

James River Association Calls for Urgent Action Needed to Address Impending Crisis at Shoosmith Landfill

by jravirginia | Jun 3, 2026 | Advocacy, News, Press Release | 0 comments
PUBLIC STATEMENT
For Immediate Release
June 3, 2026

Urgent Action Needed to Address Impending Crisis at Shoosmith Landfill

James River Association is calling for urgent state intervention and funding to address the growing threat of an environmental and public health crisis at the Shoosmith Landfill in the James River watershed.

The private landfill in Chesterfield County, which stopped accepting waste in 2022 and filed for bankruptcy in June 2025, had a history of noncompliance with permit requirements during its operation. It has now developed into an environmental crisis threatening the region.

“Without immediate action, this situation could escalate into a major environmental disaster with lasting consequences for communities and waterways across the region,” said Jamie Brunkow, Director of Advocacy and River Ecology at the James River Association.

Threats to Drinking Water and Communities

The Shoosmith Landfill is bordered by Swift Creek, with neighborhoods and businesses in close proximity. Swift Creek flows into the Appomattox River and ultimately the James River at Hopewell – the location of a drinking water intake that serves roughly 9,300 residential, commercial and industrial users. In addition to being sources of drinking water, these waterways provide important fish and wildlife habitat and support recreation and local economies across the region.

Escalating Environmental Risks

Evidence has surfaced documenting multiple significant and concerning characteristics at the Shoosmith Landfill site, including:

- [Elevated temperatures](#) within the landfill contributing to accelerated settling, increased generation of leachate, noxious odors, and the buildup of gases that could destabilize the landfill further;
- Accumulation of roughly 50,000 gallons of leachate a day, a toxic wastewater that poses risks to people and waterways; and
- [Leachate spilling](#) into stormwater ditches and in cases directly to Swift Creek, due to inadequate maintenance of on-site drains and pumps and the presence of multiple seeps from landfill cells and sidewalls.

These conditions are the result of a long history of operational violations and mismanagement. The situation has deteriorated rapidly following the landfill operator’s bankruptcy, which has left no viable financial means to address the site’s substantial environmental liabilities.

Urgency Amid Legal and Funding Uncertainty

[An engineering report](#) filed as part of the bankruptcy proceedings estimates that landfill remediation, closure, and long-term post-closure care will cost approximately \$173 million over a 30-year period. Approximately \$19 million in closure and post-closure bond funds are currently available, far short of what is needed to manage the site’s escalating environmental risks. This funding gap places the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Chesterfield County residents, and Virginia taxpayers in a difficult position of being responsible for the future of this private landfill.

James River Association has been engaging closely with State leadership as well as legislators to urge action to stop the contamination risks at Shoosmith Landfill. To address the immediate threat and prevent further environmental degradation, current estimates indicate that approximately \$50 million will be needed over the next two years to construct an on-site leachate treatment and management facility. Without prompt action, environmental risks and associated costs will increase, with the potential for catastrophic consequences.

“Virginia must respond decisively by funding emergency actions to protect public health and prevent a larger environmental crisis from developing at Shoosmith Landfill,” said Brunkow.

“State officials must investigate how this situation was allowed to escalate, pursue every avenue to secure the resources needed for cleanup, and ensure that polluters are held accountable.”



ABOUT THE JAMES RIVER ASSOCIATION: The James River Association is a member-supported nonprofit organization founded in 1976 to serve as a guardian and voice for the James River. Throughout the James River’s 10,000 square mile watershed, the James River Association works toward its vision of a fully healthy James River supporting thriving communities. The James River Association believes that “when you change the James, the James changes you”. With offices in Lynchburg, Richmond, Williamsburg, and Scottsville, the James River Association is committed to protecting the James River and connecting people to it. For more information visit www.thejamesriver.org.