

Mr. Jaime King
901 Miller Road
Lake Orion, MI 48362

Dear Mr. King:

Thank you for your June 12, 1999 letter to President Clinton about municipal solid waste landfills. The White House sent your letter to the Environmental Protection Agency so that we could respond to you.

The number of municipal solid waste landfills in the United States is steadily decreasing, from 8,000 in 1988 to 2,400 in 1996. Yet, you and many others have expressed your concerns to us about the siting of landfills in your communities.

There were problems sometimes with older landfills, but I want to assure you that EPA and State solid waste officials are working to ensure that landfills are designed and operated properly so that they will not pollute our environment. EPA wrote regulations in 1991 to replace the open dumps of yesterday with new state-of-the-art facilities for handling garbage. Today's landfills follow strict location, operation, design, and monitoring practices. Also, once landfills run out of space for more trash, they are properly closed, capped and monitored for many years to ensure their continued safety.

Because handling trash and landfills is primarily the responsibility of State and local governments, you may wish to speak with Joan Peck of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality for more information about the siting of landfills in your particular community. She can be reached at (517) 335-4035.

Like you, we are concerned about America's mounting trash problem and have done much to encourage people to avoid creating waste in the first place. For example, we encourage people to reuse empty containers and when copying paper to copy on both sides. This reduces the overall amount of waste created, and decreases the

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demand for more landfill space. The enclosed EPA publication, *The Consumer's Handbook for Reducing Solid Waste*, describes many ways in which citizens such as yourself can help address the growing garbage problem.

In addition to creating less garbage, EPA promotes recycling. Recycling, including composting, diverted 57 million tons of material in the United States away from landfills and incinerators in 1996. In 1990 the U.S. only recycled 34 million tons, so we have increased recycling by 67 percent in just 6 years. I have enclosed an EPA publication entitled *Puzzled About Recycling's Value?*, which further describes recycling's benefits.

Thank you again for sharing with us your concerns about the siting of landfills. We appreciate your interest in the safe and effective management of garbage. I hope this information will be helpful to you.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth A. Cotsworth, Director
Office of Solid Waste

Enclosures

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