

APPLICATION  
Narrative Sections  
1thru 3

# USA WASTE GENEVA LANDFILL - EXPANSION & REMEDIATION PROJECT

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GENEVA TOWNSHIP, ASHTABULA COUNTY, OHIO

## 1.0 PROJECT PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION

### 1.1 OVERVIEW

USA Waste Geneva Landfill, Inc. (GLI) owns and operates the Geneva Landfill facilities located in Ashtabula County, Ohio. The facility is approximately 3.85 miles northwest of Austinburg, Ohio on Township Road 203 (Tuttle Road). GLI is a wholly owned subsidiary of Waste Management, Inc., a publicly traded company that owns and operates landfills throughout the United States. Waste Management is strongly committed to the safe and responsible management of waste and works diligently to ensure regulatory compliance and protection of the public's health and natural resources. Since its purchase and subsequent operation by USA Waste in 1997, GLI has maintained an excellent record for environmental protection and compliance in accordance with provisions of Chapters 3704 (Air Pollution Control), 3734 (Solid and Hazardous Waste), and 6111 (Water Pollution Control) of the Ohio Revised Code.

GLI has been exploring potential expansion alternatives for their landfill operations since the late 1990's. Presently, the landfill has permitted footprint of 48.6 acres and its volume capacity has been nearly exhausted. In the last few years there have been renewed and recently successful efforts to rezone the landfill acreage holdings (+/- 436 contiguous acres). A number of proposed expansion footprint configurations were prepared for the landfill during and immediately following the rezoning process. These expansion proposals were intended to maximize the potential waste disposal volume on the GLI holdings. However, these earlier alternative footprints did not recognize the importance of avoiding higher quality wetland and waters resources; specifically, presumed jurisdictional resources in the corridors of two unnamed tributaries to Cowles Creek (UNT-2 and UNT-3). As a result of the environmental assessment for the most recent design process, these resources are now appreciated for their value in protecting water quality in the Cowles Creek watershed.

The currently proposed *minimal degradation design alternative* has resulted in a configuration focused on avoidance, minimization, and buffering of the defined natural channel tributaries to Cowles Creek and their associated wetland resources.

Geneva Landfill submitted a permit to install (PTI) application for the expansion of Geneva Landfill to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency in August of 2010. The PTI application was prepared and submitted in accordance with Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) Chapter 3745-27. The landfill expansion proposed in the August 2010 application will add approximately 14,600,000 cubic yards of airspace to the facility,

allowing approximately 38 years of additional operation for the site. This expanded time period of operation translates to long term disposal services for Ashtabula and surrounding Counties in an innovative environment that is focusing on progressive reduction of waste stream volumes through ever-improving recycling strategies and emerging technologies. At present, the existing permitted facility has a life expectancy of only four years based on current waste placement volumes.

The proposed Geneva Landfill expansion is to be constructed entirely on acreage owned by USA Waste Geneva Landfill, Inc. This document addresses the requirements of the Army Corps of Engineers 404 Permit and associated Section 401 Water Quality Certification and Anti-degradation Addendum administered by the State of Ohio.

## **1.2 FACILITY DESCRIPTION**

GLI has owned and operated the Geneva Landfill since 1997. GLI is currently permitted (PTI No. 02-11359, effective 8/13/02) to accept non-hazardous, general domestic, commercial, and industrial waste. The current site consists of approximately 436 acres, including 48.6 acres permitted for solid waste disposal. The remaining acreage provides buffer and non-coal mining opportunities to generate soil/mineral materials for facilities construction and daily cover of waste.

Geneva Landfill is located in a sparsely populated area of northeastern Ohio zoned primarily as Rural Residential and WM (zoned for Waste Management uses) and has few nearby neighbors. Residences lie primarily to the east and south of the site. All occupied buildings that occur between Cowles Creek (to the north) and its unnamed tributary to the west are owned by GLI. Three residential buildings owned by GLI occur immediately to the north and northeast of current landfill operations (at the bend in Tuttle Road and immediately east of UNT-1). However, all three structures are vacant and scheduled to be demolished.

Outside of municipal and industrial areas, land in Ashtabula County is used primarily for agricultural activities such as cropland, forage production, livestock grazing, vineyard, and orchard. Oil and gas production are historically common in the region. Industrial enterprise in nearby Ashtabula and Geneva municipalities has been reduced greatly from past times of peak production. Most of the Geneva Landfill property and surrounding area have historically been in crop production, vineyard, nursery, and forestland use. The original "Doherty Landfill" was started and permitted on the GLI property in the 1950's. As noted above, the GLI acreage involved in this proposed project area is now zoned entirely as "WM" in Geneva Township (Waste Management zoned).

