



Maine Water Environment Association Protecting Maine's Water Resources

April 5, 2021

Honorable Stacy Brenner, Senate Chair
Honorable Ralph Tucker, House Chair
Joint Legislative Committee on Environment & Natural Resources
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: *LD 960, An Act to Require Reporting of Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances, PFAS, in Products and of Discharges of Firefighting Foam Containing PFAS*

Senator Brenner, Representative Tucker, and members of the ENR Committee:

The Maine Water Environment Association (MeWEA) appreciates the opportunity to provide the following testimony in support of LD 960.

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. PFAS has become a term that we all are now very aware of. The chemicals' negative influence within our environment and on human health has been dramatic. As representatives of wastewater and stormwater systems here in Maine, our member systems have already been impacted by PFAS compounds.

PFAS, in one form or another, is a product that has been used for decades, unknown to most users until recently. PFAS are man-made compounds that were introduced in the 1940's and have been used in food packaging materials, household products like water-repellent materials, nonstick products, polishes, waxes, paint and in fire-fighting foam. More recently, many manufacturers have stopped using PFAS compounds here in the United States.

We feel this bill will help our members and public utilities to avert additional contamination to our drinking water supplies, wastewater systems, and stormwater systems through two key factors:

- 1) Better public understanding of the products they are using.
- 2) Direct notification to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) of a release.

As PFAS contamination has become a common report in the daily news, we believe that the public will be far less likely to knowingly use products containing these compounds. The requirement to clearly state a product contains PFAS compounds should be a very effective deterrent to their use.

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In the event of a release, typically through the use of firefighting foam by municipal or private fire department, notification to the DEP would result in a streamlined notification to any affected utility. This practice is already utilized voluntarily by some Fire Departments and the DEP for the release of any contaminant to a wastewater or stormwater system. An immediate report issued about the use of PFAS to our member utilities allows those utilities to take appropriate action to minimize any impact it may have on our water supplies, wastewater, and stormwater systems. I have witnessed the effectiveness of this streamlined response as it has developed over the past several years involving the Greater Augusta Utility Districts systems. In 2011 we were not notified of a spill directly adjacent to one of our drinking water supply wells until responders were already on site and one of our trustees happened to drive by. We engaged all of the responders and discussed the importance of our response being coordinated as well. In subsequent years, we have received calls from Augusta Fire and/or Maine DEP for any spill adjacent to any of our systems.

Conclusion. This bill helps to ensure that the public and the systems operators have the information needed to make well informed choices or responses to help protect public and environmental health. We strongly urge The Environment and Natural Resource Committee vote ought to pass on LD 960.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Wade". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Tim Wade
Chair, MeWEA Government Affairs Committee
Operations Manager Greater Augusta Utilities District

cc: Phil Tucker, President MeWEA
James I. Cohen, Verrill Dana, LLP, Legislative Counsel