

From: [Ant Blasi](#)
To: [Knuuti, Karen](#)
Subject: Comment on Application for Public Benefit Determination---JRL Expansion
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Maine needs to learn how to operate Juniper Ridge Landfill with certified technicians. We are wasting money and causing irreparable ecosystem damage under the status quo of a private contractor. The leachate testing program is very weak.

- There should be NO renewal or extension of the Operating Service Agreement until there is a full evaluation of Casella's performance at JRL. Bureau Director William Longfellow stated just last year to the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, it was highly unusual to have a 30-year contract with anyone. Why should the OSA be extended?
- Renewal or extension of the OSA should NOT be considered without a license for expansion.
- A license for expansion should NOT be issued until operations at JRL are structured to preserve disposal capacity for Maine-generated waste.
- Obligations of Environmental Justice statutes must be met for the Public Benefit Determination.

1. Casella mismanages Juniper Ridge Landfill.

There have been numerous instances of landfill mismanagement over the years. In May of 2023, [a fire broke out at Juniper Ridge Landfill](#) which burned for four hours. Casella nor the DEP still have not identified the cause of the fire. During an uncontrolled burn, dioxins are produced and introduced into the environment when waste is [burned](#), and can settle on vegetation and bio-accumulate within the food chain. Exposure to dioxins has been linked to suppression of the immune system, disruption of hormonal systems, liver damage, skin rashes, reproductive and developmental disorders, as well as certain kinds of [cancer](#).

In February 2023, Casella refused to accept sludge at Juniper Ridge, **creating a sludge crisis** and putting Waste Water Treatment plants in a tough position. Casella claimed increased amounts of sludge caused landfill instability. However, Casella reported [no](#)

[increase in sludge disposal](#) at Juniper Ridge Landfill since LD 1911 became law in 2022. Casella's own data undermined their attempt to scapegoat a law that has helped protect Mainers from serious health consequences of spreading PFAS contaminated sludge on farm lands. There has been *no report* or accountability for the incident, claiming this manufactured emergency as a reason to continue importing out-of-state waste to manage instability.

In their two decades of operation, Casella has been **unable to manage odors** from their operations at Juniper Ridge landfill. They have admitted that they are unable to control odors from operations, and stated they are afraid to introduce more air into the system to mitigate odors fearing it would cause another landfill fire.

2. Casella has been a bad actor in Maine, with a track record of regulatory and environmental infractions across the region.

For years, Casella exploited a loophole in Maine law to use up precious state-landfill capacity to profit off of the importation of out of state waste. Additionally, Casella dumps minimally treated leachate into the sacred Penobscot River, harming the Penobscot Indian Nation.

In the past five years, Casella has violated environmental laws at their facilities in Bethlehem, NH; Southbridge, MA; and Seneca, NY. Casella's violations across the region demonstrate its lack of competence to operate any facilities, let alone extend their contract in Maine.

3. Casella impedes Maine's waste management hierarchy goals and recycling goals.

Our waste hierarchy statute states landfilling is a **last** resort, and yet Casella charges exorbitant recycling fees that work against our recycling goals. Furthermore, Juniper Ridge is a publicly-owned landfill obligated by statute to provide disposal for waste generated in Maine. However, Casella, a company that profits over a billion dollars annually, makes money off of disposal of waste at Juniper Ridge. Waste becomes a commodity that grows share-holder profits and provides little incentive to create less waste.