

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 16, 2024

The Honorable Carlos Del Toro
Secretary of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Secretary Del Toro:

We are writing to raise our concerns to you about the recent toxic foam spill at the Former Brunswick Naval Air Station. On August 19, 2024, a malfunction in a fire suppression system in hangar four at Brunswick Landing, formerly known as Brunswick Naval Air Station, discharged 1,450 gallons of aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) mixed with 50,000 gallons of water,¹ filling the hangar and spilling into an oil/water separator and into retention pond “A.” This is the largest accidental AFFF spill in the state of Maine, and the sixth largest in the U.S. in the past 30 years.²

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), exposure to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, also known as PFAS, has been linked to harmful health effects in humans and animals.³ Results from samples taken at the Brunswick site showed that PFOS, a type of PFAS that EPA has designated as hazardous under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), was detected in the AFFF product sample from the storage tank at 3,230 parts per million (ppm) and in the mixed product sample (AFFF + water) at 7.52 ppm.⁴

Though much of Brunswick Landing is now overseen by the Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority (MRRA), the Navy retains ownership over certain areas, including hangar four. Our understanding is that the operations and maintenance of hangar four including the AFFF system is a responsibility of MRRA under the conditions of the lease with the Navy. We have been informed that the Navy had planned to remove the fire suppression system at hangar 4 and other Brunswick facilities this month. We are further concerned that thousands of gallons of AFFF remain on site as part of the fire suppression systems in additional hangars at Brunswick Landing.

Our constituents are deeply concerned about the short and long-term health and environmental impacts of this spill, as well as potential future incidents, since AFFF foam remains at the site. We understand that the Department of the Navy has been communicating with MRRA, Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MEDEP) and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 1 since the spill. We ask for your commitment to coordinating with federal, state, and local partners in providing assistance as the clean-up continues. Further, we request a briefing on the status of the Navy’s involvement in these efforts at your earliest convenience.

¹ <https://www.maine.gov/dep/news/news.html?id=12955895>

² <https://www.ewg.org/news-insights/news/2022/03/epa-data-show-almost-900-forever-chemical-foam-releases-many-local>

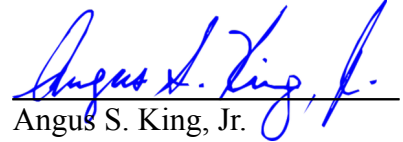
³ <https://www.epa.gov/pfas/pfas-explained>

⁴ <https://www.maine.gov/dep/news/news.html?id=12965501>

Sincerely,



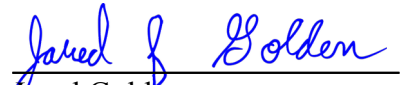
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Jared Golden
Member of Congress