The landfill property is shown on the USGS Geneva Quadrangle map. The wooded areas within the proposed expansion project area have experienced multiple modifications to their hydrologic condition due to past farming, logging, and subsequent development and improvement of the adjacent landfill operations. Remnant agricultural drainage practices are in evidence throughout the site; and the construction, maintenance,

and improvements made to Tuttle Road over the years also have affected surface water flow patterns. In addition, the drainage patterns that pre-dated development of current landfill operations on lands to the south... and the former Doherty Landfill to the west... were modified and re-directed through diversions, road ditches, storm-water piping, waterways, storm-water management facilities, and erosion/sedimentation control structures installed by County road maintenance crews and authorized landfill operations.

### **1.3 PROJECT PURPOSE**

The purpose of the proposed landfill expansion project is to construct and operate a non-hazardous waste landfill that will meet projected waste disposal needs of Ashtabula County and surrounding areas for the next 35-40 years in a cost effective and economically acceptable manner that benefits the entire service area. In addition, remediation of portions of landfill facilities closed under past OEPA oversight is planned in order to bring past waste placement into compliance with current OEPA solid waste disposal standards.

Operation and management of the facility will continue to be consistent with the goals and objectives of Ohio's waste management regulations.

### **1.4 ECONOMIC ANALYSIS**

The population of Ashtabula County in 2008 was estimated to be 104,970<sup>1</sup>, and the median household income was \$41,414<sup>1</sup>. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the County ranked 28th among the 88 Ohio counties. In 2006, there were 9,199<sup>1</sup> residents between 18 and 64 years of age that were living below the established income poverty line, approximately 15.2% of that demographic grouping. The total number of children under the age of 18 years living in poverty was 5,177<sup>1</sup> or approximately 22.5% of all children in the county. Education expenditures in 2006 were \$2,680.07<sup>2</sup> per student with a graduation rate of 43.1%<sup>2</sup> and a dropout rate of 21.9%<sup>2</sup>.

The proposed landfill expansion will serve to continue economic and social benefits derived by Ashtabula County from current operation of the Geneva Landfill, Inc. facilities. Direct benefits include a continuance of jobs and payrolls for permanent employees, payroll taxes paid to state and local government and school taxes. Jobs and payroll for temporary employees and local contracted work during the construction phases of the project will be an added benefit.

Additionally, a revenue sharing/enhancement program is in place between GLI and Geneva Township (the host township). Funds that Geneva Township receives from this arrangement are dispersed as the Township perceives need (discretionary funds). Continuance of these revenues is dependent upon continued operation of the landfill and placement of future waste volumes in the proposed expansion area.

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<sup>1</sup> 2006-2008 US Census estimate.

<sup>2</sup> Education information from: <http://dnet01.ode.state.oh.us/sfeps2.0/buildingblocksReport.aspx>.

### **Jobs Created and Revenues Gained.**

The existing landfill has 5 full-time employees and 4 part-time employees with an annual payroll in excess of \$500,000 dollars. Expansion of the landfill will lengthen the life expectancy of the facility and ensure that Geneva Landfill will maintain at least current staff. However, operation of a larger landfill during and following expansion development may require additional full-time and/or part time employees. Construction of the expansion facilities will generate employment opportunities and will allow the circulation of millions of additional dollars into local and regional economies from landfill construction activities.

In addition to direct employment, the existing facility operation provides tax revenue to the County through per capita employee occupation taxes and local income taxes. Construction of the minimal degradation alternative design will serve to continue these tax revenues at levels at least equal to the current levels.

Construction of the currently proposed minimal degradation alternative design will have positive impacts on the local economy for approximately 20 years. Shortening the life expectancy of the landfill by limiting the expansion area (as in the nominal degradation alternative) would seriously jeopardize the continued employment of Geneva Landfill employees and would reduce or shorten the construction contracts awarded for needed construction activities. As noted in the alternatives analysis section of this application, the nominal degradation alternative would also preclude effective remediation of the closed Doherty Landfill portion of the GLI site and would not generate sufficient revenue to meet minimal site operation expenses.

