

## 4.0 SUPPLEMENTAL VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

---

As noted in Section 4.5.8 of the DGEIS, the visual conditions presented by the Landfill Expansion will be consistent with the currently permitted conditions at the site. Certain nearby receptors may experience additional exposure if the landfill construction and operation activities associated with the Landfill Expansion occur closer to them.

In its comments on the DGEIS, the Town of Seneca Falls noted that there are several points where the landfill is visible from locations distant from the landfill on major routes entering Seneca Falls and Waterloo. The Town requested that the DSEIS include a visual analysis of the major routes into Seneca Falls and Waterloo. In its response to the Town of Seneca Falls comments, SMI agreed that the Supplemental EIS would include a supplemental visibility analysis from major routes entering Seneca Falls and Waterloo.

The supplemental visual impact assessment was completed by Saratoga Associates in December 2006 and included both quantitative (how much is seen) and qualitative (what it will look like) aspects of potential visual impact. The process used for the supplemental visual impact assessment follows basic New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Program Policy “Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts”-DEP-00-2 (DEC Visual Policy) and State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) criteria from which to minimize visual and aesthetic impacts while, preserving, conserving, and or enhancing the visual resources of affected communities. Consistent with the DEC Visual Policy, the study area encompassed a 5-mile radius around the project site. A copy of the Saratoga Associates Visual Resource Assessment Report is included as Appendix C.

### 4.1 COMPONENTS OF SUPPLEMENTAL VISUAL ASSESSMENT

Components of this supplemental visual impact assessment included the following procedural steps:

- Define the existing landscape character/visual setting to establish the baseline visual condition from which visual change is evaluated;
- Conduct a visibility analysis (viewshed mapping) to define the geographic area surrounding the proposed facility from which portions of the project might be seen;

- Identify sensitive aesthetic resources to establish priority places from which further analysis of potential visual impact is conducted;
- Select key/representative viewpoints from which detailed impact analysis is conducted;
- Illustrate the visual character of the proposed facility, as it would appear from key/representative viewpoints; and
- Evaluate the nature of visual change (qualitative analysis) resulting from project construction and completion and the public's probable reaction to the visual change.

#### **4.2 PHOTOGRAPHIC SIMULATION OF THE PROPOSED LANDFILL EXPANSION**

High-resolution photographic realistic simulations of the proposed Landfill Expansion have been prepared for representative receptor locations. Locations selected for photographic simulations were based on 1) the most unobstructed or directed views, 2) relative importance of public vantage points, 3) level of viewer exposure, and 4) geographic distribution. Figures A1 through A12 of the supplemental visual impact assessment report provide photographs of existing conditions, simulations of currently permitted conditions and simulations of proposed conditions for the following receptor locations:

- NYS Thruway (I-90) at Exit 41;
- NY Route 414 near NY Route 318;
- NY Route 318 at Whiskey Hill Road;
- Black Brook Road;
- NY Route 414 at Routes 5 and 20;
- NY Route 414, 1,000 feet south of Salcman Road;
- Seneca County Fairground;
- NY Route 414, 1,000 feet north of Salcman Road;
- Waterloo High School;
- NY Route 96 near Christier Road;

- North Road Near Burgess Road; and
- Cayuga and Seneca Canal at Route 414 Bridge/Proposed Cayuga-Seneca Canal Trail.

As depicted in the supplemental visual impact assessment, direct views of the Existing Facility are more significant on the outskirts of the Village of Seneca Falls and the Village of Waterloo where localized residential and commercial structures, street trees and landscaping are less likely to provide a visual barrier. Direct views of the Existing Facility are also more significant along Route 414 located east of the Existing Facility. Less significant views of the Existing Facility are found along Routes 5 and 20 and Route 318.

Less than three (3) percent of the five-mile radius study area will be newly impacted by visibility of the proposed horizontal and vertical expansion of the Existing Facility. Areas of new project visibility are typically limited geographic extensions of adjacent lands that are already affected by views of the Existing Facility.

The project would result in several steep-sided adjoining meadowed landforms that, although consistent with the visual and composition of the Existing Landfill, are somewhat distinct from the natural topographic and vegetative patterns found in the study region. Consistent with the Existing Landfill, the proposed Landfill Expansion would be a dominant visual element, clearly identifiable as a man-made landfill within the context of the surrounding natural landscape.

