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Please pass LD 489, The Amendment to the Maine Constitution to Establish Mainer's rights to a Healthy Environment. Mainers are fortunate to live in a state with clean, abundant natural resources of forests, fields and fisheries, which have provided the backbone of Maine occupations. Native peoples provided good stewardship of Maine lands, making subsistence living while protecting those resources for future use. Due to ocean pollution, acidification due to increased atmospheric carbon, and overuse of fisheries, Maine has lost most of its ground fisheries and is rapidly losing wild shellfish industries. Forest stewardship has improved since passage of the Forest Practices Act, and must improve more with longer rotations to incorporate more carbon in the soils to both improve timber quantity and sequester carbon. Farming in Aroostook overused pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers causing death of all living organisms in overworked soils. Improvements in farming methods in the past 30 years have caused the growth of an organic dairy industry and new grain and vegetable crops in northern Maine. This amendment will protect the current restoration of northern Maine soils, and set the stage for rewarding forest owners and farmers for implementing soil improvement practices.

It will protect Maine lands from improper disposal of hazardous and solid waste, requiring all new industries meet standards set by the Department of Environmental Protection to maintain high water, air and soil quality. The Penobscot Nation has worked with DEP to improve the water quality of the Penobscot River above Bangor, allowing DEP to upgrade the water quality. These higher standards will prevent future water pollution, and maintain the water quality improvements won to date, allowing fisheries restored after dam removal to grow. Maine has higher asthma rates in children and in adults than many other states, being downwind from midwest coal fired plants. As many of Midwest electric plants have been closed in the past decade, and more Maine and Midwest electricity derived from wind and solar PV arrays, Maine air quality will continue to improve. Let's continue to improve Mainer's health by adding air, water and land protection as a right of all Mainers in our constitution.