



Satilla
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January 13, 2020

Land Protection Branch, Georgia EPD
4244 International Parkway, Suite 104
Atlanta, GA 30354
Via email john.sayer@dnr.ga.gov

Cc: Keith Stevens, William Cook, Chuck Mueller

Re: Draft Site Limitations for Brantley County Development Partners, US 82 Solid Waste Handling Facility – South, Brantley County, Proposed Municipal Solid Waste Landfill, APL 01301

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Dear Mr. Sayer:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Site Limitations prepared by EPD in response to the Site Assessment Report submitted by the applicant.

Satilla Riverkeeper is a 501c3 nonprofit organization. We work to protect, restore, and educate about the Satilla River, its tributaries, and watershed. Our members care about the health of the Satilla River watershed, the communities that live here, and the future generations that will be able to enjoy the Satilla River watershed. Our members live all over the state of Georgia, including Brantley County surrounding the site for this proposed project.

First, we would like to request an extension in the comment period for the public to submit their comments on the Draft Site Limitations. This letter was issued to the Brantley County Development Partners, LLC on December 11, 2019. It was not published online until December 17, 2019. I personally tried to get in touch with employees at EPD about this project via phone and email, but I did not receive a response until January 2, 2020. The Site Assessment Report referenced in the Draft Site Limitations was not published online until January 6, 2020. This does not give the effected public enough time to review and respond to the Draft Site Limitations. This is a very controversial project, and the public deserves the opportunity to learn about the proposal and voice their concerns.

Second, the Site Assessment Report prepared by Innovative Engineering Strategies, revised in October 2019, did not take into account the amendment to the Brantley County Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) in 2017. As the report was revised 2 years after the amendment to the SWMP, it should take into account the restrictions for siting solid waste management facilities in Brantley County. I have attached the 2017 amendment for your reference. Additionally, there are inconsistencies with the Draft Site Limitations and the Brantley County SWMP that is included in Appendix E of the Site Assessment Report. I have noted these inconsistencies below.

1. Figure 1-01 shows the entire property. Does this statement simply mean that EPD is not considering the site suitability of neighboring properties at this time? The Report states that the proposed site is only about 463 acres of the 2,389 acre tract. What other areas are part of the tract? Are there intentions for landfill expansion into other parts of the tract? If so, will the applicant have to go through the permitting process, including assessment of the site suitability again at that point? For example, in the event that Brantley County Development Partners, LLC receives a permit for a solid waste disposal facility on the site delineated in the referenced Draft Site Limitations, and in the future they wish to expand into other areas of the “tract,” please explain the process to get approval for that expansion and the opportunities for public input.

2. Figure 4-01 shows that only 227 acres are deemed “favorable” for solid waste disposal. However, in the notes included on the figure, it states “Jurisdictional wetlands (and their 50 ft buffers) may become favorable areas for solid waste disposal only if proper permitting is obtained as required by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.” Please clarify that waste shall not be placed in areas outside of what is shown as “favorable” in Figure 4-01, even if those areas are to change in the future.

Additionally, please ensure that the “favorable areas” in figure 4-01 reflect the Solid Waste Management Rules, and the site limitations set forth in the Brantley County Solid Waste Management Plan.

3. We strongly agree that a liner and leachate system must be in place for any and all areas of solid waste disposal on this site.

Will an underdrain system alter groundwater/surface water flow in times of flooding and high water? Changing the hydrology of the proposed site could negatively affect downstream neighbors, such as Deerwood Estates (Wiltsie Way, Waynesville) and other low-lying residential communities near the Satilla River.

4. We agree that there should be at very least a 200-ft buffer between the site boundary and any waste disposal activities. The larger the buffer, the better to protect neighbors and prevent adverse environmental impacts in adjacent areas.

5. Georgia DNR Rule 391-3-4-.07(1)(b) states that facilities must provide “a minimum 500-ft buffer between the waste disposal boundary and any occupied dwelling and the dwelling's operational private, domestic water supply well in existence of the date of permit application.” In Brantley County’s Solid Waste Management Plan, amended in 2017, it states that “a minimum 1 mile buffer between the waste disposal boundary and any residential dwelling or residentially zoned property and any dwelling's operational private, domestic water supply well in existence on the date of permit application and/or permit approval.”

In Figure 4-01, a 500-ft buffer from the property line is included on the southern end of the site. This should be increased to a 1-mile buffer to accurately depict the “unfavorable” areas for waste disposal.

Additionally, to the eastern edge of the site is a platted neighborhood, Hawk’s Landing. There are no residences on that edge of the property, but the intent for those parcels is to build residences, or sell the parcels to someone who intends to build residences there. Because these properties are zoned for residential use, and because of the obvious intent on the use of those properties, a 1 mile buffer should also be in place on the eastern edge of the proposed landfill site, adjacent to the platted neighborhood.

