



February 1, 2024

We, the Seneca County Commissioners, want to express our strong opposition to the permit applications submitted by WIN Waste Innovations. Our opposition reflects the opinions of many constituents who have voiced to us their fear, their anxiety, and their anger about the landfill.

In light of WIN Waste Innovations' long history of noncompliance and refusal to address residents' concerns, we oppose any expansion or growth at the landfill. In June of 2022, the commissioners who were serving at the time, including current Commissioner Anthony Paradiso and current Commissioner Tyler Shuff, formally signed a resolution opposing any expansion at the landfill, and today's commissioners unilaterally maintain that stance.

We recognize the importance of properly managing solid waste facilities to protect the environment and public health, but we cannot ignore WIN Waste's track record of non-compliance with state and federal regulations.

The issue of water quality is an ongoing concern for local residents. WIN Waste's landfill in Fostoria is located in the vicinity of the Portage River and Toussaint River watersheds. According to the Ohio EPA, "The Portage River flows into Lake Erie at Port Clinton in Ottawa County. The watershed is distributed across Ottawa, Sandusky, Hancock, and Wood counties with a small portion in Seneca County." Major municipalities partially or fully in the Portage River and Toussaint River watersheds include Fostoria, Port Clinton, and Marblehead.

The landfill also lies within the vicinity of the Sandusky River and Sandusky Bay tributaries watersheds, which flow through 12 counties. According to the Ohio EPA, "Major municipalities partially or fully in the watershed include Sandusky, Fremont, Tiffin, Bucyrus, and Upper Sandusky."

We have in our possession photos taken on January 10 of water dripping out the bottom of a railcar that was sitting in a residential area near WIN Waste's landfill in Fostoria. Railcars are not sealed, enclosed structures. They are open to the elements, and in this situation, rainwater poured into a railcar filled with waste, infiltrated the waste, and poured out the bottom. This photograph that captured one moment in one railcar represents thousands of railcars that travel from the East Coast to Fostoria every year, intermittently dripping potential toxins when rain or snow fills the cars.

Another photo, taken on Jan. 9, reveals a railcar with extensive holes at its base and a pile of waste lining its floor. Yet another photo, taken on Jan. 10, shows what looks like soil mixed with waste seeping out a hole in a railcar. Waste, water, and soil contaminated with possible toxins can easily escape a traveling or resting railcar, potentially reaching water sources and impacting other elements of the environment.

Because WIN Waste's landfill lies within the vicinity of the Portage River and Sandusky Bay watersheds, we are concerned that the landfill could affect water quality from the landfill all the way to Lake Erie. Therefore, we are opposing the expansion in an effort to protect residents across Northwest Ohio.



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In addition to concerns over water quality, we also question the landfill's effect on air quality. Local residents have made multiple complaints about odor emanating from unknown and possibly toxic sources at the landfill. Although WIN Waste made efforts to address the odor issue, they continue to receive complaints from local residents.

We, the Seneca County Commissioners, have been fighting tirelessly to protect our constituents from WIN Waste Innovations' subpar operational standards and to hold WIN Waste accountable, and it is disheartening and frightening to face the possibility that a business with significant violations and unwavering apathy towards its neighbors could be allowed to expand. WIN Waste Innovations has not demonstrated its will or ability to operate the landfill in compliance with the law while receiving 7,500 tons of waste per day, not to mention 12,000 tons per day as proposed. Ohio EPA should not allow the landfill to expand its footprint or increase its daily intake.

We support the Seneca County Board of Health's plan to implement a comprehensive environmental impact study that would gauge the landfill's effect on all Seneca County residents. The study, which will be conducted by a third party, will be an unbiased, scientific study of the social, environmental and financial aspects of the landfill on the community. We ask the Ohio EPA to refrain from making a decision on the permits until the environmental impact study is complete.

You will hear many people today express fear, anxiety, and anger about WIN Waste Innovations, and those emotional expressions are tangible evidence of another damaging impact the landfill has on local residents. The landfill has negatively impacted residents' mental health and therefore their quality of life.

According to the National Library of Medicine, which is part of the federal government's National Institutes of Health, mental health encompasses a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being and impacts the way a person thinks, feels, and acts. Mental health helps a person cope with stress, be physically healthy, have good relationships, and work productively.

Mental health, therefore, is foundational to a good quality of life, and the landfill has negatively impacted the mental health of many people living within its vicinity. Now the landfill wants to expand its size and capacity, opening the door for increased detrimental effects on the mental health of this community.

In an article sourced from the National Library of Medicine entitled "Environmental Stressors: The Mental Health Impacts of Living Near Industrial Activity," the authors argue that local industrial activity can be a neighborhood-level chronic stressor that impacts the mental health of people living nearby. Not all industrial activity is equal, and Northwest Ohio has many industrial businesses that bring a positive impact to a community. This article addresses industrial operations with substantial potential to harm a community, like a landfill.

The authors also touch on the significant impact on the psychological well-being for employees at these types of businesses. We, the commissioners, recognize the potential physical and mental health risks that WIN Waste employees face.



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According to the article, living near high-risk industrial activity is likely to increase individual feelings of powerlessness. Powerlessness, the article says, develops as individuals learn to expect to have no ability to alter circumstances as a result of repeated exposure to situations over which they have little control.

In this room are dozens of people whose lives have been defined by helplessness and hopelessness as WIN Waste Innovations has repeatedly ignored their concerns and has continued to operate while violating Ohio EPA regulations that are in place to protect residents living near the landfill. The authors concluded that, "...it is reasonable to expect that many people find residential proximity to industrial activity to be chronically stressful and, therefore, psychologically distressing."

The article also spoke of the stress experienced by local residents because the lack of control they have over their own lives is exacerbated by the reality that business and government decision makers are often unknown powers who do not live nearby and are not affected by their own decisions. Adding to the stress is the knowledge that choices, like the ones under consideration today, are sometimes made with no regard to community opposition.

The people of Seneca County have been powerless for too long. They have repeatedly voiced their opinions and have actively engaged in efforts to protect their community against harmful operational practices at the landfill. Yet, they now live in fear and distress that the Ohio EPA will choose to breathe new life into WIN Waste Innovations. They understand that the Ohio EPA is their only defense against the growth of an industrial giant whose expansion has the potential to consume what little quality of life is left in this community.

Signed,

Anthony Paradiso

Tyler Shuff

Bill Frankart