



60 Community Drive  
Augusta, ME 04330  
+1-207-623-8428  
[www.mewea.org](http://www.mewea.org)

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April 24, 2025

Honorable Denise Tepler, Senate Chair  
Honorable Victoria Doudera, House Chair  
Environmental and Natural Resources Committee  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: ***Letter of Support of LD 297 "An Act Regarding the Management of Oversized Bulky Waste from Wastewater Treatment Plants"***

Dear Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Members of the Environmental and Natural Resources Committee:

We appreciate this opportunity to provide public hearing testimony in support of LD 297. As we understand it, LD 297 proposes an extension on the allowance of oversized bulky waste in the landfill.

**About MeWEA.** The Maine Water Environment Association is a non-profit, all volunteer association of over 650 members. MEWEA represents a diverse group of water quality professionals throughout Maine including wastewater treatment plant operators, sewer collection system operators, utility system administrators, consulting engineers, suppliers, contractors, public works officials, stormwater system operators, and regulatory officials. The mission of MeWEA is to support and enhance Maine's water environment community through promoting training opportunities; supporting balanced environmental policy and practice; promoting education and collaboration with the public to protect and enhance Maine's water resources.

**Discussion.** We are compelled to write this letter because of the continued crisis that our wastewater treatment facilities find themselves in today because of well-intended legislation passed in 2022 related to landfill management. The ban of beneficial reuse has forced Wastewater treatment facilities to haul biosolids (the normal residuals of the wastewater treatment process) offsite to landfill which is considered wet waste. In 2023, wastewater facilities faced an even more pressing challenge due to the sudden reduction of bulking materials that landfills need to mix with biosolids.

A joint study by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and Maine Water Environment Association (An Evaluation of Biosolids Management in Maine and Recommendations for the Future, by Brown and Caldwell, December 15, 2023) revealed that the underlying challenge lies in managing solid-waste effectively and the path forward will be slow. The study's recommendations are long-term and will need to be thoughtfully navigated to maintain a delicate balance between a variety of stakeholders.

With the passage of LD 718 in 2023, the Maine legislature provided temporary relief to the biosolids crisis by delaying the implementation of the reduction in bulking materials. LD 297 extends that temporary relief. In the interim, MEWEA and our members have engaged in numerous partnerships, studies, technology piloting and administrative efforts to carve a path towards sustainable biosolids management. This work includes

- a. MEWEA's involvement in the Brown & Caldwell report, referenced above;
- b. MEWEA's involvement in the Bureau of General Services study of bulking material alternatives to construction and demolition debris;
- c. Anson-Madison Sanitary District piloting of PFAS treatment technology;
- d. Portland Water District biosolids study, including regional approaches for biosolids management, and administrative efforts such as agreement with Eco-Maine to locate drying/PFAS treatment facility;



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- e. Multiple members in discussion with Waste Management, who is investing in biosolids drying and leachate treatment at the landfill in Norridgewock;
  - f. Public and public/private partnership efforts for PFAS treatment facility in Sanford;
  - g. Study of biosolids management options in Lewiston-Auburn; and,
  - h. Support for refurbishment and upgrades at the digester located in Brunswick Landing.

Maine still faces an uncertain future for biosolids disposal. We encourage the passage of LD 297 that will provide essential time for the State to continue their work on refining state-owned landfill operations and exploring alternative disposal options. Meanwhile, MeWEA continues to work with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection to look for long-term sustainable solutions for biosolids management.

Sincerely,

*Theresa L Tucker*

Theresa Tucker, President