6. We agree that a vegetated, undisturbed buffer between all wetlands and waste disposal boundaries is necessary. In Brantley County's Solid Waste Management Plan, amended in 2017, it states that "All wetlands, semi-permanent streams, ephemeral springheads, perennial streams, rivers, other permanent flowing watercourses, and ephemeral streams shall be protected with a 100-foot vegetated buffer, experiencing minimal hand-thinning only, and no cutting of woody vegetation with DBH > 3 inches." In the 2006 version of the Brantley County SWMP included in Appendix E of the Site Assessment Report, it also says that all wetlands should receive a 100-ft vegetated buffer.

To be consistent with the local governing body, all wetlands should be left undisturbed and should be afforded a minimum of a 100-ft buffer between the wetland and waste disposal boundaries.

7. Based on the language stated above from the Brantley County Solid Waste Management Plan, amended in 2017, an 100-ft undisturbed, vegetated buffer should be maintained between waste disposal activities and all on-site springs, intermittent or perennial streams, and surface water bodies.

Additionally, in the 2006 version of the Solid Waste Management Plan, included in Appendix E, pg 58 and 59, it requires a 100-ft vegetated buffer from the 100 year floodplain, and "a 100' natural vegetated buffer must be maintained around all wretched and depressional river channels, creek channels, slough channels, dead lake channels, ponded areas, cypress heads, and like formations."

8. It is extremely important to think about how alterations to the proposed site will indirectly affect erosion and sedimentation into the Satilla River and tributaries of the Satilla River. For example, increasing the runoff from this site during rain events can impact structures like the earthen dam at the community lake at Deerwood Estates. When this dam has been damaged in recent years, it has caused major sediment issues for the Satilla River. Brantley County also has many miles of dirt roads that are vulnerable to flooding. When these roads wash out, not only is it hazardous to residents and expensive for the county to fix, but it also causes sedimentation pollution in our waterways.

9. The Brantley County SWMP, amended in 2017, states that no solid waste management facility should be located within the 100-year floodplain, nor within a 100-ft buffer of the 100 year floodplain of the Satilla River and any of its tributaries. Furthermore, the proposed site for this project is "upstream" of a vulnerable residential lake adjacent to the Satilla River. Alterations of the hydrology on the proposed site, including but not limited to changing the function of wetlands or other surface waters, creating impervious surfaces, altering the groundwater table, could change the runoff that reaches the downstream wetlands and lakes in such a way that destroys property, washes out roads, damages the earthen dam, and cause major erosion and sedimentation issues in the Satilla River. Deerwood Estates community lake is adjacent to Wiltsie Way in Waynesville, and in 2 recent storms associated with hurricanes, the road and dam have been damaged by the enormous volume of water that was coming through the watershed. If the hydrology of the watershed is altered so that it increases the flow of runoff from the proposed site in large rainfall events, the dam could be damaged or destroyed as a result.

11. We agree that groundwater and surface monitoring systems must be in place. This data should be made available to the public in real-time, via an email alert system, posting on a website easily accessed by nearby residents.

12. Please explain which ponds are expected to be filled. Please also verify that this will not alter the water storage capacity of this site, and increase runoff.

In the Site Assessment Report submitted by the applicant, revised in October 2019, Figures 1-08 and 1-14 respectively show the 100-year floodplain and the tidal flooding expected during a Category 5 hurricane. However, these models do not take into account what flooding would look like in the event that a large hurricane came ashore or close to the Georgia Coast and also dropped a large amount of rainfall on the area. It is reasonable to say that when flooding from upstream rainfall meets tidal flooding, the extent of flooding would be much greater, threatening the integrity of a solid waste disposal facility at the proposed site. Please consider the effects of Hurricane Florence in South Carolina as a recent example.

Please also consider the locations of nearby churches and schools. Because this is a rural area, these facilities' drinking water is sourced from groundwater wells. In order to protect their residents' drinking water supply, and consequently their health, Brantley County has imposed a limitation prohibiting a solid waste disposal facility within 1 mile of any churches, schools, or public parks (Brantley SWMP, amended 2017.) Nearby churches and schools include:

- Waynesville Baptist Church, 25486 Highway 82, Waynesville, Georgia 31566
- Waynesville Church of God, 25011 Highway 82 West, Waynesville, GA, 31566
- Pilgrim's Rest Church, 205 Franklin Trail, Waynesville, GA 31566
- Waynesville Primary School, 5726 Old Waynesville Rd, Waynesville, GA 31566
- Atkinson Elementary School, 4327 GA-110, Waynesville, GA 31566

In summary, we appreciate your careful attention to detail as you write the site limitations for this proposed solid waste handling facility. It is in a very vulnerable area, surrounded by a rural community that sources its drinking water from groundwater wells. Proper site limitations are essential to protecting the Satilla River, its tributaries, wetlands, and groundwater resources from contamination and pollution. The proposed site is not appropriate for a solid waste handling facility. It does not meet the limitations put in place by Brantley County. It is EPD's responsibility to ensure that the proposed project will not harm our air, water, or land. Georgians (not excluding the residents of Brantley County) have a right to and a responsibility for a healthy environment and the conservation of our natural resources.

Please reach out to me with any questions or updates on this proposed project.

Sincerely,



Laura Early
Executive Director and Satilla Riverkeeper