



# SIERRA CLUB

## MAINE CHAPTER

PO Box 88  
Belfast, ME 04915  
Phone: (207) 761-5616  
[www.sierraclub.org/maine](http://www.sierraclub.org/maine)

To: Members of the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,  
From: Andrew Blunt, Legislative and Political Strategist  
Date: February 24, 2025  
Re: **Testimony in Support of L.D. 222: An Act to Establish a Take-back and Disposal Program for Firefighting and Fire-suppressing Foam to Which Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Have Been Added**

---

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and the members of the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

I am submitting the following testimony on behalf of Sierra Club Maine, representing over 22,000 supporters and members statewide. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nation-wide as we work towards combating climate change and promoting a just and sustainable economy. To that end, **we urge you to vote "ought to pass" on L.D. 222: An Act to Establish a Take-back and Disposal Program for Firefighting and Fire-suppressing Foam to Which Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Have Been Added.**

Maine has an undeniable PFAS crisis. Toxic PFAS (Per- and Polyfluorinated Substances) are contaminating our environment and threatening public health through its pervasiveness in sectors ranging from agriculture to consumer goods. Recognizing the dire impacts of these toxic chemicals in the environment, Maine has acted to phase out PFAS, including banning the use of firefighting foam that contains PFAS. This aggressive response exemplifies the necessary steps to protect Mainers from the harmful effects of PFAS in our communities.

Aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) is used as a fire suppressant, and it was required at airports and military sites in emergency systems. Its use exposes firefighters, service members and their families, and surrounding communities to toxic PFAS linked to dire health impacts. Firefighters have higher rates of cancer than the general public due to their proximity to substances like AFFF.

The threat that AFFF poses to our communities was put on full display last summer. In August 2024, a faulty fire suppression system at Brunswick Landing spilled 1,450 gallons of toxic AFFF concentrate mixed with 50,000 gallons of water. It was the largest toxic foam spill in Maine history and the sixth-largest nationwide.

The spill in Brunswick entered the public sanitary sewer system that discharges into the Androscoggin River, contaminating nearby waterways and presenting a serious, long-term threat to soil, groundwater, air quality, and public health. The impacts are still being investigated. It was an environmental disaster.

The spill was an egregiously visible and acute representation of the PFAS crisis in Maine. And unfortunately, without action, there is a possibility of this happening elsewhere in the state. Sites across Maine are storing an estimated 50,000 gallons of AFFF, and there are no established systems for collection and management of this toxic foam.

Given the scale of this lurking danger, **the state must support communities collecting and removing AFFF to protect Maine's people and environment.** We need a centralized collection system to prevent future spills, and such a program will require state resources to avoid disproportionate impacts on smaller communities. Policymakers should establish and fund a collection system, similar to that in New Hampshire and Colorado, to provide public and private entities storing AFFF with a safe way to remove and dispose of this toxic foam. Through the development of this program and related rulemaking, we encourage the Department of Environmental Protection to take a proactive approach to take-back and disposal activities and seek to remove dangerous AFFF before disasters like the one at Brunswick Landing repeat themselves.

For the safety of communities across Maine and to avoid repeating the disaster that happened last summer in Brunswick, it is crucial that we take swift action to establish a take-back and disposal program. We urge an "ought to pass" report on L.D. 222: *An Act to Establish a Take-back and Disposal Program for Firefighting and Fire-suppressing Foam to Which Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Have Been Added*. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrew Blunt  
Legislative and Political Strategist  
Sierra Club Maine Chapter