

Maulian Bryant  
Wabanaki Alliance  
LD 297

#### Testimony Regarding Juniper Ridge Landfill Management

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Honorable members of the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Maulian Bryant and I am a Penobscot Nation Tribal Citizen and also serve as the Executive Director for the Wabanaki Alliance. We are an organization formed by tribal leaders in 2020 to advocate for the restoration of the recognition of the inherent tribal sovereignty of the Wabanaki Nations. Please accept this testimony regarding the slate of bills before you today in regards to the tribal input on the management of the state owned landfill, Juniper Ridge. I give this testimony in coordination with Penobscot Nation leadership and Department of Natural Resources and it is also supported by the Wabanaki Alliance. We are opposed to LD 297 and in support of LD 1349 and LD 1604.

The Penobscot Nation has a history of stewardship of the lands and waters containing and surrounding the location of the Juniper Ridge landfill. This territory is not just where our people live now, it is where our people have lived for thousands of years. While we have suffered the trauma of colonization, land theft and forced dispossession of our wealth and resources, and oppression of our rights; we are blessed to be in the homelands of our ancestors. It is because of both the tremendous losses and the fierce resilience we fight tirelessly for the health and wellbeing of our homelands now called Maine and in this case our homelands now called Alton, West Old Town, and Argyle but also our tribal territory and reservation.

We are not satisfied with the operations of the landfill. We do not feel we are adequately notified nor informed about the fires that engulf the area from time to time. We are not communicated with in regards to the air quality or water quality. On hot summer days or rainy days any time of the year we can smell the odors from the landfill in our front yards. Our ancestors did not fight for us to stay in our homelands to suffer from breathing in trash as we go about our lives. We are in agreement with the proposed reforms to ownership and we are also in agreement with regulation of PFAS chemicals. At one point the runoff from the landfill was being treated in the adjacent paper mill on the other side of our home and a pipe burst directly into the Penobscot River. We did not know about this incident until tons of gallons of waste had been discharged.

We are opposed to reopening the loop hole to accept out of state waste and we believe there are other alternative solutions to meeting the waste management needs without forcing Maine taxpayers to support the landfill storing and processing the waste of the rest of New England. We were part of the coalition that helped close that loophole and reform the statute and we feel the burden of finding ways to stabilize the waste falls on the state and the communities impacted negatively by the landfill should not have to incur further negative consequences.

Judging from the amount of bills surrounding operations of this landfill this is an issue that needs prompt and thoughtful attention. We have also expressed clear opposition to the expansion of this landfill as our tribal lands at Birch Stream would likely be directly impacted. The current status quo has our reservation lands and waters of Orson Island directly in the path of air toxics that are created during the fires. The state has made progress on climate goals and part of this work is around environmental justice. Forcing a tribal nation to be encumbered by the negative consequences and annoyances of an environmental hazard flies in the face of that. We have concerns about the disproportionate ways that these landfills are placed near the Penobscot River watershed with sites near Dolby flowage and possible placement near Mattamiscontis. We are thankful to our friends and coalition members who stand by our rights to clean air and water for our people and we encourage you to consider our input when voting on these bills.