

The Resolution

Whereas we believe that God is the Creator and that we are called to be responsible stewards of creation; and

Whereas we live in the Great Lakes watershed, which contains approximately 20% of the available fresh water for the planet; and

Whereas those of us who live here have a particular responsibility to be vigilant in protecting our waters for the health and safety of all who live in and use the Great Lakes waters; and

Whereas Chemical Waste Management (CWM) is the only licensed toxic landfill in the northeastern United States, and is located close to Lake Ontario; and

Whereas PCBs from the CWM facility have leaked into Lake Ontario, and CWM has been found to violate its permit repeatedly by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation; and

Whereas CWM imports toxic waste from thirty states, Canada, and Puerto Rico, such that trucks carrying these toxins pass in front of several schools; and

Whereas the CWM facility is located in the territory known as the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works (LOOW) and unexamined nuclear wastes are buried there which should not be disturbed; and

Whereas there are methods for rendering toxic waste harmless at the site of origination that obviate the need to transport them to be buried elsewhere; and

Whereas CWM is asking for a new permit to expand its LOOW facility, bringing more toxic waste to this location in the future;

Therefore be it resolved that the Presbytery of Western New York is hereby opposed to further expansion of the Chemical Waste Management Site located at 1550 Balmer Road, Model City, NY.

Be it further resolved that the Presbytery of Western New York communicate this resolution to appropriate media, Governor David Paterson, DEC Commissioner Pete Grannis, and to the Western New York delegation of the NYS Legislature.

Be it further resolved that the delegates at this Presbytery meeting take this information back to their congregations and organize letter-writing campaigns to ask Governor Paterson and Commissioner Grannis to deny the request of Chemical Waste Management for a permit to expand the facility.

Background and Rationale

Nearly 20% of the planet's fresh water flows through the Great Lakes watershed. Water rights and access to clean water have become a crisis throughout the world, and no less so in Western New York--bordering two of the Great Lakes: Ontario and Erie. Chemical Waste Management (CWM) operates a toxic waste facility on property commonly known as the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works (LOOW) in the towns of Lewiston and Porter. This CWM facility is one of nineteen such hazardous waste facilities in the United States. CWM is seeking a permit to expand this operation.

Chemical Waste Management (CWM) is the only licensed toxic waste landfill in the entire Northeastern part of the United States. The burial is near Lake Ontario, and on top of unexamined nuclear wastes from the Manhattan project. Trucks carrying the materials pass the schools and leak such materials. Recently CWM discharged a large amount of supposedly treated water into the Niagara River, but the discharge was noxious and foaming. The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) said that CWM had violated its permit, but there is no indication that the DEC tested the spill or fined CWM for this violation.

PCBs have been one of CWM's major waste streams for decades. In 1999 alone, more PCBs were buried at CWM than the amount that General Electric dumped into the Hudson River more than thirty years ago. CWM continues to import toxic waste for burial near the shore of Lake Ontario from the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico.

CWM currently seeks permits to construct more toxic waste capacity, despite all the state and federal Great Lakes agreements to eliminate the discharge of PCBs into the Great Lakes watershed.

The transportation, off-loading, and inspection of toxic waste en route to CWM creates leaks and spills. The truck route for CWM lies adjacent to the Lewiston-Porter School District campus.

CWM remains under a DEC "Consent Order" for the discharge of PCBs into 4-Mile Creek and 12-Mile Creek, both of which feed into Lake Ontario. CWM has also discharged mercury into the Niagara River.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has responsibility for cleaning up or controlling chemical and radioactive contamination incurred by the federal government. Its responsibility includes the 2,000 curies of Radium 226, one of the deadliest radioisotopes known, stored on federal property adjacent to CWM. The DEC is responsible for granting permits to CWM, and after twenty-five years has been unsuccessful in enforcing clean-up by CWM for its contamination on the LOOW site.