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**PFAS Task Force Recommendations Too Weak
to Protect Mainers' Health from 'Forever Chemicals'**

*Advocates call on Maine Governor and Legislature
to support adoption of health-protective drinking water standard*

AUGUSTA—Governor Janet Mills' PFAS Task Force's final recommendations, published today, are too weak to adequately protect public health and the environment from toxic PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) pollution in Maine, say health advocates.

"The Governor's Task Force recommends strong action to clean up contaminated sites and prevent future PFAS pollution. But the recommendations fall shockingly short of protecting thousands of Maine people exposed to PFAS in their drinking water at levels deemed unsafe to serve in neighboring New England states," said Mike Belliveau, a Task Force member and executive director of Environmental Health Strategy Center. "Instead of relying on the Trump Administration's controversial do-nothing approach, Maine must adopt its own health-protective drinking water standard for PFAS."

Health advocates are calling on Governor Mills, the Maine Legislature, and the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to adopt a health-protective drinking water standard, and to give relief to residents across the state who are facing contamination of their land and drinking water from these dangerous chemicals.

"It's unacceptable that the Task Force is endorsing levels of PFAS in our drinking water five times higher than what our neighbors in New Hampshire have deemed dangerous," said Phelps Turner, Senior Attorney at the Conservation Law Foundation.

Three New England states are taking a more health-protective approach than Maine, which relies on an outdated federal advisory level that limits the sum of two PFAS chemicals to no more than 70 parts per trillion (ppt) in drinking water. In contrast, Vermont and Massachusetts limits the sum of five or six PFAS to no more than 20 ppt, while New Hampshire recently adopted standards for individual PFAS that range from 11 to 18 ppt. The majority of Maine's Task Force, led by state agency representatives, voted to stick with the weaker federal action level.

Health advocates were also concerned about the recommendations' failure to adequately address PFAS pollution from PFAS-contaminated sewage and industrial sludge spread as fertilizer on some Maine farmland.

Sharon Treat, Senior Attorney at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, said: "Now is the time to transition away from agricultural use of sludge, septage, biosolids and residuals, and to develop a process to engage farmers in planning this change. Initial data from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection show widespread PFAS contamination from sewage sludge spreading and disposal. Ending this practice is the only way to assure that food and farmland is uncontaminated and that Maine's reputation for the highest quality food and agricultural products remains intact."

"The state must also establish a firm timeline for testing all sites where sewer and industrial sludge was spread, and foods and feed grown on those sites, and begin prioritizing those for cleanup," Belliveau added. "Finally, the state must ensure that PFAS-contaminated sludge is never used as fertilizer or compost in the future."

PFAS exposure has been linked to kidney cancer and testicular cancer, as well as thyroid disease, compromised immune systems, and infertility. PFAS are used in a wide variety of consumer products, such as nonstick coatings on cookware and water- and grease-resistant coatings on food packaging, outerwear, and furniture. These chemicals are also used in many firefighting foams, which then contaminate soil and water. State-ordered testing in 2019 revealed nearly all sewage sludge used as fertilizer or for compost in Maine is contaminated with toxic PFAS.

Arundel dairy farmer Fred Stone's livelihood was ruined by PFAS contamination of his land, cows, and milk—a result of state-sanctioned spreading of sewage and industrial sludge on his farmland as fertilizer. The Task Force recommendations include a suggestion for the legislature to revise Maine's statute of limitations to allow landowners, like Fred Stone, to seek compensation for pollution of their land that may have occurred in the past but only recently brought to light. Nearly all other sites where sewage and industrial sludge was spread across the state remain untested for PFAS contamination.

In November, the Maine CDC [reported](#) that PFAS has already contaminated multiple public water supplies, including those serving schools and a preschool.

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The [Environmental Health Strategy Center](#) works to create a world where all people are healthy and thriving, with equal access to safe food and drinking water, and products that are toxic-free and climate-friendly.