



# Saugus River Watershed Council

1 March 2013

Governor Deval Patrick  
State House, Room 280  
Boston, MA 02133

Secretary Richard K. Sullivan, Jr.  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

Commissioner Kenneth L. Kimmell  
MA Department of Environmental Protection  
One Winter Street  
Boston, MA 02108

John Fischer  
MA Department of Environmental Protection  
One Winter Street  
Boston, MA 02108

RE: Proposal to Lift Moratorium on New or Expanded Waste Incinerators

Dear Governor Patrick, Secretary Sullivan, Commissioner Kimmell, and Mr. Fischer,

The Saugus River Watershed Council is a non-profit organization founded in 1991 to protect and restore the natural resources of the Saugus River watershed.

**We are writing to express our strong opposition to the proposal to lift the moratorium on new or expanded waste incinerators in Massachusetts. We urge you to keep the moratorium in place to protect public health and critical natural resources. This issue is of particular concern in the Saugus River watershed, where local public officials and residents are still grappling with the fallout from the recent Consent Judgment and \$7.5 million fine against the Wheelabrator waste incineration company for violations of the Clean Water Act and the Wetlands Protection Act in Saugus and other locations.**

**As you know, the Wheelabrator Saugus waste incineration facility, and the landfill used to dispose of contaminated ash, are both located adjacent to the Saugus / Pines River estuary, an Outstanding Resource Water located within the Rumney Marshes Area of Critical Environmental Concern. This is by far the most important natural resource area in the Saugus River watershed.** The Rumney Marshes ACEC is a 2,634 acre urban salt marsh system extending into Saugus, Lynn, Revere, Boston and Winthrop. This region was designated as an ACEC in 1988 to preserve its critical environmental value as one of the most biologically significant salt marshes north of Boston. The marsh contains flounder, alewife, rainbow smelt, American eel, soft shelled and razor clams, mussels, and a variety of native and migratory birds.

The Saugus River Watershed Council has been actively involved in protecting and restoring the natural resources of the region by working with federal, state and local agencies to implement the Rumney Marshes Salt Marsh Restoration Plan, monitor and promote restoration of historic fisheries, monitor and improve water quality, remove illegally dumped debris, and educate the public about the natural resources of Rumney Marsh. Thanks to increased environmental enforcement and local cleanup efforts, the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries in conjunction with local communities reopened shellfish beds (conditionally with depuration) in the Saugus / Pines River estuary during 2007.

**Operations at the Wheelabrator Saugus facility have already had a significant negative impact on natural resources in this portion of the Saugus River watershed.** In 2011, the state ordered Wheelabrator to pay a historic \$7.5 million fine as part of a settlement for environmental violations of the Clean Water Act and the Wetlands Protection Act at their waste incineration facilities in Saugus and other locations around the state. As part of the Consent Judgment, Wheelabrator was required to improve operations and undergo regular environmental audits by the independent consulting firm Environ. The Town of Saugus has been reviewing compliance with those audits each quarter. During the process, the audits have regularly revealed environmental and operational problems that needed to be addressed after each audit. **Allowing waste incineration facilities with a history of environmental violations and continued operational problems to expand in any manner would be irresponsible.**

The Saugus River Watershed Council understands that the proposal to lift the moratorium is focused on allowing existing waste incinerators to add capacity for emerging technologies such as gasification or pyrolysis that would convert garbage into liquid fuels or gas. While some of these new facilities are currently being proposed, there are currently no large-scale operating facilities in the United States that are gasifying municipal solid waste or biomass. **The Saugus River Watershed Council maintains the proposed 'emerging' technologies have not been proven, and testing them out in the watershed's most environmentally sensitive area using facilities that have a history of environmental violations is unacceptable.**

Although traditional waste incineration was touted as an environmentally friendly solution to the landfill capacity problem when first proposed, it resulted in an entirely new set of environmental and public health problems associated with emissions and contaminated ash. **Gasification may have a lower rate of emissions than traditional waste incineration, but the end result of expanding waste incineration with gasification would be the release of significant new emissions into the environment – a scenario which is unacceptable and flies in the face of the state's ongoing efforts to reduce greenhouse gases.**

We believe that the solution to the state's solid waste capacity must be found through policies and programs that will not expand any form of waste incineration or create new emissions and increase contaminated ash in Massachusetts. Looking to waste incineration for a solution to solid waste will only expand other environmental pollution problems. Promoting gasification doesn't support the state's Zero Waste goals because recyclable waste would be burned instead of recycled. At the same time, expanding waste incineration with gasification or pyrolysis would increase emissions and is therefore in conflict with the greenhouse gas reduction goals set forth in the Massachusetts Global Warming Solutions Act.

In closing, we urge you to keep the moratorium on new or expanded waste incinerators in place in Massachusetts in order to protect public health and critical environmental resources. Please contact me at 781-233-5046 or [srw@shore.net](mailto:srw@shore.net) if you have any questions about the Saugus River Watershed Council or this comment letter. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joan LeBlanc". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Joan LeBlanc  
Executive Director

Cc: Senator Thomas McGee  
Rep. Kathi-Anne Reinstein  
Rep. Donald Wong  
Saugus Town Manager, Scott Crabtree  
Saugus Board of Selectmen  
Saugus Board of Health  
Saugus Conservation Commission