



Senator Stacy Brenner
Representative Ralph Tucker
Joint Standing Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources
100 State House Station
Augusta ME 04333
May 20, 2021

Dear Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker and distinguished members of the ENR Committee,

I would like to reiterate the Appalachian Mountain Club's support for LD 1639, An Act to Protect the Health and Welfare of Maine Communities and Reduce Harmful Solid Waste.

AMC is the nation's oldest conservation, recreation, and education organization, with the mission to foster the protection, enjoyment and understanding of the outdoors. We have 6,500 members in Maine, and own 75,000 acres of forestland in the 100-Mile Wilderness region of Piscataquis County, managed for multiple use including sustainable forestry, carbon sequestration, backcountry recreation, and environmental education.

Over the past several years, working closely with the Maine Department of Marine Resources and other partners, AMC has restored 64 miles of habitat and undertaken egg planting, with the result that the endangered Atlantic Salmon has returned to its historic headwaters in the West Branch of the Pleasant River in Piscataquis County for the first time in 150 years. This remarkable achievement is a direct result of the 16-year collaborative Penobscot River Restoration Project, which opened 2,000 miles of rivers and streams to sea-run fish. That extraordinary \$63 million project is widely viewed as a model for river restoration efforts around the world.

Yet the same Penobscot river is subject to pollution from the discharge of leachate from the Juniper Ridge landfill. That pollution originates in the annual import of an estimated 100,000 tons of waste including construction and demolition debris from out of state, materials that contain arsenic, dioxin, mercury, and PFAS compounds. Before they spawn, the endangered Atlantic Salmon returning to their historic headwaters must swim through this toxic stew.

LD 1639 would address this dangerous and short-sighted situation in two important ways: by ending the exploitation of a loophole that allows the import of toxic debris from out of state, and by recognizing that the continued pollution of the Penobscot is a matter of environmental justice.

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. It cannot be achieved while 100,000 tons of waste of unknown origin is trucked to Maine, incinerated into residue and spread in a landfill. Environmental justice cannot be achieved while the resulting landfill leachate is treated by a paper mill whose facility was not designed for that purpose before being discharged into the Penobscot river. Environmental justice requires the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of the people of Alton and surrounding communities and the Penobscot people whose identity and well-being are intertwined with that of the river.



While the history of the issue is long and complicated, its impact is simple: materials containing carcinogens and neurotoxins from out of state are making their way into Maine's water, threatening human and environmental health.

We have the opportunity and responsibility to address this injustice. LD 1639 offers a clear and forthright solution, and we urge you to vote Ought to Pass.

Sincerely,

Eliza Townsend
Maine Conservation Policy Director