



April 25, 2025

Honorable Denise Tepler, Senate Chair
Honorable Victoria Doudera, House Chair
Joint Legislative Committee on Environment & Natural Resources
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 297, An Act Regarding the Management of Oversized Bulky Waste from Wastewater Treatment Plants

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and members of the ENR Committee:

The Lewiston Auburn Clean Water Authority (LACWA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments in respectful Support to LD 297.

About LAWPCA - 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 serve the public by protecting public health and enhancing the Androscoggin River water quality.

Discussion about the bill – Nearly every treatment plant in Maine, including ours, require landfills to dispose of our biosolids due to PFAS concerns. We are very concerned with the unintended consequences that this bill, if not approved, would have on utilities such as ours that currently have no reasonable alternatives other than landfilling. Landfills need to use bulky and municipal wastes to mix with the biosolids so they are stable enough to be safely placed in the landfill. Most biosolids are typically 80-90% water – sort of the consistency of slightly dried mashed potatoes. Reducing the water content is costly and energy intensive, and something treatment plants continuously strive to achieve. Waste management companies are struggling to manage these wet solids with the current volumes of bulking materials available, and seasonal availability of the materials they are receiving make it even more challenging to get through the long Maine winters. Reducing the bulky waste supply, regardless of the source and however well intentioned, severely compounds the already difficult biosolids management scenario that treatment plants like ours face, by limiting and possibly even shutting down the last remaining outlet they have for disposal of biosolids. I don't mean to sound alarmist about all of this, but the reality of our State solid waste situation has already been played out over the past couple of years.

PFAS concerns have caused sudden and significant market restrictions, increased cost, fear, and operational uncertainty. In order to address this issue, The State and DEP should be developing extensive long-term plans in coordination with all stakeholders to work towards a reduction of landfilling biosolids, thus reducing the volume of materials needing landfilling, and preserving our limited landfill capacities. To do this, time is needed, and 36-months will provide necessary relief to the landfill operators and facilities such as ours while we develop short and long-term plans in response. Not approving legislation such as this will only complicate these issues and the current State solid waste situation, while continuing to cause significant financial harm to the individual and business ratepayers served by these wastewater treatment plants that would have to send biosolids to landfills out of state, or out of the country.

There are simply no outlets in Maine for the management of biosolids beyond landfill. As a large facility which produces 8,500 yards of anaerobically digested biosolids annually that can no longer be land applied or composted, and is too wet for incineration, we face this reality daily. To address this situation, we have recently completed a 30% design for a low temperature belt dryer, that once installed would reduce our biosolids volume by 85%, and would produce a 92% dry biosolid product that would no longer require bulky waste. These technologies exist, but are extremely expensive (estimated \$9M), and require years to procure, install, and become operational. The State should continue to support local and regional projects that utilize anaerobic digestion and/or drying, which would drastically reduce, and possibly eliminate, the need for bulky waste to be added to any of the estimated 88,000 wet tons of biosolids produced in Maine annually. Again, these projects take time to plan for and to install, which is exactly what the bill would allow for.

Conclusion. Thank you for your time and attention in considering our testimony. We are in the business of cleaning water and improving the environment as a whole and are not advocating for any position on out-of-state disposal policy, other than addressing the direct impacts that inadvertently affect the disposal of biosolids which has a significant financial impact to our ratepayers. We respectfully request that you vote LD 297 “ought to pass” and allow our industry and the DEP time to develop sustainable and environmentally sound solutions to biosolids disposal that limit the amount of material needing landfilling and/or reducing the necessary volumes of bulky waste.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Peaslee', written in a cursive style.

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