

5/12/2021

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, Members of the Committee,

I am writing to provide my whole-hearted support of LD 1639, "An Act to Protect the Health and Welfare of Maine Communities and Reduce Harmful Solid Waste". This bill would, in part, reduce the amount of out-of-state waste byproducts that end up in our State-owned Juniper Ridge Landfill.

The State-owned landfill was created as a way of keeping out-of-state waste from filling up a Maine landfill, but the opposite has happened. Approximately one-third of the wastes deposited at Juniper Ridge were originally wastes from other states. As a resident of Old Town, and a member of Don't Waste ME, I have been horrifyingly astonished to see how rapidly that landfill is expanding. In 2003, it could not be seen unless you actually entered the landfill area. Eighteen years later, it can now be seen from all area roads, including the southbound land of I-95 around mile 201. It is now one of the tallest points in Old Town.

Accompanying this incredible expansion have been numerous odor issues, traffic back-ups, and very creative definitions of what is true Maine waste. As a Maine citizen, I accept responsibility for handling our own waste, but to realize how much of what is in Juniper Ridge, forever, that came from out-of-state is hard to swallow. What makes it particularly irksome is knowing that the filling of the landfill with out-of-state "processing residues" means that much less future capacity for our own waste disposal needs.

This bill does nothing to impact what may be processed at a solid waste processing facility within the state; it would simply limit the weight of such processing residues sent to Juniper Ridge to the weight of the true Maine waste processed at such facilities. This bill will bring our policies more in line with the original intent behind having a State-owned landfill.

During testimony, you may hear that passage of this bill will negatively affect jobs in Maine. In 2019, inputs to one solid waste processing facility in Lewiston, ME were 91% from out-of-state. 96% of the processing residues ended up in Maine landfills, as either CDD disposed in landfill or CDD fines/cover chips used for alternative daily cover. Again, this bill does nothing to try to control the origin of wastes being processed; instead it limits the outputs to be landfilled at JRL to equal true Maine inputs. It is not attempting to shut down any business in Maine but rather to save state-owned landfill capacity for true Maine waste. Processing residues could still be sent to other landfills. If the processing facilities claim that they could not continue to operate with the passage of this bill, they are patently admitting that the only purpose of their business model is to "game the system" by taking out-of-state waste (mainly construction and demolition debris from Massachusetts) and somehow converting it to "waste generated within the state of Maine" and sending it to Juniper Ridge. See DEP report next page:

Summary of ReEnergy Lewiston Solid Waste Inputs & Outputs
 prepared by Dept. of Environmental Protection
 January 2021

Year	INCOMING WASTE		RESIDUES SHIPPED FOR BENEFICIAL USE (tons)		METALS RECOVERED (tons)	RESIDUES SHIPPED TO LANDFILLS (tons)	
	Total CDD Received** (tons)	% total by state	CDD wood fuel	CDD wood for raw material subs.		CDD fines/cover chips used for ADC, etc.	CDD disposed in landfill
2011	229,979	CT - <1 MA - 85 NH - 5 RI - <1 ME - 9	18,123	0	2,903	124,042	97,764
2012	222,631	MA - 85 ME - 9 RI - <1 NH - 6	28,492	0	4,784	136,815	63,280
2013	197,803	MA - 85 ME - 12 NH - 2 RI - <1	16,569	0	4,338	137,336	54,545
2014	164,593	MA - 85 ME - 14 NH - 1	10,032	0	4,306	110,437	48,113
2015	181,338	MA - 86 ME - 13 NH - 1	6,109	1,524	5,682	128,299	47,193
2016	190,011	MA - 87 ME - 11 NH - 1	279	8,597	6,915	133,048	50,950
2017	212,234	MA - 77 ME - 9 NH - 14	8,553	1,529	8,620	144,239	61,933
2018	213,734	MA - 76 ME - 9 NH - 14	8,943	394	7,619	138,327	75,793
2019	235,650	MA - 75 ME - 9 NH - 16	7,658	3,966	7,308	136,600	90,023

** Total CDD includes mixed CDD and CDD wood

source: ReEnergy Lewiston annual reports



Casella Waste Systems, the operators of the Juniper Ridge Landfill, keep a large open / operating area active each day (estimates are in the 5- to 8-acre range). This large active area means that much more of the processing residues, or “fines for daily cover”, must be used to cover the active area at the end of each day. Casella could very well accommodate less of these residues by limiting the amount of open / active area at the landfill on a daily basis, or using other means of daily cover. Casella does get paid to accept these residues (“tipping fees”), yet it does not have to pay the host communities a portion of these fees as it does for other wastes deposited in the landfill. A larger active area means more income for Casella – but it also allows more rainwater to enter the landfill, creating more leachate that must be trucked away from the landfill. If you have ever been behind one of the leachate trucks, I sincerely hope you will not have eaten anything recently. The smell from these trucks is nauseating; I have had to pull over and change direction when traveling just to get away from one such truck.

This bill also limits the amount of processing residues that can be counted as “recycled”. I believe that nothing that is landfilled should be considered recycled; this bill would ensure that at least 50% of the waste that a solid waste processing facility characterizes as recycled must have been reused or recycled by the facility through methods other than the placement of the waste in a solid waste landfill. Grinding wood into chips and shipping them to a landfill is not really recycling the wood, it is simply changing the physical properties of the wood before landfilling it. While the bill does not go as far as I’d like in this regard, I feel the bill’s proposal is reasonable for the parties involved.

Other New England states have made great progress in determining what can and cannot be landfilled in those states. It is time for Maine to do the same. I urge you to fully support LD 1639.

Sincerely,


Charles B. Leithiser

Old Town, ME