

Dawn Neptune Adams
Brewer

Sen. Brenner, Rep. Tucker, and members of the ENR Committee: My name Dawn Neptune Adams and I am a Penobscot Nation Tribal member, currently living in Brewer. I am here to speak in favor of LD1600, "An Act to Investigate Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substance Contamination of Land and Groundwater" and specifically of the landfill leachate amendment in Section 4 "Levels of PFAS and Heavy Metals in Landfill Leachate .

I'd like to thank Rep. Lori Gramlich for sponsoring the bill, and Sen. Bennett and many others for co-sponsoring.

Penobscot Elders have been praying for the Water. The Penobscot River is being polluted by the state-owned, privately-run Juniper Ridge Landfill. Landfill leachate is a waste byproduct created when rainwater filters down through layers of solid waste in a landfill, collecting a toxic cocktail of chemicals along the way. The leachate is then trucked to the Nine Dragon's Paper mill wastewater treatment plant in Old Town, "processed" and dumped in the Penobscot River.

"I've been fighting that dump ever since it came because we didn't want it. It was supposed to be originally just for the paper mills. We all feel that connection to something and I'm connected to the water, I am the water, we are water.

I'm going to do the best I can to bring people together so they can help me do something; because this water is your water too.

My heart is speaking to all of you today and I hope that all of us can get together and do something, as One." - Kathy Paul, Penobscot Elder and Activist

According to Juniper Ridge Landfill monthly status reports, the volume of leachate varies, but in the last 12 months 15,754,040 gallons of chemical-laden leachate was shipped to Nine Dragons Paper Mill for processing. According to the Penobscot Nation's Natural Resources Department, the paper mill treatment plant does not have the capacity to adequately process and test for the complex and constantly changing toxins contained in landfill leachate, including PFAS and heavy metals.

"What we're doing to ourselves with this landfill leachate is totally unacceptable. I grew up being taught that everything in Creation is Sacred, with not one thing being more important than the other. So while I pray for the water, I also pray for all of Creation, because we are all, everything in Creation, is interconnected.

When we harm one thing, we harm ourselves." - Charlene Francis, Penobscot and Ojibway Elder

Because of a loophole in Maine Waste Policy, an estimated 30-40% of the trash brought to Juniper Ridge Landfill comes from other states. This includes trash not allowed in out-of-state landfills because of more stringent regulation; such as Construction, Demolition and Excavation debris, and wastewater sludge that contains PFAS and heavy metals.

The Penobscot People view the assault on the Penobscot River, and the Penobscot people, as a clear example of Environmental Racism, and an example of Environmental Injustice for all affected communities on the River.

The Penobscot people take their kinship responsibility to care for the River very seriously. And we do this for all the people of Maine. For the next seven generations and all our Relations.

M'sitte n'talonpemnawak (All our Relations)

Here are two recently made Sunlight Media Collective Videos related to Juniper Ridge Landfill:

Penobscot Elders have been inviting the public to stand in Solidarity and Ceremony with the Penobscot River.

<https://vimeo.com/523344387>

Landfill Leachate dumping into the Penobscot River at Nine Dragons Paper Mill Wastewater Treatment Plant, Testing by Penobscot Nation Department of Natural Resources

<https://vimeo.com/523171448>

Dawn Neptune Adams, in Brewer

Penobscot Nation Tribal Member
Narrator, Co-Producer, and Journalist at Sunlight Media Collective
Racial Justice Consultant at the Peace & Justice Center of Eastern Maine
Consultant and Activist at Racial Equity & Justice
(207) 907-0486