

# NO Gardner Sludge Landfill Expansion

Oct. 2022

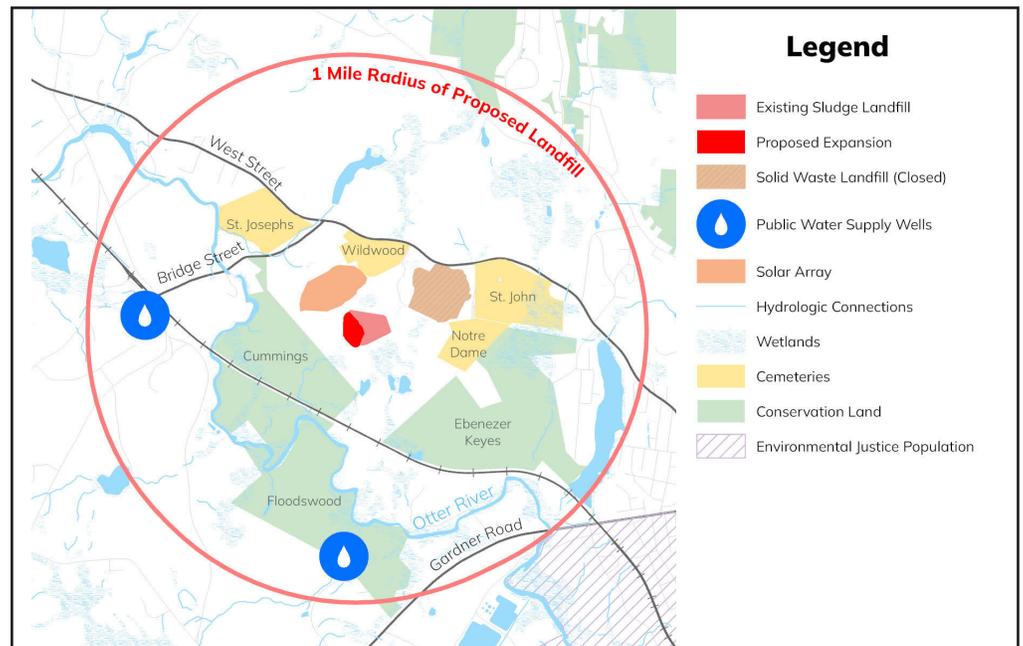
*Prepared by Millers River Watershed Council, Inc. and the Coalition For a Sustainable Alternative to the Gardner Sludge Landfill Expansion—for more details go to: <https://millerswatershed.org/gardner-landfill/>*

## 1. Overview

- The City of Gardner is planning to construct a 4.3-acre expansion to the Sludge Landfill (SLF) in the Wildwood Cemetery Forest off West Street in Gardner. This is a 72% increase in the size of the existing 6.0-acre landfill that currently rises 50 feet above the surrounding area—see map.

- This expansion is only a temporary solution to managing the City's wastewater sludge for a period of 17 years, but the sludge will remain at the site forever. So will the threat to nearby public and private drinking water wells (see map) from liner leakage, which is common to most landfills over time.

- The SLF expansion is also expensive and will destroy sensitive environmental resources that currently benefit everyone. Gardner residents and sewer rate-payers deserve a better solution from —and for— their City!



*Prepared by Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust*

## 2. Threatens Drinking Water

- The geology of the site has glacial outwash and fractured & weathered bedrock which does not provide any natural containment for leachate leakage to groundwater. 71 private wells in Gardner and Templeton, as well as Templeton's Otter River and Sawyer Street public wells, are within a mile.

- The area to the south and southeast of the expansion has many interconnected wetlands, spring-fed ponds, and streams that flow through City owned (Cummings) and privately owned (Ebenezer Keyes) Conservation Areas on their way to the Otter River. Any sludge landfill contamination of surface or ground water will likely impact these vital water bodies.

