



## 'Stronger than the Smell:' Roxbury rallies against Fenimore dump's odors

By Louis C. Hochman/NJ.com

on August 23, 2013 at 10:28 AM, updated August 23, 2013 at 11:52 AM

**ROXBURY** — Bob Schultz looked over a crowd of brought 300 people, many carrying signs, some wearing gas masks.

"Is the DoH here? Is the DEP here?" he asked. "It doesn't look like it. I guess they don't care."

Schultz was venting frustration with the stage agencies — the Department of Health and the Department of Environmental Protection — over the problem that brought the crowd together. For too long, he and others said, residents have suffering through the unpleasant rotten egg-like smells and ill health effects caused by hydrogen sulfide, emanating from the Fenimore landfill.

And in speeches, on placards, in crowd-wide chants, they said Thursday night at the Horseshoe Lake Beach parking area that they want answers — to when the problem will be fixed, and why it was allowed to happen in the first place.

"My daughter can't even stand outside at the bus because it smells so bad," said Amanda Denis, whose husband, Stephen, is part of the Roxbury Environmental Action Coalition, which organized Thursday's rally.

Gasses from the landfill have been a problem for Roxbury residents since 2011, after developer Strategic Environmental Partners began implementing a DEP-approved plan to cap the landfill and convert it into a solar farm.

The DEP recently took over the closure following lengthy legal battles involving the company, the state agency and the township. SEP is challenging that takeover, and seeking compensation.

For now, the agency says it is making progress toward mitigating the smell — though some of the work it has done in that process has prompted spikes in hydrogen sulfide emissions. When they get bad enough, the township issues emergency alerts and opens up facilities to serve as temporary respite centers.

The DEP has completed installing a Posi-Shell cement-based spray on cap, a first step toward mitigating the smells, spokesman Lawrence Ragonese told NJ.com Thursday. A DEP contractor, Handex, is testing and installing a gas collection and treatment system that he said should help further.

The DEP had installed torches at the site to try to burn off gasses during its work there, but they didn't have the

desired effect, Ragonese said. Ultimately, the DEP plans to permanently cap the landfill, but that will take substantially more time.

Dan Sico said he lives too far away from Fenimore to smell the gasses at his home, but he's encountered them shopping. His children play on township fields and get whiffs of the rotten odors, he said.

"It worries me a bit, and I don't even stand in it every day," he said. "I think we need more than 300 people to get something done,"

Linda Keane, one of the speakers who addressed the crowd, said she grew up in Roxbury and moved back to raise her family. But people in town have been suffering asthma, headaches, nausea and other effects, she said. The Department of Health, in an FAQ listed on Roxbury's website, describes those among the possible effects of hydrogen sulfide exposure.

"Roxbury is the perfect place to raise a family, and that is what makes what is happening here with the Fenimore Landfill even more heartbreaking," she said.

She said the smells are getting stronger, and traveling further.

"Gov Christie, we, the people of Roxbury, should not be expected to live analyzing wind direction, watching live monitor feeds on the Internet, and waking our children in the middle of the night to go sit in a gym and sleep on a cot," she said.

**Elliot Ruga, a senior policy analyst with the New Jersey Highlands Coalition, told the crowd "this is what happens when our government becomes they rather than us." He said residents should demand answers about why approvals were given to open up the landfill in the first place.**

Deputy Mayor Kathy DeFillippo said she shares her fellow residents' frustration — but also said the DEP is working hard on the problem.

"We have to be a little more patient," she said, soliciting light boos from the crowd. "But that does not mean we shouldn't stand up."