



April 9, 2025

Honorable Margaret Rotundo, Senate Chair  
Honorable Drew Gattine, House Chair  
Appropriations & Financial Affairs Committee  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

**Re:** LD 25, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Fund Wastewater Treatment Facility Planning and Construction of Infrastructure Projects

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and members of the AFA Committee:

The Lewiston Auburn Clean Water Authority (LACWA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments in respectful Support to LD 25.

**About LACWA** - The Lewiston Auburn Clean Water Authority was created by an act of the Maine Legislature in 1967 to provide wastewater treatment services to the cities of Lewiston and Auburn. The plant started operation in 1974. Our mission is to protect public health and the environment by treating the residential, commercial, and industrial wastewaters of our communities and returning clean water to the Androscoggin River.

**Discussion about the bill** – Biosolids are a natural by-product of treating wastewater. Most treatment plants in Maine, including ours, now need landfills to dispose of these biosolids due to PFAS concerns. There are simply no outlets in Maine for the management of biosolids beyond landfill because they can no longer be land applied or composted and are too wet for incineration. With finite space in the only operational state-run landfill, and a moratorium on any new landfills, the available capacity is quickly decreasing. Additionally, the influx of biosolids being sent to landfill requires a significant amount of bulky and municipal wastes to mix in in order to maintain structural integrity of the landfill, which takes up even more landfill capacity. Financially, the cost to transport biosolids is significant because most biosolids are ~80% water. As the second largest wastewater treatment plant in Maine, we produce 8,500 yards of anaerobically digested biosolids annually, which makes the uncertainty around future disposal very concerning for us. If unable to landfill in Maine, out of state options would need to be utilized, which would be even more costly for our facility, and thus our users. It is critical that we take action now to drastically reduce the volume of biosolids needing to be disposed of.

The state has demonstrated leadership on this front over the past couple years, and funded an independent study by Brown & Caldwell engineers (“An Evaluation of Biosolids Management in Maine and Recommendations for the Future”<sup>1</sup>), who provided recommendations to the state on steps to take to address the existing biosolids management crisis. As part of the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/dep/publications/reports/index.html>

study findings, it was recommended that the state provide financial assistance to wastewater treatment plants to help fund proven technology projects that would reduce the volume of biosolids that would be landfilled, while also minimizing or eliminating the need for bulky waste to be added to them. These projects include technologies such as improved dewatering, anaerobic digestion, and biosolids drying.

At LACWA, our priority is protecting public and environmental health in the most financially responsible way for our users. We have been working diligently on researching biosolids management solutions. In doing our part, we have recently completed 30% design of a biosolids belt dryer for our facility, and are hopeful to advance design on this project, which is estimated to cost around \$9 million. This project has the potential to reduce the volume of our biosolids by up to 85%, significantly reduce the transportation cost, and would result in a material that is 90%+ dry (currently ~20% dry), which would no longer necessitate the addition of bulky waste for landfill stability. Such a project aligns with the recommendations outlined in the state funded study; however, the price tag is substantial and would come on the heels of an existing combined sewer overflow (CSO) storage tank project that is costing LACWA users a little over \$26 million.

The DEP staff are technical experts who understand the complexities of these issues, and should be applauded for their efforts toward solutions, including the recommended submission of this legislation. The ENR committee has also been committed to and deeply involved in providing solutions to the problems that PFAS has created in our industry, and they should also be commended for their efforts, especially the bill sponsor Senator Brenner, who is a current member and former chair of the ENR committee. Approval of this legislation is needed to provide wastewater treatment plants with the resources needed to adopt proven technology solutions.

**Conclusion.** Thank you for your time and attention in considering our testimony. Biosolids management is at crisis-level and solutions are needed now. We are fully cognizant of the difficult financial times and decisions this committee must make; however, we strongly recommend the committee support the public health, environmental health, and economic benefits these funds would provide by helping the state develop sustainable and environmentally sound solutions to biosolids management.

Thank you for your time and attention.  
Sincerely,



Travis Peaslee, P.E.  
General Manager  
Lewiston Auburn Clean Water Authority