



# New DEC rules are important for Long Island

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By The Editorial Board



A dumping site at 175 Brook Ave, Deer Park, June 5, 2014, where the District Attorney's Office is investigating and taking samples. Photo Credit: Ed Betz

So, you don't get excited about revisions to solid-waste regulations. We get it. You're not a policy wonk or ardent environmentalist. But you should care because those rules are important to every Long Islander. They set standards for dumping and sand mining and mulching, all of which can leach contaminants into the aquifer that is the region's sole source of drinking water.

After years of promises and delays, the state Department of Environmental Conservation said the new rules would be made public by Feb. 28. But having a date certain is one thing. Getting the revisions right is another. State officials say the revamped regulations will require cradle-to-grave tracking of construction and demolition debris, the kind of material found in the four sites of alleged illegal dumping in the Town of Islip. That's good; we have advocated repeatedly for such a manifest system. The rules also should make whoever generated the debris responsible for its disposal — an incentive to hire carters who are reputable, not merely cheap.

Tougher restrictions also are needed on sand miners, such as how deeply they can dig before reaching groundwater, and on composting and mulching operations that can cause egregious groundwater contamination. There should be tougher penalties for violators, and some misdemeanor crimes should be felonies. And the DEC needs more staff for monitoring, inspecting and enforcing.

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo recently vetoed a bill to tightly regulate mulching facilities, saying it wasn't necessary with new regulations coming. So now he's on the hook, too. Long Island's water must be protected. The new rules must be up to that task.

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