



Removing the hazardous waste pit at the WDE Landfill

Removal is the most cost-effective method to address environmental concerns at the site.

What's the issue?

The 122-acre Waste Disposal Engineering (WDE) Landfill is located in a primarily residential area in Andover, Anoka County. It operated from 1962 to 1983, and was used to dispose of solid and hazardous waste. The waste footprint of the site is about 66 acres.

Of greatest concern are about 6,600 barrels of hazardous waste that were buried in a clay- and asphalt-lined pit in one portion of the landfill between November 1972 and January 1974. The pit where the barrels of hazardous waste were disposed of is about a third of an acre in size.

The hazardous waste pit is leaking and contaminating the groundwater beneath it. Contaminants include polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), paint wastes, heavy metals, solvents and other volatile organic compounds. Groundwater extraction/treatment systems and a vapor extraction system (from the pit) are operated at this site to reduce the health and environmental risks posed by this contamination. In addition, an active gas collection system controls methane migration. Before the groundwater extraction systems began operating, surface water quality standards in nearby Coon Creek were being violated because contaminated groundwater from the site was reaching the creek. Most residents are served by a municipal water supply that is not impacted and the few private well owners in the area are not currently affected.

But even with these safeguards in place, the WDE Landfill ranks at the top of the list of Closed Landfill Program (CLP) sites posing risks to human health and the environment, due mainly to the hazardous waste pit.



The work being proposed

Despite the measures being taken to address pollution at the landfill, risks remain high, particularly should the systems addressing the hazardous waste pit fail. It is also expensive to operate the systems — since the landfill entered the CLP in 1995, \$13.7 million has been spent to construct, operate and maintain these systems. In the past year, operation and maintenance costs were more than \$500,000.

The MPCA is seeking \$12 million to safely remove and dispose of the hazardous waste and underlying contaminated soil from the pit. The agency also proposes to move some wastes from along the boundary of the site into the hole left from the pit excavation, and install a new cover that meets current standards to these disturbed areas.

The risk of exposing nearby residents to unacceptable levels of vapors precluded this work from being considered earlier. The vapor extraction system in the hazardous waste pit has lessened this risk. Removal of the hazardous wastes now would both reduce the risk from that source to nearby residents and be more cost-effective than continuing to operate separate remediation systems for the pit.



Timeline

- » 1962 – Site opened as the Grow Township dump
- » 1971 – Site permitted by the MPCA as a mixed municipal solid waste landfill
- » 1972 – Landfill was allowed to accept hazardous waste, but this portion of the landfill was closed in 1974
- » 1983 – Landfill stops accepting waste
- » 1992 – Groundwater extraction and treatment system installed (as part of federal Superfund Program) – about 25 million gallons of groundwater treated per year
- » 1993 – Multilayer soil cap installed
- » 1995 – Landfill enters the CLP
- » 1996 – City of Andover adopts Ordinance 19 that prohibits the building of enclosed structures within 200 feet of the waste footprint
- » 1998 – Landfill gas extraction system installed – more than one million pounds of methane burned off per year
- » 2009 – PCBs discovered leaking from the hazardous waste pit – MPCA begins studying treatment options
- » 2012 – Separate treatment system installed onsite to treat PCBs in the groundwater collected beneath the pit
- » 2013 – Vapor extraction system installed to collect volatile organic compounds from the hazardous waste pit – about 8,300 gallons of condensed gases have been collected to date and sent out of state for disposal

For more information

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