

Testimony by Douglas Lee Miller on LD2013-Fund to Address PFAS Contamination
To the Maine Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
14MAR22

The Honorable Senators and Representatives of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, I am Douglas Miller living at 87 Stevens Road, Unity, Maine, a 78-acre parcel in hay for dairy cows and reforestation. I live there with my wife, Nina, and our 11 year-old grandson, Story Crawford. We have a dog, some chickens and horses are coming.

The reason that I am testifying today is that our domestic water system is contaminated with PFAS. The level of the sum of the six PFAS parameters is somewhat higher than 3,800 µg/L (ppt). However, our property was never treated with sewage sludge. We have a contaminated water problem and are now living with bottled water supplied by the State. I am concerned about our health, PFAS's impact on our lives, and our property value.

I am a Professional Engineer (P.E.) licensed in Maine. My wife is a retired Nurse Practitioner. I am an environmental engineer with 50 years of experience focusing on water resource management. I have an undergraduate background in agriculture and natural resources and a Masters Degree in Civil/Environmental Engineering. I am a Board Certified Environmental Engineer (BCEE). I was the Superintendent of the Portland Water District (PWD) wastewater division in the late 1980's. I am a utility manager. I have operated water and wastewater treatment facilities for over 45 years all over the world. I have been responsible for the proper disposal of bio-solids from these facilities. I have been a leader in the Maine Water Environment Association (President), the New England Water Environment Association (President), the (international) Water Environment Federation (Director) and the American Water Works Association (Life Member). I have made numerous technical presentations and have many published works. I am also involved in several not for profit organizations.

Through this sum of experience, I have come to understand quite a bit about the environment and management. When we were distributing bio-solids to agricultural sites, we thought that it was good management. It restored valuable resources to the land. It was an effective and environmentally "safe" way to dispose of these residuals of cleaning wastewater. We know better now. Those materials were contaminated with chemicals that we didn't know existed and we didn't have a method to evaluate the chemicals. Now we do. Now we know better. PFAS was in those sludges.

We moved from the Portland area this past July to our 78-acre farm in Unity. We didn't know that the water supply was contaminated with PFAS. It was not in our perspective. I was unaware of the bio-solids applications in my area. A neighbor, Adam Nordell (Songbird Farm), alerted me to the contamination of their water just before Christmas a few months ago. I requested the State to sample and analyze my water and in early February we were notified of the very high levels of PFAS. Although we are not farmers making a living from the soil, we have elevated levels of PFAS that affect our family and guests, our livestock, and our gardens and the vegetables we grow for ourselves.

We believe the source of the PFAS contamination of our water is from municipal bio-solids spread on the adjacent Sebec Regional Land Trust property (the Richardson Preserve) just a few hundred feet from our well. Ross and Amy Barden owned the farm property in the early 1990's when the Kennebec Sanitary Treatment District (KSTD) and the Portland Water District (PWD) were licensed by the State to deposit municipal bio-solids on the property under the guidance of Resource Conservation Service. Even after over 30 years, the soil and water is still adversely impacted with high PFAS levels. This bio-solid spreading affects many of my immediate residential neighbors with elevated PFAS levels in their drinking water. This in turn affects the vegetables we grow and eat, preparation of our daily meals and the water we use for personal hygiene and washing clothes and dishes. This type of impact is affecting individuals all over the state.

We have all been advised of the health effects of PFAS, so I won't elaborate. But the impact of this contamination also affects our emotional balance and generates personal stress. What is it doing to our wellbeing now and in the future?

Farmers are facing an even greater impact in that their livelihood is adversely affected. Many of them cannot sell their products. Their contaminated soil may have resulted prior to their ownership. This affects their real estate values as well as affecting neighbor's real estate values due to the PFAS contamination.

I support the proposed language of LD2013 that addresses a series of issues effecting farmers (see Section 320-K, 4. A-M). I am not a farmer, but others and I have been adversely affected by PFAS contamination. I ask that you ensure that this proposed legislation is extended to any homeowner who is adversely affected by PFAS.

The State has culpability in this case as it permitted and licensed the spreading of bio-solids on farmland. We thought that this material would help soil fertility. We didn't know about PFAS in the 1990's. The State encouraged municipalities and industries to apply bio-solids that met the State's standards. Now we are living with the legacy of those decisions. The State seems obligated to financially assist those affected by these licenses.

Financial support for those affected by PFAS contamination from bio-solids spreading is the least that the State can do to assist farmers and other residents adversely impacted. Remediation of the soil is still uncertain, but that should be our State's goal for the long-term effort of environmental stewardship.

Please adopt LD2013 or a bill with similar language and intent.

I am happy to answer any questions or comments you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Lee Miller, P.E., BCEE