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Maine Office of Environmental Protection

Dear Commissioner,

I am writing to express my strong objection to the proposed expansion of the Juniper Ridge Landfill operated by Cassella Waste systems. The current landfill is a serious health hazard to the surrounding communities and to the animals, fish, birds, plants, and water which are subject to contamination as a result of current mismanagement by Cassella. Expanding the landfill will only increase the damage being done and cannot be justified from either a community health or environmental justice perspective.

The Juniper Ridge landfill has been concerning for many years, with PFAS and other forever chemicals found in leachate from the landfill into the wetlands and Pushaw Stream and Birch Stream adjacent to Juniper Ridge and poured directly into the Penobscot River through the Nine Dragons pipeline, and from caustic ash dispersed by air from waste fires. Cassella is clearly not able to manage the landfill that they already have responsibly, without jeopardizing the Penobscot River ecosystem and the people who depend on it. Why would the Office of Environmental Protection even consider giving the company a permit to make this destruction 40% greater?

Juniper Ridge contains a literal soup of toxic chemicals, including but not restricted to PFAS and other forever compounds. The immediate health impacts on neighbors from breathing toxic smoke from burning at the landfill have been well documented in recent public testimony. The more subtle endocrine disrupting and cancer-causing impacts may be invisible at first, but these are equally harmful to humans, animals, fish, and birds. The closest neighbors to the landfill are the Penobscot Nation, for whom Juniper Ridge perpetuates longstanding harms: as an immediate health hazard, through disrupting sustenance practices, and by violating their cultural relationship as protectors and stewards of the Penobscot River.

According to the EPA, *“Environmental justice means the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability....so that people are fully protected from disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects (including risks) and hazards...and have equitable access*

*to a healthy, sustainable, and resilient environment in which to live, play, work, learn, grow, worship, and engage in cultural and subsistence practices.”*

<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>). In addition to the clear violation of the rights of Penobscot Nation citizens to *live, play, learn, grow, worship and engage in cultural and subsistence practices*, everyone living downstream who fishes or swims in the Penobscot river is being exposed to poison from Juniper Ridge released into its waters. I live on French Island, and my neighbors' children spend a lot of time in the river in hot weather, unknowing that they are being exposed to forever chemicals which will affect them the rest of their lives.

The current management of the Juniper Ridge landfill by Cassella is clearly in violation of the principles of environmental justice as defined by the EPA. There can be no possible public benefit from expanding the landfill and a great deal of guaranteed harm. The Maine Office of Environmental Protection should reject Cassella's permit application and instead require the company to clean up the mess it has already created and to practice environmentally safe, sustainable waste management from now on or lose their ability to conduct business in Maine.



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