

Lokotah sanborn
indian island

“Good Morning, Thank you Senator Brenner, representative Tucker, honorable members of the environmental resources committee, my name is Lokotah Sanborn, I am from Indian Island and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1639. We must end the funneling of out of state Waste into the state of Maine. It is an environmental hazard and is actively poisoning our waterways, our animal relatives and our peoples.

Juniper Ridge Landfill sits just upriver from Penobscot Nation. We are a riverine people who have relied upon the river for sustenance and sustainability for well over ten thousand years. The river is our relative, a family member who is inalienable from ourselves. She is just as much a part of us as we are a part of her. The river is where we derive our namesake as a people. I am here testifying on behalf of the river because too often people do not listen to the voice of the river, they do not paddle the river, they do not sit beside her every day and understand when the river is speaking plain and clearly about the harm that is actively being done to her. So I am here to give the river's voice emphasis in a way that hopefully many of you will understand as dire.

In 1989 Maine enacted a ban on new commercial solid waste landfills in order to create a legal way to restrict out of state waste in the state of Maine, the ban authorized state ownership for new solid waste landfills and in 2004 the state acquired the Juniper Ridge Landfill and in turn turned over operational control to Casella Waste Systems, which is an interstate commercial entity. Since the state acquisition of Juniper Ridge, out-of-state waste disposal at Juniper Ridge Landfill has increased dramatically. Over 200,000 tons of out-of-state waste is disposed of at the Juniper Ridge Landfill site every year. As it stands, out of state waste can become in-state waste through the process of going through recycling facilities or in state incinerators, the waste is brought through these facilities, Re-Energy in Lewiston being one such site. We have this misconception that since the waste is brought to these facilities that somehow the majority of this out of state waste is recycled at said facilities, but this is not the case. This loophole allows for the bulk of out of state waste to be brought to these facilities and directly transported to Juniper Ridge Landfill.

Whenever there is rainfall at Juniper Ridge, rainwater funnels down through all of the waste, the chemicals, and the toxins, and becomes Leachette. Leachette from Juniper Ridge Landfill is then transported and “treated” offsite at the Nine Dragons Paper Mill just downriver from The Penobscot people in Old Town. Nine Dragons Paper is fitted with a treatment facility that was designed to treat mill waste and pulping chemicals NOT Landfill Leachette. Over 10million gallons of Leachette is pumped directly into the Penobscot River through piping systems at the Nine Dragons Paper Mill every year. The Penobscot Nation is sandwiched between these two environmental hazards, and this is not by mistake. More often than not the dumping grounds for toxins and pollutants generated by industries are placed by communities of the poorest and most marginalized peoples in our society. Not only is the “treated” Leachette pumped into the river, we also risk Leachette leaching into the river directly upriver from us.

As such, Out of State waste in Maine is an environmental justice issue, it is a public health justice issue, and it is a racial justice issue. The Penobscot people are the original people of these lands and waterways, we are the protectors of these lands and waterways, and the spokespeople for these lands and waterways. We as a people have treaty rights which state our right to fish sustainably within the river, yet we cannot sustainably eat fish out of the river due to poisons and toxins dumped into the river, which has been perpetuated by many forms of Maine industries, From the dioxin from the paper mills, mercury dumped by holtrachem, and in this case out of state Leachette from JRL being pumped directly into the river at Nine Dragons. We are fighting constantly to end the ongoing abuse against our relative, the Penobscot River. I hope you vote in support of LD 1639. Thank you.