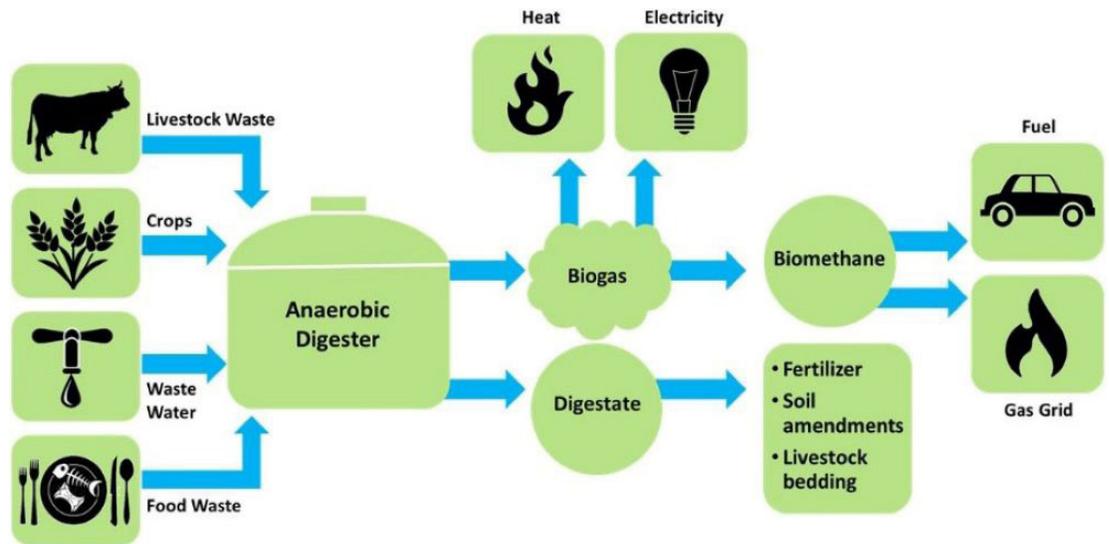
- Erosion wash-out incidents at the SLF in 2020 and 2022 resulted in landfill material exiting an outfall pipe near "Wetland D."

- The City has no plan or procedure to restore water resources in the event of system failure and contamination in 1, 5, 10, 25, or 100 years. That's because contaminated water resources are almost impossible to restore.

### 3. Better Alternatives Exist

- No details on the true cost of the SLF Expansion have been provided to the public. In July of 2022 the City's DPW Director estimated the expansion's cost at \$4,200,000, but provided no details.
- That figure certainly does not include the money required for landfill closure/capping and post-closure monitoring (for 30 years)—which the City has already estimated at \$4,612,280 and \$983,247 (based on 2021 dollars).
- According to the 2018 MA Sludge Survey, only 18% of the state's wastewater sludge was sent to landfills. The other 82% was incinerated or applied to soils.
- No other MA city

or town is currently trying to create or expand a sludge landfill. Many communities are now working on alternative solutions that recycle sludge and generate revenue, to substantially reduce costs and environmental problems. Anaerobic Digestion (AD) is one such solution - see graphic.



*Anaerobic digestion process -- from Environmental and Energy Study Institute*

- Gardner could take advantage of innovative, more sustainable alternatives, perhaps partnering with other communities, for a cleaner and cost-effective solution. Instead, the City's SLF expansion plan rejects a phased, gradual approach to construction in favor of a build-it-all-at once strategy that locks in sludge dumping for another 17 years.

### 4. Environmental Destruction & Poor Air Quality

- The SLF expansion will destroy 4-5 acres of Gardner's natural resources, including a hardwood forest, wildlife habitat, and a geologically important esker in the Wildwood Cemetery Forest.
- This expansion is inconsistent with the City's own Forest Management Plan (2012) that has the following stated goals: "The City of Gardner would like to improve and protect the forest resources on the Wildwood Cemetery property for the benefit of the residents of Gardner. Protecting water quality is a high priority. Maintaining and improving aesthetics near the Cemetery is extremely important as well."
- Persistent odors emanating from the existing sludge landfill negatively affect visitors to the abutting cemeteries and the recreational use of the nearby Conservation Areas. These odors impact Gardner residents, including the City's large Environmental Justice (EJ) community.

**Coalition members:** Athol Bird and Nature Club, Clean Water Action, Connecticut River Conservancy, Gardner Clean Air, MassPIRG, Massachusetts Rivers Alliance, Millers River Watershed Council, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust and North County Land Trust; technical support provided by The Sierra Club.