and likely in the Hudson River and the presence of unauthorized materials at the landfill likely contributing to the contamination. The chemicals were first discovered by REC in February 2020 with the assistance and support of the prestigious Public Employees for Professional Responsibility (PEER).

REC calls on NYS DEC to conduct monthly tests for PFAS at several and varied locations at the landfill and where the leachate goes in the Hudson River and to make those test results available on a public facing website. REC also requests DEC increase their inspections and supervision at the landfill.

In a letter to Governor Cuomo, REC states, "We believe this new discovery (PFAS at the landfill) calls for you to seriously consider closing the landfill now because this landfill is a serious health and environmental threat to potentially hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers." REC also requests to initiate a full scale and detailed review of the situation.

The landfill's leachate (liquid runoff) is trucked off site every week and goes into the Hudson River. These PFAS chemicals are deemed "forever chemicals" and are undoubtedly present in higher concentrations when they go into the Hudson where thousands of New Yorkers get their

drinking water. Millions of gallons of the leachate go into the Hudson River every year from this landfill.

Considered “forever chemicals”, PFAS chemicals persist in the environment and can accumulate in the human body and have been linked to a variety of cancers and endocrine disruption and most recently, increased risks associated with Covid-19. Specifically, NYS DEC confirms the presence of the PFAS chemical PFBA at levels between 65 and 370 ppt in leachate from the Dunn Landfill. NYS DEC does not regulate PFBA levels, recent research has shown that PFBA can lead to more severe cases of COVID-19. Given the severity of the pandemic it is prudent that DEC minimize exposure to this PFAS.

On October 30, 2020, REC wrote to the Commissioner of NYS DEC advising him to warn the community of the presence of these dangerous chemicals. A reply was not received to this letter until January 22, 2021 from Acting Regional Director, Anthony Luisi which confirmed the presence of these chemicals at the landfill.

On February 24, 2021 David Ellis, Chair of REC, sent a letter in reply to the January 22 letter to NYS DEC. In the reply, which was a collaborative effort with Kyla Bennett of PEER, Judith A. Enck, former EPA Regional Administrator and members of REC a comprehensive testing and inspection effort is recommended. Kyla Bennett, Science Director PEER, stated in the letter, “Rather, in January 2020, New York issued PFAS Guidance to establish procedures for sampling PFAS, and for determining if PFAS is a contaminant of concern for a particular site requiring remediation. That guidance states, “PFAS should be further assessed and considered as a potential contaminant of concern in groundwater or surface water if PFOA or PFOS is detected in any water sample at or above 10 ng/L (ppt). DEC’s sampling results do not show a measurement of PFOA or PFOS over 10 ppt, but samples by REC do. Specifically ...we found 12 ppt of PFOA...”

Details including a copy of the February 24 letter can be found on the website stopdunn.org.