

To: Ms. Julie S. Hamilton, julie.s.hamilton@usace.army.mil

Norfolk District, Corps of Engineers (ATTN: CENAO-WR-R)

9100 Arboretum Parkway, Suite 235, Richmond, Virginia, 23235

Re: NAO-2011-2448

Waste Management of Virginia, Inc.

8000 Chambers Road, Charles City, Virginia 23030

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action (VCCA) regarding the proposed expansion of the Charles City County landfill on Chambers Road. We are calling for a full environmental impact assessment and a public information session prior to a public hearing to address the potential negative health consequences of this expansion on the local community.

The proposed expansion would sacrifice 3.31 acres of local wetland and 150 linear feet of stream channel. The location of the expansion would threaten additional flooding, as the permit application mentions existing inundation of the area due to runoff from the landfill slope. This puts neighboring homes at risk of mold and exposure to mosquitos.

Threats to Charles City County families would also include increased groundwater contamination, worsened air quality from dust and methane released from the trash piles, and dramatic surges in local highway traffic due to the use of trash trucks on neighboring roads. The expansion would also threaten public health and safety due to additional truck traffic and flooding on the road near the landfill, as diesel emissions are likely to increase asthma, cancer, cardiac and respiratory conditions in community residents.

As physicians and other health professionals, we are concerned not only about the physical health effects of decreased area for carbon sinks, landfill runoff, and wetland and river contamination, but also the mental health and social effects of sacrificing local historic and cultural resources. The permit application mentions Saint Mary's Church Battlefield and prehistoric archaeological resources. A full assessment should be completed in order to evaluate the possible impact of the landfill expansion on these important cultural resources and this should be discussed with the local community..

It is impossible to discuss the potential negative impacts of the landfill expansion without considering the environmental justice aspect of the issue. According to the 2019 U.S. census estimates, approximately one-quarter of Charles City County's population is aged 65 or older, and 15% are under age 18. This is significant because we know that children and older people are more susceptible to the negative effects of climate change. Because children are still developing and have relatively high body surface area they are particularly vulnerable to environmental toxicants. Their age also means that they have more years of life during which cancer, endocrine disorders, autoimmune disease, and other negative health outcomes can develop, all of which can be mediated by exposure to environmental toxicants.

Elderly people are more susceptible to weather extremes, from abnormally high or low temperatures to extreme weather events such as storms, which can result in damage to living structures, lost power, and injury. Those aged 65 and up may have more difficulty managing in the face of natural disasters. The loss of wetland means the loss of an important buffer to storm surges as well as the loss of a carbon sink that can help to modulate temperature extremes.

Furthermore, the population of Charles City County is estimated to be nearly 60% people of color, the majority of whom are Black/African American, followed by Native people. Communities of color disproportionately bear the burden of environmental destruction and climate change, which are worsening existing health disparities in conditions such as asthma, cancer, heart and respiratory diseases, which we expect will be increased by exposure to more diesel emissions. An environmental impact statement should consider how the proposed landfill expansion might impact issues of environmental health and environmental justice.

On behalf of VCCA, thank you for considering our concerns about the Charles City County landfill expansion. We look forward to reading a full environmental impact statement.

Sincerely,

Irène Mathieu, MD
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Department of Pediatrics
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia