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Forever chemical risk identified throughout ME

Department of Environmental Protection will test for PFAS contamination at hundreds of licensed sludge and septage dispersal sites across state, but some people aren't waiting

BY PENELOPE OVERTON
Portland Press Herald

The Maine Department of Environmental Protection has begun hunting for so-called forever chemicals at hundreds of licensed sludge dispersal sites across the state, but it will take years to work through the ever-changing list of more than 700 properties.

A team of chemists, geologists, engineers and techs must investigate each location, starting off with the drinking well nearest the fields where the sludge, septic tank sewage or industrial waste was applied as fertilizer. If unsafe levels of forever chemicals are found, the testing area expands.

"We've got a long road ahead of us," said Victoria Eleftheriou, DEP's deputy director for the Bureau of Remediation and Waste Management. "Not all of the licenses were put to use. Some of the records go back to the 1970s. Some places received sludge from multiple sources. ... It's going to take time."

The agency has prioritized the list based on the type and amount of sludge spread at the site and its proximity to housing, Eleftheriou said. About 50 sites in 34 towns fall into its highest risk category, she said. To date, DEP has begun investigating about half of these high-risk cases.

Some people who don't want to wait are hiring private labs from as far away as California, Washington state and Florida to test their soil and well water for unsafe

levels of PFAS, a group of long-lasting and man-made chemicals used in common household products and industrial settings.

If the results come back over Maine's PFAS limit, DEP will reimburse homeowners, so long as they live near one of the 700 sludge dispersal sites included on this map. Residential PFAS testing can

run from \$250 to \$500, depending on the kind of PFAS testing done.

There are no labs in Maine with the equipment, certification and trained staff required to test for PFAS. The nearest one on DEP's list of 14 certified labs is Absolute Resources Associates in Portsmouth, N.H. The state itself has had

Please see **CHEMICALS** on A8

Harpswell school board member cites group's toxicity as reason for resigning

Alison Hawkes resigned Jan. 19

BY PAYAL GANGISHETTI
Times Record staff

Former Maine School Administrative District 75 board member Alison Hawkes said the board's "toxic" atmosphere prompted her resignation earlier this month, the latest in a revolving door of changes to the district's leadership.

"This board has been toxic for a while," Hawkes, who has children attending school in the district, told the board on Thursday, Jan. 27. "I am still standing by my resignation so I can ensure my kids' education doesn't fall further behind. Can you imagine that I would have to look to another state to educate my kids? We have to recognize that some kids and adults cannot work

under the current conditions for extended periods of time."

Hawkes, who represented Harpswell, tendered her resignation, which the board accepted Thursday, on Jan. 19.

On Thursday, Hawkes also decried how the board has handled the COVID-19 pandemic.

"How will this district make up for two years of survival learning?" said Hawkes. "If you cannot explain what you are doing with facts and data, then who are we saving. I don't want to be a part of a team that will sit aside and watch kids be mentally abused and oppressed over fear."

Hawkes served 1 1/2 years of her most recent term. She has been involved with the board

Please see **RESIGN** on A6

Synagogue celebrates centennial



PHOTOS BY KATHLEEN O'BRIEN / THE TIMES RECORD

Over 100 members of the Beth Israel synagogue congregation marched from the corner of Washington and Centre streets to the Beth Israel synagogue on Sunday afternoon to celebrate the synagogue's centennial anniversary.

Congregation of Beth Israel in Bath held a centennial ceremony designed to mirror celebration that was held when it opened in 1922, with a few COVID-19 adjustments

BY KATHLEEN O'BRIEN
Times Record staff

The congregation of Beth Israel, a Bath synagogue, celebrated its centennial anniversary on Sunday by reenacting the synagogue's dedication ceremony held in the same spot 100 years ago.

The celebration included a parade that started on the corner of Washington and Centre streets, where Nathan Povich, one of Beth Israel's founding congregants, once owned a store. The parade of over 100 people headed north on Washington Street to the synagogue, which sits near the intersection of Washington and Summer streets.

Siblings Lon and Elaine Povich led the parade, carrying the Torah, the first five books of the Jewish bible, just as their grandfather, Nathan



Lon and Elaine Povich, great-grandchildren of founding member Nathan Povich, hold the Torah on the steps of the synagogue. Congregants Irwin Brodsky, Peggy Brown, Shira Gersh and Marty Fox hold the synagogue's chuppa.

