

MAINE • WATER UTILITIES • CAPITAL BRIEFING

Maine wrote the country's toughest PFAS laws. Your capital plan has to pay for them.

Maine was the first state to ban land-spreading of sludge, the first to set a drinking-water PFAS standard, and it is testing every farm and every historically licensed spreading site in the state. On top of that sits a fleet of century-old district systems and hundreds of small, seasonal providers. Invizion helps Maine utilities re-sequence a capital portfolio in a click — and defend every decision to the PUC and their boards.

90¹ Maine farms found with PFAS above the state's soil screening level or 20 ppt drinking-water standard — out of roughly 7,000, and still counting as testing continues.	26² Lead service lines identified statewide out of ~290,000 — the reason Maine requested zero federal lead-line dollars for 2026. Maine's contamination story is PFAS, not lead.	150+³ Public water utilities whose rates are set by the Maine PUC — including the big consumer-owned districts, not just the one investor-owned company.	\$60M⁴ State PFAS Fund the Legislature created in 2022 to help contaminated farms — the first fund of its kind in the country.
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THE MAINE LANDSCAPE

Four forces are moving your project list at once

Maine's water sector doesn't look like the Sun Belt's. There's no Colorado River fight and almost no lead. Instead: a PFAS legacy no other state has confronted at this scale, old pipes in a hard climate, and a system split across hundreds of small utilities — all competing for the same capital dollars.

CONTAMINATION — PFAS

The nation's hardest PFAS problem, and Maine is testing everything

Decades of spreading wastewater sludge and septage on farmland left Maine with a PFAS legacy no other state has faced at this scale. Maine became the first state in the nation to ban land application of sludge (Public Law 2021, chapter 641), effective August 8, 2022, and the first to adopt a drinking-water standard — an interim limit of 20 parts per trillion for the sum of six PFAS, set June 21, 2021.⁵

The state is now testing every historically licensed sludge and septage site and every commercial farm; DEP is required to finish that site testing by 2025.⁶ To date, about 90 of Maine's roughly 7,000 farms have come back above a screening level.¹ For water utilities, that means source protection, wellhead testing, and treatment are no longer optional line items — they're the plan.

RENEWAL — AGING PIPE

Old systems, a hard climate, and a national bill

Maine's largest systems have been in the ground a very long time — Portland has drawn from Sebago Lake since 1869 — and freeze-thaw cycles punish mains that most Sun Belt utilities never worry about.⁸

EPA's 7th Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey put the national 20-year need at \$625 billion, the bulk of it in distribution and transmission pipe.⁷ Maine's share of that renewal wave lands on utilities that are, for the most part, small and thinly staffed.

Renewal doesn't wait for the PFAS work to finish — the two compete for the same crews and the same dollars.

STRUCTURE — FRAGMENTATION

Hundreds of small and seasonal systems

Water service in Maine is spread across a large number of independent providers — the PUC alone rate-regulates more than 150 public water utilities, and many more small community and seasonal systems sit below that line³

Small systems face the same PFAS testing, the same aging pipe, and the same compliance clock as Portland or Bangor — with a fraction of the ratepayers to spread the cost over. For these utilities, the sequencing of one treatment upgrade against one main replacement can decide whether rates stay affordable.

TIMING — COMPLIANCE & AFFORDABILITY

Funded mandates stack on top of renewal

PFAS treatment, source testing, and pipe renewal are all live at once, and much of the money to pay for them now runs through Maine's State Revolving Funds — including a dedicated \$7.64 million emerging-contaminant allotment for 2026 aimed squarely at PFAS²

New obligations don't replace the old backlog; they stack on it. When a treatment mandate moves up or a grant lands, something else on the list has to move — and in Maine that trade-off plays out in front of the PUC and elected district trustees.⁵

WHO RUNS MAINE'S WATER

A district state — consumer-owned utilities, and one big investor-owned company

Maine's water is dominated by quasi-municipal water districts and municipal departments — consumer-owned utilities run by local trustees. The one large investor-owned provider, Maine Water Company, is the exception. Unusually, the PUC sets rates for both.

Consumer-owned utilities

Local water districts & municipal departments · rates reviewed by the Maine PUC

Portland Water District Sebago Lake since 1869 · ~16% of Maine's population · ~55,000 meters

Bangor Water District ~10,700 accounts · ~200 mi of main · Floods Pond sources

Kennebec Water District Waterville / mid-Maine region

Auburn & Lewiston systems Androscoggin municipal providers

Numerous small & seasonal districts Where capital capacity is thinnest

Maine's largest providers are consumer-owned water districts governed by locally elected trustees — the dominant ownership form in the state.

Investor-owned utility

Rates & capital recovery regulated by the Maine PUC

Maine Water Company ~32,000 customers · 21 towns · subsidiary of H2O America (Nasdaq: HTO)¹⁰

Small private & association systems Parks, associations, seasonal operators

Mobile-home-park & community systems Where funding gaps hit hardest

Maine Water is the state's only large private provider; the rest of the investor-owned segment is a long tail of very small systems.

