

# OneWater



2025 / Brought to you by Maine Water Environment Association

## President's Message



It's hard to believe my time as President of MeWEA is already coming to an end. As I look back over this past year, I'm filled with gratitude for the amazing group of dedicated people who make up this organization.

From advocating in front of our federal delegation in Washington, D.C., to writing testimony for our state legislature, attending events around the state, and helping spread the word about the incredible work we do every day – it's been such a rewarding experience. I've been continually inspired by the passion, commitment, and sense of purpose that each of you brings to this profession.

Our Fall convention at Sunday River was a great success, and I want to thank everyone who helped make it happen and everyone who joined us. It's always one of the highlights of the year for me – seeing so many

familiar faces, connecting with new ones, and sharing ideas and laughs along the way.

If you're not already involved in MeWEA beyond your day job, I really encourage you to give it a try. We have so many committees and opportunities to get involved, and the sense of fulfillment that comes from contributing to something bigger than yourself is truly special.

Serving as your President has been an honor and a privilege. I'm so grateful for the trust and support you've given me throughout the year. As I pass the gavel to **Rob Pontau**, I look forward to staying active in MeWEA – especially through our strategic planning efforts – and helping keep this organization strong, sustainable, and supporting of all our members.

Thank you for everything you do each and every day to protect Maine's water environment. I wish you all a wonderful holiday season and great year ahead!

Warmly,  
Theresa Tucker, President



2025 MEWEA Fall Conference Golf Tournament

## Upcoming Events

**12/17/2025**

### **MMA Mix & Mingle Networking Night**

5:00-7:30PM

Sacred Profane Brewery & Tankpub  
50 Washington Street, Biddeford ME

**1/17/2026**

### **Water Professionals Night**

6:00PM

**Maine Mariners**  
Portland ME

**3/19/2026**

### **Ski Day**

Saddleback Mountain

**9/17/2026**

### **MEWEA Fall Convention**



Also check the following links for more and new classes

NEIWPCC-JETCC Remote Learning Catalog  
<https://neiwpcc.org/maine/jetcc-training>

MWUA Sponsored Training  
<https://mwua.org/training>

## Upcoming Training

**12/2/2025**

From Clash to Collaboration –  
**Navigating Workplace Conflict Webinar**  
2:00-4:00pm; remote

**12/16/2025** (registration deadline)

**2026 Wastewater Operator School,**  
classes every other Thursday 1/8/26 through  
6/11/26, 8:30a-3:30p; various so. Maine loca-  
tions

**12/16/2025**

Lunch & Learn Session 6 – **Navigating the  
Workers' Compensation Audit Process**  
12:00-1:00pm; remote

**12/16/2025**

**Wastewater Grades 3-5 Exam Prep,**  
8:30a – 3:30p; (3) locations – Bangor, Presque  
Isle, So. Portland ME

**12/18/2025**

**Advanced Laboratory Procedures;**  
8:30a-11:30a; remote

**1/13/2026 to 1/15/26**

**NEWEA Wastewater Collection System Exam  
Prep,** 8:30a-3:30p; Gardiner ME

**1/20/26 to 1/23/26**

**NEWEA Wastewater Collection System Exam  
Prep,** 8:30a-3:30p; Springfield MA

**1/22/26**

**Fundamentals of Activated Sludge Bio-  
logical Nitrogen Removal & Operation  
Troubleshooting using Process Simulators,**  
8:30a-3:30p, Narragansett Bay Commission RI

## Peer-to-Peer Training Program: A Resource for Operators

Today, I want to share more about the MEWEA Treatment Plant Operators (TPO) Committee. As a member of the committee, I'd like to explain what it does and how it can benefit operators and treatment plants.

One initiative that's especially meaningful to me is the committee's support of the Force Maine Operations Challenge Team, of which I am a member. The TPO Committee is also a valuable resource for process control assistance and problem-solving. The Committee members have a deep pool of knowledge and experience to share.

The focus of this article is the Peer-to-Peer Training Program developed by the committee, which we are actively promoting. The goal of this program is to enable operators to learn about specific equipment or procedures directly from other operators who use them regularly. In the committee's opinion, sometimes the best way to learn is from a hands-on expert. The TPO committee can also assist in finding facilities that employ the topic you want to learn about.

Let me share a concrete example to illustrate the potential of this program. I work at the Bethel Wastewater Treatment Plant, where we've modified our license to include Peracetic Acid (PAA) as our primary disinfectant. Other systems in the state have shown interest in this approach, but due to limited data and information, the topic remains somewhat unclear.

At the MEWEA Fall Conference, I connected with operators from the Kennebunk Sewer District (KSD) who expressed interest in learning more about PAA and the possibility of switching to it as their main disinfectant. Here's how the Peer-to-Peer Training Program would work in this case:

Operators from KSD will each fill out a form indicating the questions they have and the specific aspects they'd like to learn about. Then, the plan is for KSD to visit Bethel for an in-person demonstration, in-



cluding a Q&A session and hands-on learning. After the session, the "trainees" add things they learned and how they may apply it at their facility, the trainer signs it and all forms are submitted to the TPO Committee for review and approval.

According to DEP rules, participants in this program can earn 3 TCHs per year and 6 per license cycle.

If you're interested in learning more about the Peer-to-Peer Training Program, you can email [meweatpo@gmail.com](mailto:meweatpo@gmail.com) or <https://mewea.org/Resource-Guide/Operator-Guide/Operator-Training> or visit the Treatment Plant Operator Committee page at MEWEA.org. You're also welcome to contact me directly with any questions.

Jeff Warden  
Lead Operator  
Bethel Wastewater Treatment Plant  
[jwarden@bethelmaine.org](mailto:jwarden@bethelmaine.org)



## Maine Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee Marks Forty Years of Training Clean Water Operators

By Peter Zaykoski

It's just after 8 a.m. on a beautiful Maine fall morning and the training room at Portland Water District is slowly filling with students who are about to start the first of three days of instruction on basic wastewater treatment. Their class is focused on the purpose and history of wastewater treatment, professional certification, and wastewater basics including sampling.

Water professionals such as these students have been attending classes held by Maine's Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee (JETCC) for forty years. While the details in the content and the teaching technology have certainly changed since the 1980s, many of the fundamentals have not and would be recognizable to the student's peers of the past.

### Establishment of JETCC

In the years following the enactment of the Clean Water Act in 1972, utilities across the country built wastewater treatment plants, and the first cohort of water professionals entered the field, making major progress in cleaning up the nation's waterways.

In 1983, the Maine Water Environment Association (MEWEA, previously called the Maine Wastewater Control Association), the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the New England Regional Wastewater Institute (NERWI), a NEIWPCC program, began discussions about the availability and adequacy of training for clean water professionals in the state. Out of this collaboration, a bill (LD 1837) to create JETCC was taken up in the legislature and ultimately signed by Governor Joseph Brennan in 1984. The Maine Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee (JETCC) was born.

Henry Warren, the Maine DEP commissioner, appointed a committee composed of agency officials, utility managers, and professional association representatives who developed the initial plans for the training curriculum. The committee completed surveys of utilities in the state and developed a training approach to meet the needs of the professionals in the state. The committee selected NEIWPCC as the entity to implement the program through NERWI.

JETCC's training calendar was launched in the fall

of 1985, and the first class offered was “Wastewater Treatment: Your Number One Investment,” held in Portland. From the very beginning, JETCC’s approach focused on recruiting volunteers from the clean water industry as instructors and relying on partners throughout the state to donate training spaces.

## Workforce Development

Throughout JETCC’s history, it has focused on advancing the careers of clean water professionals and helping to educate new staff on operations and maintenance fundamentals to be successful at their facilities. Every year, JETCC offers two dozen or more regular training opportunities focused on wastewater treatment processes and troubleshooting, collection system topics, and current issues, such as biosolids management. Many operators are required by the state to be certified. JETCC frequently provides preparation classes for certification exams.

In recognition of an impending wave of retirements of the first cohort of water professionals, JETCC established a Management Candidate School in 2009



acquisition (SCADA) systems. The in-person format and additional elements, such as conference attendance, provide an additional opportunity for the students to form connections with their colleagues and practice skills, like interacting with vendors that are important in management roles. The current class graduates at the 2025 MEWEA Fall Convention in September and joins the more than 230 water professionals who have completed the program before them.

The need for new operators in the industry has been strong as mid-career professionals move up in their organizations. Throughout JETCC’s history, it has offered introductory programming for new operators. Multiday training series concepts coalesced in 2017 into the most recent of JETCC’s flagship programs: Wastewater Operator School, initially developed largely by the Maine DEP and the Portland Water District. The program is composed of 12 sessions over six months, focused on fundamentals in wastewater treatment and operations. The next iteration will be offered again based out of Portland Water District in early 2026.

## Serving All of Maine

Maine’s unique geography and demography present challenges for JETCC to achieve the element of its mission to serve professionals throughout the state. North of Bangor, the population density drops and travel distance for services increases. Aroostook County, Maine’s largest, caps the state and is characterized by vast forests with a swath of agricultural land that follows the eastern border with Canada.

In order to serve the northern reaches of the state, JETCC began one of its first flagship programs in 1990: the North Country Convention. Since then, this



to prepare the next generation of mid-career professionals for management roles in their utilities. A year later, the program scope was expanded to serve both clean water and drinking water staff. Classes cover topics ranging from personnel management to budgeting and rate setting.

The program also offers instruction related to technical topics such as geographic information systems, blueprint reading, and supervisory control and data ac-

training conference has been held nearly every other year in Presque Isle, Maine, most recently this past April. Many utilities in Aroostook County provide both drinking water and wastewater services. As such, the convention's focus has grown to ensure training opportunities for operators who work on both sides of the industry.

## Community Support

In the last decade alone, JETCC programs have had more than 6,100 attendees and awarded more than 48,000 hours of continuing education credits. This success would not be possible without the support and efforts of the clean water and drinking water community in the state of Maine and the Northeast region more broadly. The original collaborative relationships among Maine DEP, MEWEA, and NEIWPC continue to this day and are critical in the success of the program. Relationships with other organizations in the state, including the Maine Water Utilities Association, have blossomed and led to a broader scope of services for JETCC programming and advanced the connection among water professionals. Ultimately,

JETCC's success is due to the innumerable volunteers who have provided instruction, input on curricula, provided training spaces, and monetary support over the last 40 years.

Back at the Portland Water District, the students are finishing their first day of training. The students may not know it, but they may have just started relationships that will support them over the next several decades of their careers. Peers that they meet in their class, that they will meet again in a couple of weeks, may show up once again in a decade in Management Candidate School. Five years later, they may be calling those same individuals seeking guidance on a tough situation or help when something goes wrong. And perhaps, after seeing the power of sharing knowledge through training, they find themselves in front of a classroom, providing instruction to the next generation of water professionals.

---

This article was originally published in the Fall 2025 edition of Interstate Waters magazine. Peter Zaykoski is the program manager of NEIWPC's South Portland office.

## BIG NEWS!

The Sanford Sewerage District has started its new administration/maintenance building construction project located at the treatment facility on Gavel Road. We have been planning this project for over 5 years. The project started in April and should be substantially completed within a year. We chose TPD Construction (Sanford) as the general contractor and working with Jo-Ann Cavanaugh, an architect in Springvale. Wright-Pierce was the consultant for the civil design and SLODA site law application. We expect to officially move in during the summer of 2026. The administration staff and maintenance personnel have been working out of the 281 River Street location since 1968. The move will bring our 14 employees under one campus.

The building will have all the amenities to conduct our monthly trustee meetings plus any future public hearings, local & regional training. Looking forward to an open house in 2026! André Brousseau



## Maine Wastewater Operators Visit Deer Island Treatment Facility

October 20 & November 10, 2025 — Boston, MA. Wastewater operators from across Maine recently traveled to the Deer Island Treatment Facility — the second-largest wastewater treatment plant in the United States and the third-largest in the world — for a professional development tour hosted by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA).

The two visits brought together operators representing utilities and districts from throughout Maine to observe Deer Island's world-class operations. The facility treats an average of 350 million gallons of wastewater per day, with a peak capacity exceeding 1.3 billion gallons during wet weather events. Its 145-acre site houses 12 primary clarifiers, 8 secondary treatment reactors, and 14 massive anaerobic digesters, each capable of holding 3 million gallons of sludge. Methane produced from the digestion process is captured and converted to energy, providing over 20% of the facility's electrical power and significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Attendees toured the plant's primary and secondary treatment systems, odor control units, and energy recovery infrastructure while MWRA staff discussed innovations in process optimization, nutrient management, and biosolids handling. The group also learned about the facility's 9.5-mile ocean outfall tunnel, which releases highly treated effluent more than 100 feet below the surface of Massachusetts Bay — a system credited with restoring water quality to Boston Harbor and transforming it into one of the cleanest urban harbors in the world.

Participants described the experience as both educational and inspiring. *"It was intimidating to witness the magnitude of the*

*operation, but inspiring to see that the fundamentals are the same as a plant the size of ours — as are the challenges,"* said **Amanda Smith** of Bangor. **Theresa Tucker**, current president of MEWEA, added, *"This visit shows how long-term investment and innovation can make wastewater treatment a model of environmental progress."*

Following the success of this fall's visits, two more tours will be scheduled for spring of 2026. If folks would like more information they should contact Phil Tucker at [ptucker@yorksewerdistrict.org](mailto:ptucker@yorksewerdistrict.org). These upcoming sessions will continue fostering collaboration between Maine utilities and MWRA staff — strengthening professional connections and sharing best practices that support energy efficiency, environmental stewardship, and operational excellence across the region.

These visits underscore Maine's commitment to professional growth and innovation, ensuring that the state's wastewater operators remain leaders in sustainable, forward-looking water resource management.



Maine wastewater operators at the Deer Island Treatment Facility in Boston Harbor on October 20, 2025. *The group toured the facility's primary and secondary treatment systems, anaerobic digesters, and energy recovery operations during the professional development visit hosted by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority.*

## Government Affairs Update

October 23, 2025

The Legislature first session ended late spring 2025 with the regular mixed bag of results for MEWEA members. **We did get an extension on the moratorium for out of state wastes (LD 297)** that allows Juniper Ridge to remain operational and brings short term consistency for the processors of bulky material that are needed to mix with wet waste at the landfill. LD 297 passed without the emergency preamble and only delayed the moratorium for two years instead of three years as originally proposed. This means that the prior extension to the moratorium had expired before the new extension went in to effect – but DEP said they would not be enforcing that during the interim window. It also means that we will be back to begging in front of the legislature again next session one year earlier than we could have.

On the stormwater side, we provided comment to hopefully help shape a study commission. It is unclear if our comments were heeded, but the Commission did not receive funding so it is kind of in limbo. We provided comment on a bill regarding testing for landfill leachate and I think we were successful in injecting some reality and common sense into that outcome. We spent time advocating for the sludge drying bond (LD 25) but given the budgetary mess that was Augusta last session that bill was carried over to the next session. **We hope to continue advocating for the bond in the upcoming session.**

There were a number of housing crisis related bills that could have a significant impact on our members. The one that sticks out, **LD 1829, allows for greater densities in areas served by sewer and water regardless of whether they are in a growth district or not.** There are many issues with the bill as well as with the timeline for implementation so it is a question if/when this becomes reality for us. There are a number of bills in the second session that will seek to clarify the impacts.

In terms of new bills for the second session, there were 250 new bills submitted by legislators and 90 new bills submitted by agencies. There are a few that seem like we should learn more about and track, including one that has to do with “improving” management of Juniper Ridge.

Looking forward, the Government Affairs Committee is initiating an effort to **host your local legislator at your treatment facility.** Most legislators have no idea what goes on at our facilities, and the hope is that they will see that we have many more issues than just “sludge” that occupy our time and our capital spending – from aging infrastructure to climate change to capacity, operations, staffing, etc. etc. – all the things that all of us deal with everyday. Vermont undertook a similar effort with very good results. **If you would like to host your legislator for a facility tour, please reach out to Dan Marks for a template letter invitation.** Dan will also be happy to, within reasonable travel distance, join you for the tour to provide more statewide context.

The final piece of GAC news for the time being is that **we are bringing back muffins (or donuts) to the Hall of Flags in lieu of our legislative breakfast.** The Hall of Flags sits between the house and senate chambers in the legislative building in Augusta, and it was felt that meeting them on their turf may be more beneficial than mostly buying waffles for our members (as fun as that is). **We reserved the Hall of Flags for Monday, January 12 – again reach out to Dan Marks if you are interested in joining us.**

If any of this interests you and you want to get more involved with Government Affairs, let us know!