Consistent with visibility of the Existing Landfill during the operational activities, periodically visible construction vehicles and relatively small areas of active landfilling would create a contrast in color and texture with the vegetative patterns of the surrounding visible landscape. This contrast would be particularly noticeable from viewpoints located within the foreground distance zone (within ½ mile). These differences would be substantially diminished with distance.

#### **4.3 VISIBILITY OF THE PROPOSED EXPANSION STAGES**

The Landfill Expansion will be constructed over nine stages which are detailed in the Engineering Report and Engineering Plans which are incorporated by reference in this DSEIS. As previously stated in Section 4.5.8 of the DGEIS, the peaks and sideslopes of the Existing Landfill are generally visible from several vantage points along Route 414 and Burgess Road. The top of the Existing Landfill has reached its peak elevation of 763 feet above mean sea level (MSL) which places it approximately 281 feet above the surrounding grade (approximately 482 feet). The earthen berms which surround the SELF on the east and south sides generally screen its operations from several vantage points along Route 414 and Burgess Road. In areas that are higher than the perimeter

berms, operational berms are constructed on the outbound slopes of the SELF to screen operational activities from view to the maximum practical extent.

The vertical component of the proposed Landfill Expansion will result in an approximate 11 feet height increase compared to the currently permitted maximum elevation of 763 feet above MSL. Receptors located along Route 414 will generally experience the same visual impact with the Landfill Expansion as they currently experience with the Existing Facility. For receptors located along Burgess Road, the western part of the Landfill Expansion will become a more dominant visual feature, similar to what the receptors along Route 414 currently experience for the Existing Facility.

Construction and operation activities for the proposed Landfill Expansion will continue to be performed behind the perimeter and operational berms to the extent possible to reduce the visual impacts. The mitigation measures for the visual impacts of the proposed Landfill Expansion are further discussed in Section 4.4 of this DSEIS.

#### 4.4 MITIGATION MEASURES

Proposed mitigation measures for the visual impacts of the proposed Landfill Expansion include progressive operational berms, perimeter screening and daily cover of exposed waste material.

Upon initiating each successive vertical lift during landfilling activities, a berm constructed of waste material would be placed along the perimeter of the lift area. All external side-slopes would receive a final cover of soil and would be planted with grass and herbaceous vegetation. This operational berm will create a visual barrier that progressively screens views of operation and construction vehicles, as well as daily operational areas of uncovered waste material. This berm would be maintained at a typical height of 10 – 13 feet above the adjacent elevation of the active fill area.

An extensive landscaping plan has been developed which is intended to maximize screening of exposed views along Route 414. The landscaping plan includes construction of a screening berm and planting of deciduous and evergreen vegetation to screen views into the project site in areas where existing vegetation does not provide an adequate visual barrier. Existing onsite vegetation will also be preserved to the extent possible so that it can continue to provide a visual screen to onsite activities. Additional landscape screening has also been proposed for the property on the northwest corner of North Street and Burgess Road.

Daily placement of waste will be limited to as small of an area as possible to minimize views of this component of the proposed Landfill Expansion. Exposed waste material will be covered with soil cover on a daily basis to minimize visual impact and blowing litter.

#### 4.5 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the supplemental visual impact assessment results, the visual patterns and composition of the proposed Landfill Expansion will be consistent with what is already visible.

Pursuant with the DEC Visual Policy, aesthetic resources of statewide significance and potential impacts on these resources from the proposed Landfill Expansion were inventoried along with resources of local interest. A total of 75 visual resources within the five-mile study area were inventoried. These visual resources included Cultural Heritage Resources such as local cemeteries, churches and a library; Tourist Resources such as shopping venues, nature trails and fairgrounds; Recreational Resources such as parks; Transportation Resources such as Route 414 and Burgess Road; and Residential/Community Resources such as schools and a college. For all but 21 of these 75 visual resources, no visibility of the proposed Landfill Expansion is anticipated.

Less than three (3) percent of the five-mile radius study area will be newly impacted by visibility of the proposed horizontal and vertical expansion of the Existing Facility. Areas of new project visibility are typically limited geographic extensions of adjacent lands that are already affected by views of the Existing Facility. Mitigation measures including an extensive landscaping plan which will incorporate construction of a screening berm; progressive lift berming; and daily cover of exposed waste material will be implemented to limit the visibility of the active operations to the maximum extent practicable.

In conclusion, the Landfill Expansion will result in a change in the degree of exposure rather than a new or visually different impact. The proposed Landfill Expansion represents a continuation of existing visibility of the Existing Facility operations with a limited area of new visibility.