

PERC statement on JRL expansion

Good evening:

My name is Henry Lang, and I am the plant manager at the Penobscot Energy Recovery Company waste-to-energy facility across the river in Orrington. I am pleased to be here tonight on behalf of our owners and employees to support the need for properly designed and well operated landfills. We feel that the expansion of the Juniper Ridge Landfill is appropriate and necessary to provide ongoing capacity for eastern Maine.

For 28 years, PERC has taken municipal solid waste from all over eastern, northern, central and mid-coast Maine and turned it into renewable power. In doing so, we also have reduced the volume of waste that would otherwise end up in a landfill by approximately 90 per cent.

We also are strong supporters of Maine's Solid Waste Management Hierarchy. In fact PERC and its owners worked hard for the passage of LD 1483 a few years ago so that the Hierarchy would be a matter of law, not just a matter of good intentions. We believe in the hierarchy and have put our money where our mouth is as a company.

In our current and future waste contracts we encourage recycling and reuse and the growing need for organics diversion. In fact, we have teamed up with Waste-Zero, Exeter Agri-Energy and Casella to make it easier for the communities and private haulers we serve to reduce the volumes of waste they bring to us.

If it can be re-used, it should never come to us in the first place. If it can be recycled, we don't need it. If it is organic waste, we don't want it — after all, lettuce, tomatoes, and other food waste doesn't burn very well.

But the reality of our modern society is that not everything can be recycled, re-used or diverted, and that's where we come in — we take in what's left, process it, remove any metals or material that can be further recycled, incinerate it and create steam to power our turbine generator that can produce enough electricity to power 28,000 Maine homes. But even then, there is residual waste from us and every other disposal or recycling facility that has to go somewhere. Fortunately for us and our customers, that somewhere is just a few miles away at Juniper Ridge.

Quite simply, PERC could not exist in its present form without Juniper Ridge. And even though landfills fall below us on the hierarchy, we don't see a facility like Juniper Ridge as the least important piece of the hierarchy; quite the contrary, we see the landfill as the very foundation of the hierarchy.

Until the day that we become a zero-waste society, we will need all steps in the hierarchy and landfills like Juniper Ridge will continue to be vital to the success of every rung above them.

We also have to be careful that certain policies, such as restrictions on Oversized Bulky Waste, don't discourage complete and unfettered recycling or place unnecessary financial and operational burdens on commercial businesses.

We have worked closely with Casella over the years as both a customer and a vendor. They bring tons of solid waste to our facility each year and we send our ash, glass and grit, and other non-processables to them. They also serve as our bypass facility when our plant is down temporarily for maintenance or some unforeseen issue.

Being able to safely dispose of ash at a licensed facility just 23 miles away or being able to divert a load of waste such a short distance is great convenience and cost savings for us and our customers — especially when the next closest facility is more than 70 miles away and is filling fast. In addition, fewer truck miles on the road only makes sense from an environmental standpoint.

The PERC facility is in great shape, and we intend to be part of a comprehensive, integrated waste system in Maine for many years to come. The Juniper Ridge Landfill is key to our future success and our ability to provide a proven, affordable, and environmentally sound waste disposal option for municipalities and private haulers throughout much of Maine.

Casella has operated this state-owned facility with great care and integrity. For all of us in the waste business in Maine — wherever we fall on the hierarchy — Juniper Ridge is critical to what we do and there is no credible, feasible alternative.

For all these reasons, we urge the Maine DEP to approve the expansion of the Juniper Ridge Landfill.