Contact: Dan Marks, [dmarks@falmouthme.org](mailto:dmarks@falmouthme.org)



## Public Relations Committee Update

The Public Relations Committee has had a busy 2025 so far, working closely with Black Fly Media to produce media content to best represent MEWEA and Maine's clean water industry as a whole. The committee started off the year with a big focus on legislative support and education in partnership with Maine DEP and Friends of Casco Bay, and most recently issued a press release to media outlets urging legislators to use recent state-funded research to update Maine's statewide biosolids waste management plan and to advocate for federal and state investment in PFAS destruction technologies for biosolids. See below for the press release and media highlights from the year:

### Revisit State's Biosolids Waste Management Plan

Fox 23 Maine: <https://fox23maine.com/newsletter-daily/maines-wastewater-industry-urges-state-to-stop-land-filling-biosolids-landfill-capacity-crisis-maine-environment-sludge-department-of-environmental-protection>

WGME (CBS 13 Maine): <https://wgme.com/news/local/maines-wastewater-industry-urges-state-to-stop-land-filling-biosolids-landfill-capacity-crisis-maine-environment-sludge-department-of-environmental-protection>

LD 297 – Support for Temporary Biosolids Disposal Solution

Wastewater Digest: <https://www.wwdmag.com/wastewater-treatment/press-release/55292530/maine-enr-committee-supports-emergency-bill-ld-297-for-temporary-biosolids-disposal-solution>

### EPA Recognizes Maine Wastewater Treatment Entities for Excellence

EPA: <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-recognizes-maine-wastewater-treatment-entities-excellence>

### Legislative Breakfast Highlights

Wastewater Digest: <https://www.wwdmag.com/utility-management/news/55271095/maine-water-industry-highlights-top-challenges-for-2025>

MWUA: <https://mwua.org/maines-water-industry-calls-out-critical-need-for-support-from-augusta-in-2025/>

News Center Maine: <https://www.newscentermaine.com/video/tech/science/environment/maine-water-5-pm-fs/97-45a2a652-b118-4a3a-8d65-157ada7cdb4d>

### Funding Cuts Threaten Maine's Water Infrastructure Stability

News Center Maine: <https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/politics/maine-politics/water-utility-wastewater-facilities-battling-challenges-onset-by-reduced-federal-and-state-funding/97-3a6765a0-90a4-45ce-a618-8d186b409251>

### What Wastewater Challenges in Maine Tell Us About Municipal Systems Across the U.S.

Wastewater Digest: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0oqhQbOvpzk>

### Biosolids and PFAS Questions are Rippling to Other States after Maine's Land Application Ban

Wastedive: <https://www.wastedive.com/news/biosolids-disposal-pfas-epa-maine-casella-michigan/718500/>

Upcoming press releases that the committee is working on include focuses on need for climate resiliency infrastructure funding, informational context on the state's biosolids landscape for Maine conservation voters, and continuing to identify opportunities to highlight individual districts and utilities. In addition to media efforts, the committee once again ran a successful Clean Water Poster Competition for grades 1-12 earlier this year. The committee is looking forward to some exciting new partnerships heading into 2026 - stay tuned for more, and reach out to committee chair Evan Pereira at [epereira@woodardcurran.com](mailto:epereira@woodardcurran.com) if you are interested in getting involved!

Evan Pereira

## Operations Challenge – Force Maine

*Force Maine continues to carry the torch for Maine's wastewater professionals on the regional and national stage. Representing MEWEA and NEWEA, the team competes in the Operations Challenge a fast-paced, five-event competition that tests skill, teamwork, and technical knowledge in every corner of wastewater management.*

In 2025, every member who participated at WEFT-EC in 2024 returned for another season: Jeff Warden from Bethel Wastewater, Chris Cline from Yarmouth Wastewater Water Pollution Control, Darren Lauletta from the York Sewer District, and Nick Textor from Bangor Water Quality Management. During the NEWEA training day in March, where teams practice and watch event demonstrations—we met Brian Chonko of Brunswick Sewer District and Travis Adjutant of Wells Sanitary District. Both later became alternates, helping with practices, coaching, and team coverage.



At the NEWEA spring meeting in Portland, we earned second place out of five New England teams, qualifying Force Maine for the national competition in Chicago. Notably, we finished first in the safety event, a proud achievement. Practicing was much easier this year since the event equipment was housed in Yarmouth, saving us travel time that in previous years had taken us as far as Massachusetts for hands-on sessions. This season also brought increased recog-





nition and support, including generous sponsorships that funded our participation in various mini competitions. Our management, coworkers, MEWEA, and NEWEA provided outstanding support throughout.