In Maine, even the districts answer to the PUC

Maine is unusual: the Public Utilities Commission reviews rates not only for the investor-owned company but for the big consumer-owned districts too. On top of that sit the toughest PFAS statutes in the country. Every capital dollar has to be defensible.

Maine Public Utilities Commission (PUC) regulates rates for more than 150 public water utilities — both investor-owned and consumer-owned — and must find that the rates they charge are just and reasonable.³

Interim PFAS drinking-water standard — 20 ppt for the sum of six PFAS, adopted June 21, 2021, ahead of the federal MCL that followed in 2024. Community systems and schools must sample for PFAS⁵

Sludge land-application ban — Maine DEP enforces the nation's first ban on spreading sludge and sludge-derived products (2022) and is testing every historically licensed spreading site⁶

First-in-nation PFAS product ban — Maine also became the first state to move to ban PFAS in nearly all products, phasing in by 2030.¹¹

Locally elected trustees & councils approve district and municipal capital plans in public, in front of ratepayers — before the PUC ever sees the rate filing.

The money is moving — can your plan absorb it?

Maine utilities have more capital funding available than in a generation, and a rare share of it is aimed at exactly Maine's problem — PFAS. The constraint is readiness: which projects are shovel-ready, which qualify, and how the timing lines up with everything else on the list.

Drinking Water SRF (2026) — a \$3.84M base capitalization grant plus a \$24.89M Bipartisan Infrastructure Law supplemental, with roughly \$60.9M in total project funds available for the year²

\$7.64M emerging-contaminant allotment (2026) — dedicated DWSRF funding to help systems address PFAS and other emerging contaminants.²

\$60M state PFAS Fund for impacted farms and land, plus a \$5M USDA grant (2023) and \$3M in research grants to academic institutions (2025).⁴¹²

Clean Water SRF & state grants — the Clean Water SRF offers at- or below-market loans for wastewater, alongside state wastewater infrastructure grants (about \$13.45M in a recent year)¹³¹⁴

MAINE WATER, IN BRIEF

Questions Maine utility leaders are asking

Short, sourced answers — the same facts we'll dig into on a call, in the context of your system.

Why is PFAS such a big deal for Maine water utilities?

Maine spread wastewater sludge and septage on farmland for decades, concentrating PFAS in soil and groundwater. Maine became the first state to ban that practice (2022) and the first to set a drinking-water standard — 20 ppt for six PFAS combined. The state is testing every historically licensed spreading site and every farm; about 90 of roughly 7,000 farms have exceeded a screening level so far. For utilities, that translates into source protection, monitoring, and treatment capital.⁵¹

Does Maine have a lead service line problem like other states?

Barely. In its 2026 SRF planning, Maine identified only 26 lead service lines out of roughly 290,000 statewide, and requested no federal lead-line dollars for the year. Maine's contamination challenge is PFAS, not lead — which is why its dedicated federal money flows to emerging contaminants instead.²

Who sets my utility's water rates in Maine?

The Maine Public Utilities Commission does — and unusually, that includes the large consumer-owned water districts, not just the investor-owned Maine Water Company. The PUC rate-regulates more than 150 public water utilities and must find their rates just and reasonable. Local trustees and councils approve the capital plans that drive those rates.³

What funding is available to Maine utilities right now?

For 2026, Maine's Drinking Water SRF carried a \$3.84M base grant plus a \$24.89M Bipartisan Infrastructure Law supplement, roughly \$60.9M in total project funds, and a \$7.64M emerging-contaminant allotment for PFAS. The Clean Water SRF adds at- or below-market wastewater loans, and a \$60M state PFAS Fund supports impacted farms and land.²⁴

Who are the largest water utilities in Maine?

Maine is a district state. Portland Water District, drawing from Sebago Lake since 1869, serves about 16% of the state's population; Bangor Water District serves roughly 10,700 accounts from Floods Pond; and other districts serve Waterville, Auburn, Lewiston and beyond. The one large investor-owned provider, Maine Water Company, serves about 32,000 customers across 21 towns.⁸⁹¹⁰

How does Invizion help Maine water utilities plan capital?

Invizion is scenario-based capital portfolio optimization for water utilities. It lets you model how a PFAS treatment mandate, an SRF award, or a main-renewal backlog reshuffles your whole project list, re-sequence the portfolio automatically against the constraints you set, and keep a defensible record of every decision for the PUC, your trustees, and ratepayers. The best next step is a short first meeting to look at it against your own program.

REFERENCES

Sources

Every figure in this briefing is tied to a primary or authoritative source.

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ABOUT INVIZION

Capital program optimization for utilities

Invizion is a purpose-built capital lifecycle management platform for water and wastewater utilities. It integrates budgeting, CIP, scenario analysis, and funding-source tracking in one system — so utilities can re-sequence a capital portfolio in a click and demonstrate audit-ready, defensible decisions to regulators, boards, and rating agencies.

See what a defensible Maine capital plan looks like — book a 20-minute first meeting.

Book your first meeting →