

Delaware Sierra News

A Sierra Club Newsletter about Environmental Matters Important to Delaware

September/October 2003

One Member's Opinion: **When WILL Delaware Deal With Its Trash???**
by M M Rayner



photos by Debbie Heaton

We need a comprehensive public discussion in Delaware about the waste we generate and where/what we should do with it. AND I'm not even going to mention industrial waste here -just Residential Solid Waste and Municipal Solid Waste! This discussion should be statewide, because we are small AND so the ideas/plans generated should apply to the entire state -so no one can send their trash somewhere else in Delaware. Presently this discussion is NOT happening properly and the wrong questions were originally asked of DSWA. Obviously if we, the citizens, want anything done right about this mess, we must demand it our ourselves.

In New Castle County we are facing DSWA proposals to deal with the instability and lack of capacity (5 years remaining at present rate of fill) of the Cherry Island Landfill. This landfill is the only landfill in New Castle County - including all that practically unregulated development below the canal. The recent coverage by the News Journal showed the DSWA Plan to expand the landfill (by raising its height from 125 feet to ~300 feet) and fix the problem of the river sludge liner not settling properly (The water didn't leave as predicted, but made a jello-like layer instead under the landfill weight.), BUT it offered no solutions other than DSWA's.

Excuse me, has anyone thought that maybe we should have a comprehensive "waste discussion" simultaneously? Maybe we could even discuss the EPA rules for siting and design of landfills and the state permits required for landfills? On their website the EPA says conservation, reuse, recycling, and composting have already reduced municipal waste! Plus has anyone questioned how we got a landfill on the riverbank, when the EPA website says landfills must avoid any site where water or groundwater might get pollution from the landfill? Oh I forgot, we have a 'liner' on our landfill next to the Delaware River; this 'clay liner' that never compressed properly and is no longer considered acceptable alone. The laws were written for the EPA 30 years ago. On top of it all, remember we do trash disposal locally -think how bad it must be all over the US with each municipality playing the same games, even along the Delaware River -all under the rules of the EPA!

Some Good News for Delaware

Delaware does NOT take any (that we know of...) out-of-state waste; so compared to most other states we are fortunate. Also due to the hard work of a number of environmental groups, Delaware no longer incinerates waste.

Problems with landfills

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Save the date! 3rd Annual Wild Spaces, Cool Places

Friday Evening, October 10, 2003
Delaware Center for Contemporary Arts in Wilmington

Join us for an evening of good music, fun and food to benefit the Sierra Club's conservation activities in Delaware. And there will be an exciting special guest! Items donated so far include a signed book by David Sedaris, a maritime map of the Delaware-Virginia areas and a balloon ride. The Chapter will be honoring former Senator Bill Roth for his career long efforts to protect the wild places in Delaware and across the U.S. (Check your mailbox in late September for more details. Tickets will be \$30 per person and can be reserved by calling the chapter office at 302-425-4911. Donations of items for the silent auction items are welcome - contact the Chapter office.