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Groups protest Casella request to extend its Old Town landfill contract

by **Christopher Burns**

21 hours ago



A compactor drives over trash at the Juniper Ridge Landfill in Old Town on Jan. 19, 2022. Credit: Linda Coan O'Kresik / BDN

Casella is asking Maine to extend its contract to operate a landfill in Old Town.

But that's prompted concerns from people living nearby, the Penobscot Nation and environmentalists.

A public hearing was held Thursday evening in Brewer about the proposal to extend Casella's contract to operate Juniper Ridge Landfill. That contract has another 10 years before it expires, but the current proposal would add another six years onto it, through 2040.

The contract is between the state and a Casella Waste Systems subsidiary, New England Waste Services of Maine LLC.

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PFAS may concentrate over time in landfills near Penobscot Nation



by [Marina Schaffler, The Maine Monitor](#)

People who showed up to protest the contract extension on Thursday raised concerns that include [an unexplained fire](#) last year and cancer-causing per- and polyfluoroalkyl compounds — also known as PFAS and “forever chemicals” — [leaching into the Penobscot River watershed](#).

“The Penobscot Nation has grave concerns regarding any expansion of Juniper Ridge Landfill in size or scope or otherwise. These concerns are validated by a long and troublesome history of the landfill posing direct and imminent threats to our health and wellbeing due to the harm to the Penobscot River and all lands, waters, living beings in the watershed, not to mention the air quality and safety issues,” Penobscot Nation Tribal Ambassador Maulian Bryant said.

The proposal to extend the life of Casella’s contract comes as Juniper Ridge Landfill sees [a surge in trash being dumped there](#). Maine towns and cities are now [landfilling 50 percent more trash](#), with dumping up 30 percent at Juniper Ridge, a spokesperson [told News Center Maine this week](#).

At this rate, Juniper Ridge Landfill could run out of space by 2028, five years sooner than expected.

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by [Sawyer Loftus](#)

That’s due to the closure of other waste disposal facilities in Greater Bangor.

A state-of-the-art [trash plant in Hampden](#), which served 115 municipalities, stopped operating almost four years ago. Last May, the Penobscot Energy Recovery Co.’s [trash plant in Orrington](#) that served 44 towns also ceased operations and even stopped accepting trash from its hometown in September.

The Hampden trash plant has been sold and could reopen as early as 2025. Meanwhile, PERC was sold at auction and is reopening under a new name — Garbage Recycling and Clean Energy plant, or GRACE.

Lawmakers in Augusta are considering a bill — **LD 2135**, sponsored by Rep. James Dill, D-Old Town — to investigate solutions for waste disposal and require a public benefit review of any proposed extension of the Juniper Ridge Landfill contract.

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by [Marie Weidmayer](#)

The Casella spokesperson, Jeff Weld, told News Center Maine that extending the contract now is essential because it will take time to expand the capacity of Juniper Ridge.

But Nora Bosworth, Conservation Law Foundation's staff attorney for the Zero Waste Project, said that extending Casella's contract on the assumption that Juniper Ridge's capacity will be expanded "undermines Maine citizens' procedural rights."

"We should not forget, these policy decisions are about how people get to live their lives," said Jackie Elliott, longtime environmental health and justice advocate working with Don't Waste Maine. "Everyone has a right to clean water, clean air, and safe places to live, work and play. We would be wise to put our efforts and resources into front-end, less toxic approaches that save resources and reduce disposal needs."

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