



Solutions for a
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Vice President of Policy
and Advocacy, Defend Our Health
In Support of LD 1349, "An Act to Require Legislative Approval
for a Contract to Operate the Juniper Ridge Landfill"
Before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee
April 28, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the Vice President of Policy and Advocacy for Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health's mission is to make sure that everyone has equal access to safe food and drinking water, healthy homes, and products that are toxic-free and climate-friendly. I am here to testify in support of the sponsors amended version of LD 1349 "An Act to Require Legislative Approval for a Contract to Operate the Juniper Ridge Landfill" which would require that the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of General Services may not enter into or renew a contract for the operation of the state-owned Juniper Ridge Landfill, located in the City of Old Town, unless the contract is approved by a 2/3 vote of the Legislature.

We have deep concerns with the ongoing management of Juniper Landfill. Neighboring communities have been subjected to worsening air quality and the release of harmful toxins in the air due to fires on site. The uncontrolled burn illustrated Casella's limited ability to manage the landfill's toxic contents, as people in the area reported finding their cars coated in ash, and members of the Penobscot Nation downwind from the landfill reported sore throats and burning eyes during the blaze. DEP conducted no air sampling during the burn, but area residents were left to worry about their exposure to airborne dioxins and other landfill contaminants.

While other landfill operators in Maine have announced aggressive plans to solve Maine's sludge management problem¹ and are working with partners to deal with the severe PFAS contamination of landfill leachate², Casella continues to send its untreated leachate to the private wastewater facility at the idle Nine Dragons Paper Mill, contributing to elevated PFAS in

¹ A \$35 million biosolids facility in Norridgewock could be answer to state's sludge disposal crisis. CentralMaine.com (2023, August 22). <https://www.centralmaine.com/2023/08/22/a-35-million-biosolids-facility-in-norridgewock-could-be-answer-to-states-sludge-disposal-crisis/>

² Leigh, V (2023, July 14) *Removing PFAS chemicals from wastewater being pioneered in Maine*. News Center Maine. <https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/tech/science/environment/removing-pfas-chemicals-from-wastewater-being-pioneered-in-maine-health/97-c36a8b29-8029-4613-8b62-b10acab4d681>



the Penobscot River near the Penobscot Nation's reservation³. The contamination impacts the river and the fish that the Penobscot Nation depends upon for sustenance and cultural practices.

Casella Waste Systems is deeply invested in the for-profit management of Maine's – and the broader region's – waste streams. This profit orientation conflicts with the public interest of the people of Maine, illustrated by Casella's repeated attempts to use the Juniper Ridge Landfill for out-of-state trash to increase their profits.

This bill will increase transparency and democratic oversight, providing residents in Old Town and Penobscot Nation stronger voice through their elected officials and creating a public, visible process for reviewing landfill operations, thus responding to ongoing issues like fires, odors, and complaints

I urge you to vote unanimously "Ought to Pass" on the amended version of LD 1349

³ Shauffler, M (2022, September 10) *Compound Injustice: PFAS may concentrate over time in landfills near the Penobscot Indian Reservation*. The Maine Monitor <https://themaine-monitor.org/compound-injustice-pfas-may-concentrate-over-time-in-landfills-near-the-penobscot-indian-reservation/>