

Rachel Herbener
Belfast
LD 500

Please support LD 500

Over the past few years we have discovered that PFAs are everywhere.

<https://www.npr.org/2022/06/22/1106863211/the-dangers-of-forever-chemicals>

It is the state's duty to protect the health of its citizens. It's daunting, but we must test all wells. The ability or inability of well owners to pay should not determine whether or not a well is tested.

- Toxic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) or “forever chemicals” are used in thousands of everyday products and manufacturing processes. PFAS accumulate in our wastewater and can contaminate the land and groundwater when sludge is applied to farmland.

- PFAS pose significant health risks, including kidney cancer, reduced vaccine response, elevated cholesterol, reduced infant birthweight, and more. Low-income communities, communities of color, tribal, and rural communities are disproportionately impacted and more susceptible to health and financial impacts of PFAS contamination. Children are disproportionately exposed.

- There is no approved medical procedure to remove PFAS chemicals from a person's body, and they can linger in the blood and organs for decades. Medical treatment for PFAS exposure is centered around identifying and stopping the exposure.

- Maine DEP's initial investigation of licensed sludge spreading sites has identified over 570 residential drinking wells contaminated above the state's interim safe drinking water standard of 20 parts per trillion. Three of four groups of sludge spreading sites remain to be investigated.

- Maine DEP provides free water filtration systems to households with wells contaminated over 20 ppt. Maine residents can only access that service if they know their well is contaminated, but there are blind spots in the state's groundwater PFAS investigation. The \$300 cost of the test is preventing some concerned Mainers from self-testing.

- Significant quantities of contaminated sludge have been sold to landscapers, home gardeners and farms across the state as sludge-based compost. This material needed no DEP application license. The State has no record of locations where drinking water wells might be at risk of contamination from sludge-based compost.

- Contaminated school wells are rarely located anywhere near documented sludge spreading sites. The source of that contamination remains unknown.

- Some Maine farms have discovered high testing drinking water / irrigation wells on sites with no documented sludge spreading history. The source of that contamination remains unknown.

- We can assume there are additional, impacted drinking water wells that remain to be identified. We need to ensure that everyone has access to clean drinking water – including low income Mainers. The state can add the PFAS test to its existing list of subsidized water tests, like radon and arsenic.

- The medium and long-term economic benefits to investing in public health are enormous. Preventing toxic exposure is always cheaper than cost of medical care for patients dealing with PFAS linked illnesses. Our communities have a higher economic productivity when they Mainers are healthy.