The proposed project will not have a negative effect on local recreational or commercial opportunities. In fact, implementation of the proposed wetland mitigation plan is expected to enhance an already popular local educational activity that results from annual use of mitigation wetlands constructed in 2001 for study by local school children. The proposed compensatory mitigation actions planned for the preferred minimal degradation alternative design will expand on these current education and stewardship opportunities while ensuring that similar wetland functions and societal values are fostered and preserved in the headwaters of Cowles Creek.

The existing, unlined and closed Dougherty Landfill is a lingering and potentially serious environmental concern for the area. Currently, annual monitoring and maintenance costs for the closed facility are valued in the thousands of dollars. However, the proposed GLI minimal degradation alternative includes a plan to exhume and relocate the old waste from its current location (along and within a headwaters stream corridor of Cowles Creek) onto a modern synthetically lined landfill footprint. This action will thereby avert and reduce the potential for a costly (both in financial and environment terms) cleanup of groundwater, air emissions, and surface waters of the Cowles Creek watershed. The labor and equipment to perform this operation would be part of the

landfill expansion construction cost and would be spent in the initial phases of the expansion area construction.

Waste Management is currently negotiating with potential “green energy” buyers in hopes of constructing a “gas to energy” power generation facility at GLI. The facility will require two to three full time employees, and its construction and maintenance costs will pour several millions of dollars into the regional economy. Construction of this power generation facility is dependent upon continued generation of sufficient methane gas from degradation of landfill wastes. Sustained gas generation into future years will be dependent upon new volumes of waste being placed in the proposed landfill expansion. This energy is expected to provide clean, “green”, electrical energy for many years to come.

Finally, Waste Management presently houses its Accounting Collection Division employees and their equipment in the current Geneva Landfill offices located on Tuttle Road. Although these services will be moving to temporary leased quarters while new offices are being constructed as part of the landfill expansion, Waste Management intends to return these jobs to the expanded Geneva Landfill facilities as soon as the new offices are ready for occupancy. In addition, Waste Management is considering moving additional assets and jobs to the expanded facility from other Waste Management locations, an action that would produce new net jobs for the local economy.

#### **Potential Job Revenues Lost**

The currently proposed minimal degradation alternative will not eliminate jobs or otherwise affect local businesses. Because the expansion will be confined entirely to lands already owned by GLI while maintaining significant buffer setbacks from adjoining properties, the GLI expansion will not displace businesses or residences in the community.

If the proposed landfill expansion and remediation actions are not permitted, at a minimum, all of the current on-site jobs would be lost. In addition, if landfill operations cease, it is not likely that a new Accounting Collections Office would be constructed in the area. Rather, it is likely that the Collections Office staff (and annual payroll of  $\geq$  \$784,000) would be relocated to Waste Management offices in Chardon, Ohio, thereby displacing persons and wage earning opportunities from Ashtabula County.

If the Geneva Landfill facilities are closed, all funds currently disbursed to Geneva Township would be lost as well (based on 2009 tonnage, an annual revenue loss of \$207,000). The Ashtabula County Solid Waste District has other revenue raising opportunities under Ohio Revised Code, and could probably continue to function. However, the landfill revenue contributions currently spent in support of local activities and community services would cease.

An accounting of the Financial Impacts of Geneva Landfill, Inc. on local and surrounding communities is presented in the table that follows.

**TABLE 1.4.1: Annual Financial Impacts of Geneva Landfill, Inc. on Local and Surrounding Communities.**

Description	Beneficiary	Estimated Annual Contribution <sup>(1)</sup>
District fees	Ashtabula County Solid Waste District	\$499,276.00
Host Community Fees (\$0.25/ton)	Geneva Township	\$41,360.00
Host Community Agreement (\$0.10/ton, increasing to \$1.00/ton when the landfill expands)	Geneva Township	\$16,544.00
Real Estate Taxes	Ashtabula County, Geneva Township	\$191,676.00
Contributions/Donations	Local organizations <sup>(2)</sup>	\$22,054.00
Payroll (does not include the \$784,00.00 in payroll for the Collections Operations Staff)	Local Employees	\$520,00.00
Purchases <sup>3</sup>	Local products and services	\$222,500.00 (2009)
<b>Total Average Annual Ashtabula County Economic Impact</b>		<b>\$1,503,410.00</b>

<sup>(1)</sup> Based on monies paid/donated during 2001.

<sup>(2)</sup> Local organizations include: Geneva Chamber of Commerce, Ashtabula Growth Partnership, Local Schools, Boy Scouts of America, Geneva Festivals, and the Geneva Rotary.