The WEFTEC 2025 competition in Chicago was memorable for Force Maine. We enjoyed connecting with other NEWEA teams before competing. Though one teammate couldn't make the trip, alternate Travis stepped up so we could complete all events together. Facing a record field of 57 teams, our results might not have broken records, but we consistently embodied Force Maine's values: showing up, supporting each other, working hard, and enjoying the experience. We cheered on our friends and rivals and even lent assistance to other competing teams.

The Operations Challenge creates unique opportunities for learning, networking, and camaraderie within both the Maine and broader wastewater communities. My teammates are more than colleagues—they're friends and mentors. That sense of community extends to past competitors, whose knowledge and encouragement are invaluable. If you're interested in joining this dynamic group, contact the MEWEA Treatment Plant Operators Committee at [meweaT-PO@gmail.com](mailto:meweaT-PO@gmail.com) or speak with any participating competitor—they'd love to welcome you to Force Maine.

Jeff Warden  
Lead Operator  
Town of Bethel, Maine



**Want to provide feedback on this years MEWEA Conference Corn Hole Competition?**

Please answer a few questions so we can make this experience better every year! [Survey link](#)

# 2025 Clean Water Week Poster Contest Winners

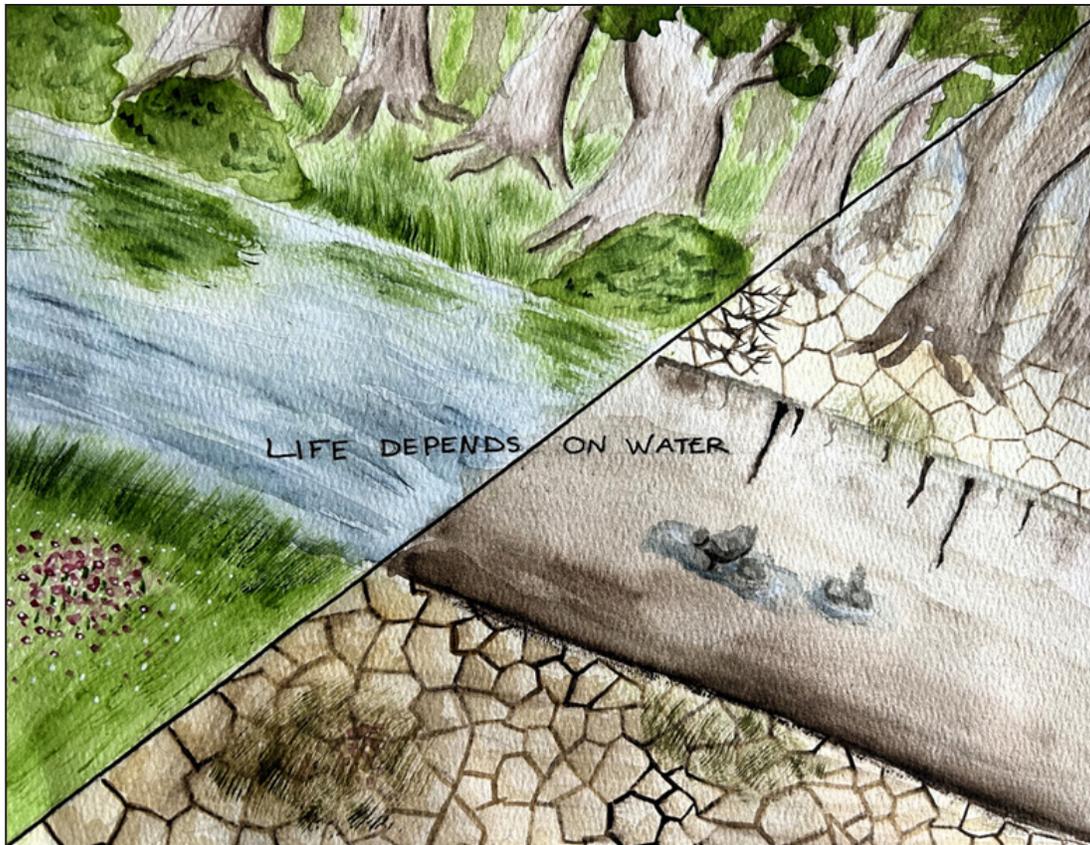


Hydson Pricor – Grade 3 – Ella P. Burr School

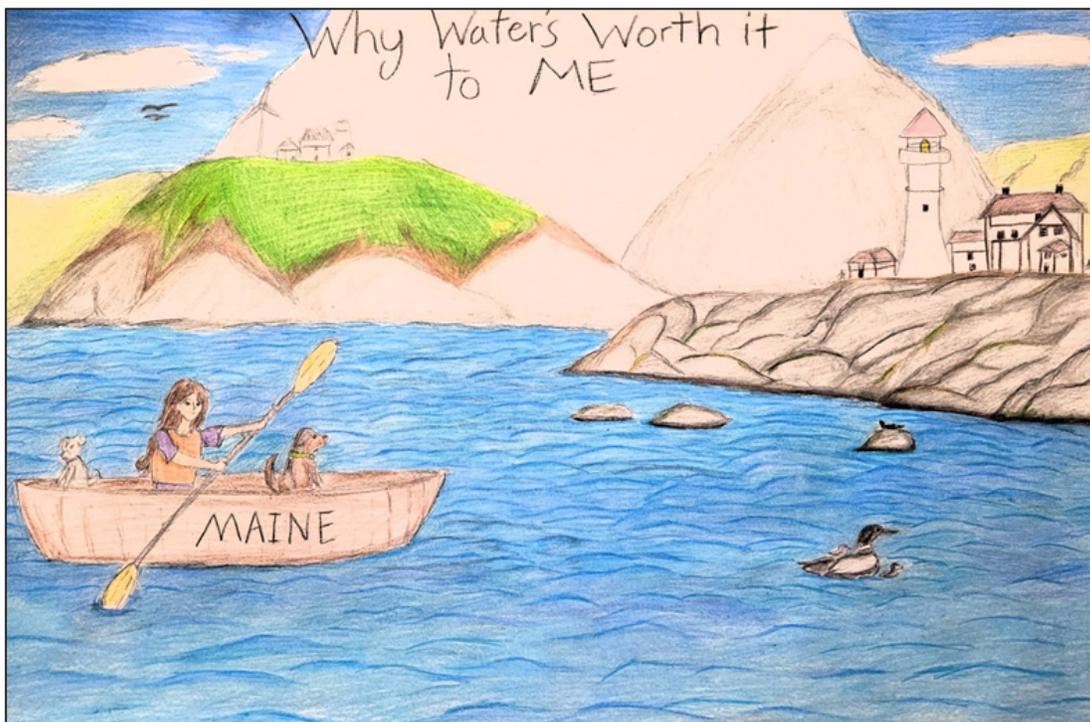


Jasmine Mitchell – Grade 11 – Waterville Senior High School

## 2025 Clean Water Week Poster Contest Winners



Guinevere Diki – Grade 6 – Edna Drinkwater School



Olivia Dicientes – Grade 8 – Stearns Jr. Sr. High School

For previous years winner, please see  
