

Testimony for the Proposed Juniper Ridge Landfill Project July 26, 2024

I am a member of the Maine and Wabanki landscape for generations. Both side of my family are from northern and coastal Maine. As such, we share the values of stewarding this landscape, and the ancient keepers of this place, as it is a sacred place and home for my family and future generations.

In learning about this proposed expansion of the Juniper Ridge Landfill, I was immediately struck with several thoughts about the proposal, and the framework of the proposal, that I knew were important to share. First, my professional life is dedicated to environmental work. The climate crisis is an existential threat to all of humanity, and particularly those most marginalized throughout the world. The United States is the single largest cause of the climate crisis, which means that our leadership as environmental professionals is critical and requires deep appreciation for what accountability means in this context.

Learning about the climate crisis eventually leads people to an understanding of the importance of supporting and stewarding indigenous communities worldwide. Indigenous communities are and have been the most successful stewards of lands, waters, biodiversity and habitat bar none. In a time of deep biogeochemical system decline and disruption, is it imperative that we put leaders who know how to steward our Earth at the center of the conversation, so that they can set the direction for the way through this time of unprecedented peril. To me, this means that any proposal that undermines indigenous communities' ability to thrive in their homeland should immediately be thrown out. Not only is stewarding native communities the morally right thing to do, it is also the most critical act that the general public can support in order to mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis. We need our native brothers and sisters to be taken care of because their worldview and ways of being is demonstrably better able to steward ecological systems than anybody else. This must be acknowledged. The leachate effluent pipe into the Penobscot alone tells me that we have some work to do before coming to the table proposing an expansion of the landfill, to fulfil our promise and awareness of the importance of supporting our Wabanaki community.

Second, because of the severity of the climate crisis, all economic activity should seek to support the circular economy. This, at a minimum, is required to stay within earth's natural limits. Because in America we landfill something over 50% of our waste, compared to northern European countries who landfill only 1%, there is an argument to be said that although it is feasible to expand Juniper Ridge for the sake of maximizing that site's productive uses, I have to wonder if there is a missed opportunity by taking this course, where an alternative path might consider the opportunities available to demonstrate leadership excellence between the State and Casella in selecting to use this opportunity and conversation about expanding the landfill to seriously examine and identify ways to avoid landfilling waste in this country. What alternatives could be created because of a denied expansion permit? What supports or innovative policy designs could be created to make Maine a leader in circular waste management? Could the Office of Policy Innovation

for the Future and UMO support that? I must believe that the priorities to tackle climate change avail much bigger opportunities when addressed head on than those which result from outdated thinking about problem-solution sets related to American waste and landfilling. The best part is that there are likely a raft of young people who would love to work on this problem and help create a circular economy in Maine that honors the importance and sacredness of Wabanaki people.

At a minimum, I'd like to see the leachate pipe cleaned up to allow the river to be restored and Penobscot practices and lifeways revived. This is important for all our futures, and it is time that we see our interconnectedness as a serious and significant aspect of how we will navigate the change ahead because of the climate crisis.

Thank you for your time.

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