



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

**Department of Environmental  
Conservation**

DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH  
Solid Waste Program

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March 10, 2022

Subject: Support for Funding to Construct a New Landfill and Close Existing Akiak Landfill

To Whom It May Concern:

The Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) Solid Waste Program regulates solid waste facilities in Alaska. This program provides technical assistance to ensure facilities are developed and maintained so they are not a threat to human or environmental health and to comply with the requirements of State of Alaska regulations 18 AAC 60. The ADEC strives to assist rural villages in improving solid waste management for their community.

Akiak is rural community in southwest Alaska, approximately forty miles upriver from Bethel on the Kuskokwim River. On May 18, 2019, an erosion event occurred over a 24-hour period, during which spring melt and high water resulted in the loss of over 50 feet of riverbank along 1200 feet of riverfront. Due to this event and the imminent threat of continued erosion, the Akiak Native Community developed a Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan which necessitates the urgent relocation of 13 residences and seven commercial structures away from the erosion threat zone. This plan identifies the critical need to close the existing Akiak Landfill and the existing honey bucket lagoon to be protective of human and environmental health due to the priority managed retreat tasks of relocating community homes.



Erosion in Akiak when over 50 feet of riverbank was lost in a 24-hour period in May, 2020.  
(Ivan Ivan/City of Akiak via KYUK News)

The existing Akiak Landfill is a permitted Class III Landfill (permit number; SW3A179-22) which was constructed in 1991. In the 2020, Broad Environmental Assessment, Akiak Home Relocation and Managed Retreat Project report, the Akiak Landfill was described as “nearly full” and the required relocation of structures due to erosion and the resulting construction and demolition debris would “certainly fill the existing solid waste site to capacity, if not beforehand”. Relocating the community to the higher ground in the Akiak Subdivision is a managed retreat priority, and the close proximity of homes to the existing Akiak Landfill and honey bucket lagoon is a public health risk.



Location of the existing Akiak Landfill in Drinking Water Protection Zone A and the Proposed New Landfill which is planned to be sited outside of Drinking Water Protection Zones A and B

The Akiak Landfill facility is located within a Zone A, Drinking Water Protection Area, delineated under 18 AAC 80.015 for an active public water system source. Groundwater testing has not occurred to determine if the existing facility has the potential to impact the quality of drinking water. However, solid waste landfill best management practices advise that constructing a landfill outside of Drinking Water Protection Zone A, helps to ensure the protection of human and environmental health. The Proposed New Landfill will be sited outside of both Drinking Water Protection Zones A and B and this will help to minimize any negative impacts to public health and drinking water quality in the community of Akiak.





Existing Akiak Landfill near community residences, November 15, 2020

Akiak has shown significant capacity demonstration in solid waste operation improvements, landfill permitting compliance, and household hazardous waste (HHW) management, and has sufficient solid waste management capacity to operate and maintain the implemented project. Akiak has demonstrated strong improvement in their ADEC Solid Waste Inspection, Waste Index score, which has increased from 26% to 78% between 2013 and 2016. The ADEC Inspection Report on March 20, 2017, praises Akiak for keeping their active waste area small, managing the burn unit, and diverting HHW away from the landfill. It was also noted that the solid waste collection bins constructed by Akiak staff, are very well made and along with a strong collection program, could be a model for other communities. This indicates that Akiak is making clear efforts to improve solid waste operations and is invested in proper solid waste management. If implemented, this project will increase their ability to operate their solid waste system to be protective of human health and the environment and increase subsequent ADEC Landfill Inspection Waste Index scores.

In conclusion, the ADEC Solid Waste Program supports Akiak in their efforts to obtain funding to construct a new landfill and work towards closing the existing Akiak Landfill site. I look forward to working with the community to provide a safe and healthy solid waste management system. Please contact me with any comments or questions at (907) 269-7642 or by email at [melinna.faw@alaska.gov](mailto:melinna.faw@alaska.gov).

Sincerely,

Melinna M. Faw  
Environmental Program Specialist