<https://mewea.org/Events/Clean-Water-Week-Poster-Contest>

All proceeds from this event go to support Maine's Operation Challenge Team



MAINE WATER ENVIRONMENT ASSOCIATION  
WATER PROFESSIONALS NIGHT  
AT THE  
**MAINE MARINERS**

JANUARY 17, 2026 @ 6:00 PM

**Support the Maine Water Environment Association as they raise money at Pirates Night with a Concessions Fundraiser!**

**GET YOUR DISCOUNTED TICKETS HERE:**



CONTACT IAN HARMON FOR MORE INFORMATION  
(207) 761 - 4364

# Four New State-Funded Research Studies Conclude that Land Application of Non-Industrial Biosolids Is Safer Than Landfilling



*Maine's wastewater industry urges the state to reconsider current policy amid mounting environmental concern and new research studies*

October 17, 2025, AUGUSTA, Maine – [Maine's Water Environment Association](#) (MeWEA), the state's largest association of clean and wastewater experts, is calling on Maine lawmakers to review four newly released studies, which all conclude that organic land application of non-industrial biosolids is an environmentally safer option than landfilling. Since 2022, when Maine became the first in the nation to ban land application due to PFAS concerns, 100-percent of Maine biosolids have been dumped into landfills or shipped out of state. Since the land application ban, Maine's Department of Environmental Protection has been assessing PFAS levels on farmlands statewide and has identified that only farms that received industrial biosolids, which were used as fertilizer, had high concentrations of PFAS. Farmlands that received non-industrial municipal biosolids had much lower, federally acceptable levels. In light of the new research, testing, and advanced risk management tools, MeWEA is encouraging state leaders to revisit the 2022 policy.

