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Admitted in: ME

January 23, 2024

Stacy Brenner, Senate Chair
Lori Gramlich, House Chair
Legislative Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 2135, Resolve, to Investigate and Address Municipal Solid Waste Disposal Services Issues

To the members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

On behalf of Casella Waste Systems, I appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments. In considering the bill before your Committee, a brief review of recent significant events is appropriate.

The past three years have marked an especially difficult and disruptive period for Maine's solid waste disposal efforts. Over that time, disposal options have become increasingly limited due to challenges at the Penobscot Energy Recovery Company (PERC) in Orrington and the closure of Coastal Resources of Maine (Fiberight) in Hampden. PERC was Maine's largest solid waste incinerator. The facility was accepting approximately 175,000 tons of municipal solid waste annually for combustion to produce electricity for sale on the grid. The combustion process reduced the remaining volume of waste requiring landfill disposal by approximately 90%. Similarly, Fiberight, which attempted to pioneer a new technology to allow the commingling of both trash and recycled items, was slated to accept a considerable amount of that same solid waste, if not more.

One of these facilities – if not both – were integral to the processing of solid waste for more than a hundred municipalities in the northern half of our State (a group previously referred to as the Municipal Review Committee, or 'MRC'.) With both facilities closed, all the solid waste from the MRC is being disposed of at the state-owned landfill at Juniper Ridge or the Waste Management owned landfill at Norridgewock.

At the same time as these developments in the greater Bangor area, the incinerator at ecomaine in Portland was shut down for repair. Because the landfill ecomaine owns and operates is reserved largely for ash from its incinerator, approximately

70,000 tons of municipal solid waste from the Greater Portland area was sent to the Juniper Ridge landfill for disposal in 2022 alone. In addition, the practice of landspreading of biosolids in Maine was halted in 2022. A majority of the resulting material – nearly 25,000 tons of wet waste in 2023 – is being diverted to the Juniper Ridge landfill.

To say that the Juniper Ridge landfill is faced with capacity challenges as a result of these developments would be a gross understatement. While Casella did not actively seek introduction of LD 2135, we can appreciate why state and municipal representatives from Old Town believe this legislation is necessary, and urgent.

As was presented to this Committee in the Department's recent waste management report, Maine generated waste has increased by an average rate of 1.3% per year over the past 5 years. Assuming no increase in this rate, Maine will generate approximately 1.96 million tons of waste by 2029, 2.16 million tons by 2039 and 2.27 million tons by 2049. We have fewer options for disposal and an increasing amount of municipal solid waste being landfilled, principally at Juniper Ridge.

In the meantime, Casella has been working to ensure that our customers – the cities and towns in Maine – continue to have affordable disposable options for their municipal solid waste and waste water biosolids. We have explored technologies – some of which are currently deployed at other landfills that we operate – to reduce the amount of PFAS in the residual leachate at the state-owned landfill.

We stand ready to work with this Committee, the DEP, BGS, Maine policy makers and all responsible stakeholders to craft solutions that will address these problems. Collectively, we have no choice but to work together to solve them.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is any further information I can provide the Committee in its deliberation on this bill.

Sincerely,



Newell A. Augur