BACKGROUNDER

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The Facts about the Search for an Ash Landfill

- The existing Hartford ash landfill is nearing capacity and must be replaced. It will stop taking delivery of ash in late 2008.

- The ash is the residue that is left after trash is burned at the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority (CRRA)'s trash-to-energy plants that turn garbage into electricity and help to power our homes, schools and offices.

- The ash is moist and has the consistency of damp cement, so it does not blow around in the wind. It also contains no food substances, so rats, birds and other pests do not scavenge an ash landfill like they might at a municipal solid waste landfill. Also, because the ash is not organic it doesn't decompose, generate odors or produce landfill gases.

- One option for disposing of the ash would be to truck it to out-of-state ash landfills or to a privately owned ash landfill in another part of Connecticut. However, this would significantly increase disposal fees for cities and towns, and residences and businesses throughout Connecticut. These are the fees paid to send trash to the state's waste-to-energy plants for conversion into electricity.

- The less expensive option is to identify an environmentally appropriate site in Connecticut where a new ash landfill could be constructed.

- Locating a new ash landfill in Connecticut is also the environmentally responsible path. Nearly 80 percent of the state's garbage that isn't recycled is burned in Connecticut's trash-to-energy facilities to produce renewable power for our homes, schools and businesses. Locating an ash landfill in Connecticut would also eliminate the fuel consumption and increased vehicle emissions that would result from the transportation of the ash to a more distant ash landfill.

- The host community will also receive financial benefit from the ash landfill operation.

- Under state law, CRRA must pay the host community – the municipality where the ash is disposed – $5 per ton of ash deposited in the ash landfill. This could result in host community payments of up to $45 million, and possibly more, during an estimated 30-year life of the ash landfill.

- CRRA has examined 77 potential sites around Connecticut and has narrowed the search down to a roughly 350-acre site off Route 32 in Franklin, Connecticut, behind the former Franklin Farms property. CRRA will continue its investigation by conducting environmental tests to determine if the Franklin site is truly suitable for an ash landfill. This testing is expected to take approximately one year to complete.

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- The Franklin site appears to meet the criteria set by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for siting ash landfills. These criteria include distance from a public water supply and from residential areas; proximity to a large stream or river; and the presence of suitable geology between the site and the large stream.

- DEP mandates that ash landfills be located adjacent to a large stream or river and in an area with suitable geology so that, in the extremely unlikely event there is any water seepage from the ash landfill, it will travel underground to the stream or river. The discharged seepage will then be safely and harmlessly dissipated within the flow of the stream or river.

- The river adjacent to the Franklin site is the Shetucket River. The construction and operation of an ash landfill at the proposed location would not adversely impact the existing water quality of the rivers.

- Proven designs, technologies and construction materials make today's ash landfills protective of public health and the environment. The bottom of the ash landfill is comprised of a system of carefully engineered layers installed under a comprehensive construction quality assurance program. This ensures that an ash landfill is built to the highest standards.

- Although the construction requirements are prescribed by DEP and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), CRRA's plans for constructing the ash landfill will be even more protective than the DEP and EPA requirements to provide an even greater degree of protection of public health and the environment.

- There will be a minimum of five feet of soil between the bottom layer of the ash landfill and the groundwater. This could include an up-to-24 inch layer of special engineered compacted soil. Above this, there will be two thick plastic liners between 60 mil and 80 mil thick; three different layers of special fabric, one of which has special clay sandwiched between two layers of the fabric; and washed stone.

- Drainage layers with piping and pumping systems will be installed on top of the liner systems to safely collect and remove for safe disposal any water that may come into contact with the ash.

- Ground water monitoring will be routinely performed to confirm the integrity of the liner systems.

- An advisory board composed of local residents chosen by the local government will monitor the permitting, construction and operation of the ash landfill and serve as an advocate for the community.

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