"There is not a wastewater leader in Maine that believes landfilling is a good option for the state's biosolids, but we don't have any other," said Phil Tucker, York Sewer District. "LD 1911 is an unfunded mandate and until Maine dedicates funding for technology to destroy PFAS or dry biosolids before they reach the landfill, we will not exit this crisis without reconsidering beneficial land application of non-industrial biosolids," Tucker said.

## Mounting Landfill Pressure, Missed Climate Goals

The September 2025 closure of the Hawk Ridge compost landfill underscores a growing crisis. Hawk Ridge accepted biosolids from around New England and was recently closed due to unsafe levels of PFAS in neighboring soils and waters. Juniper Ridge, Maine's only state-run landfill will reach capacity by 2028. Maine DEP has recommended expansion, despite local opposition and an impending lawsuit. The strained facility suddenly closed in 2023 due to a short-term capacity crisis, leaving wastewater facilities dangerously close to overflowing raw sewage into Maine waters. In 2023 and again in 2025, Maine authorized the import of out-of-state waste to stabilize these facilities — a decision that further contradicts the state's climate commitments.

## What the Science Says

Maine Bureau of General Services, Maine's Solid Waste Management Plan, and two reports commissioned by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection conclude: With proper testing and oversight, non-industrial biosolids can be safely reused, and play a key role in reducing landfill volumes, carbon and methane emissions, and the use of chemical fertilizers.

- The [2023 Brown and Caldwell Report](#), commissioned by Maine DEP, concluded that returning to regulated land application is the most environmentally and economically sound option.

- Maine’s Bureau of General Services (2025) warned of looming landfill capacity issues and emphasized the need to revisit organic reuse practices.
- Maine’s Solid Waste Management Plan (January 2024) highlighted biosolids as high-value organic material, noting that landfilling contradicts the state’s waste and greenhouse gas goals.
- DEP’s own 2025 study found that the most severe PFAS contamination stemmed from industrial sources — not municipal wastewater systems — and that most land application sites present no health or environmental risks when properly managed. DEP’s report shows that landfilling biosolids strains capacity and generates more methane emissions.

### Models to Follow

Other states have taken a phased approach to PFAS management. Arizona paused biosolids application, studied the risks, and reinstated the practice under a managed system. Michigan established screening levels to isolate industrially impacted biosolids, which have significantly higher levels of PFAS, enabling beneficial reuse to resume.

“We know that biosolids have inherent benefits in terms of protecting the climate and supporting soil health. And we now know that our current approach of landfilling carries additional issues in terms of capacity and local rights. While we continue to phase PFAS out of the products we consume, the time has come to reconsider our one-size-fits-all ban on land application,” Dan Marks, Superintendent, Falmouth Wastewater.

“MEWEA commends the state for taking a deliberate pause to investigate sites, remediate concerns, and enact source control legislation. These were critical first steps,” said Terry Tucker, President, MeWEA. “We need to follow the new information surrounding PFAS as evidenced in these new reports, and develop a plan that balances environmental protection, economic needs, public health, and agriculture. MeWEA urges the State to revisit the past policy and revise based on new insights and information,” Tucker added.

### About MAINE WATER ENVIRONMENT ASSOCIATION

Representing 650 businesses, nonprofits and water and sewer districts within Maine’s water industry, the Maine Water Environment Association’s (MeWEA) mission is to support the future of clean water. Through training and education of future generations; advocacy for sustainable policies that protect the environment; and investing in innovative technologies and infrastructure that build resilient communities, MeWEA is advancing the water industry and provides the tools and support so that members can be stewards of clean water and public health. For more information visit: <https://www.mewea.org>

For Media Inquiries: Diana Nelson, [diana@blackflymedia.com](mailto:diana@blackflymedia.com), 978-985-9993



## Interested in becoming a sponsor?

You can still sign up and be featured in upcoming newsletters! As a joint sponsor you'll reach both the MWUA and MEWEA audiences.

**WRIGHT-PIERCE**



WATER • WASTEWATER • STORMWATER  
**SOLUTIONS**



**HALEY WARD**

**Spots available for 2026!**

For more information, contact Molly King at [mking@mwua.org](mailto:mking@mwua.org)