Povich, did the day the synagogue opened. Lon and Elaine Povich said they are the fifth generation of the Povich family to belong to Beth Israel

synagogue. "Today feels very special," said Elaine Povich. "We feel like we're honoring our ancestors and marking the cen-

tenial of a very special place. My father used to say that it was a series of miracles that kept

Please see **SYNAGOGUE** on A8

Tri-state Lotteries

Friday

Mega Millions: 3-16-25-44-55
Megaball: 13
Megaplier: 3
Lucky For Life:
11-21-27-32-48 (7)
Gimme 5: 3-7-19-25-27
Day Pick 3: 2-1-6
Evening Pick 3: 6-7-9
Day Pick 4: 5-7-0-6
Evening Pick 4: 8-3-6-6

Saturday

Powerball: 2-15-38-54-65 (11)
Megabucks Plus:
15-19-32-35-37 (4)
Lotto America:
5-19-23-30-31 (3)
Lucky For Life:
3-28-31-35-46 (6)
Day Pick 3: 8-8-8
Evening Pick 3: 2-9-3
Day Pick 4: 8-0-0-6
Evening Pick 4: 8-3-4-9

Sunday

Day Pick 3: 0-2-4
Evening Pick 3: 1-9-1
Day Pick 4: 0-1-7-8
Evening Pick 4: 8-5-9-2

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Today's Headlines

Local

Man hits pole in front of police station, charged with OUI, criminal mischief

A2

Maine

UMA provides \$2.5M in COVID aid to help with student debt

A3

Augusta seeks fed funding to address emergency service worker shortage

A3

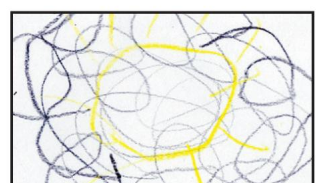
Nation/World

Clyburn, architect of Biden's court pledge, pushes his pick

A7

U.S. pledges to put Russia on defensive at Security Council

B7



Tomorrow's weather
Mostly cloudy.
High 32. See Page A8.

Wiscasset schools switch to temporary remote learning after COVID cases rise

BY KATHLEEN O'BRIEN
Times Record staff

Both Wiscasset Elementary School and Wiscasset Middle High School were forced to temporarily transition to distance learning beginning on Friday, Jan. 28, due to an increase in COVID-19 cases.

"We have been notified by the CDC that we are currently in outbreak status due to the number of students absent from both schools due to illness," Wiscasset School

Department Superintendent Terry Wood wrote in a Jan. 27 letter to families. "At this point in time, we will transition into remote learning for both schools beginning tomorrow, Friday, Jan. 28, 2022 through Wednesday, Feb. 2, 2022."

Wiscasset Elementary School went from having 13 cases during the week of Jan. 21 to reporting just seven cases last week, according to the district's website. Wiscasset Middle High School, on the other hand, jumped from reporting six cases

during the week of Jan. 21 to having 27 COVID-19 cases last week.

Wood said school officials will "reassess the situation" Tuesday and determine whether students can return to in-person learning.

Wiscasset schools have had to pivot to remote learning multiple times since the academic year began.

In October 2021, Wiscasset Middle High School, which teaches grades 7-12, switched to full remote learning for a

week after two students and a staff member tested positive for COVID-19. The following month, both Wiscasset schools COVID-19 cases were detected in both schools, leading the district to move to remote learning for about a week and a vaccine clinic at the elementary school was postponed.

The Maine Department of Education reported 37 Maine schools have been in outbreak status within

Please see **REMOTE** on A6



5-Day Forecast for Mid-coast Region

Forecast table with columns for Tonight, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Includes icons for weather conditions and temperature ranges.

Regional Forecast

Boston: Mostly clear skies tonight with lows in the single digits. West southwest wind 1 to 6 mph. Montreal: Partly cloudy skies tonight with lows in the single digits. North wind 11 mph. White Mountains: Clear skies tonight with lows in the single digits. Light winds.

Monday's highs table listing temperatures for various locations: Brunswick (27°F), Bath (26°F), Lisbon (27°F), Freeport (27°F), Harpswell (26°F), Topsham (26°F), Bowdoin (25°F), Bowdoinham (25°F), Phippsburg (25°F).

Local Almanac

Reported from Wiscasset Airport. Temperature: High 22°, Low 8°, Normal high 31°, Normal low 10°. Precipitation: Yesterday 0.00". Heating Degree Days: Yesterday 49.

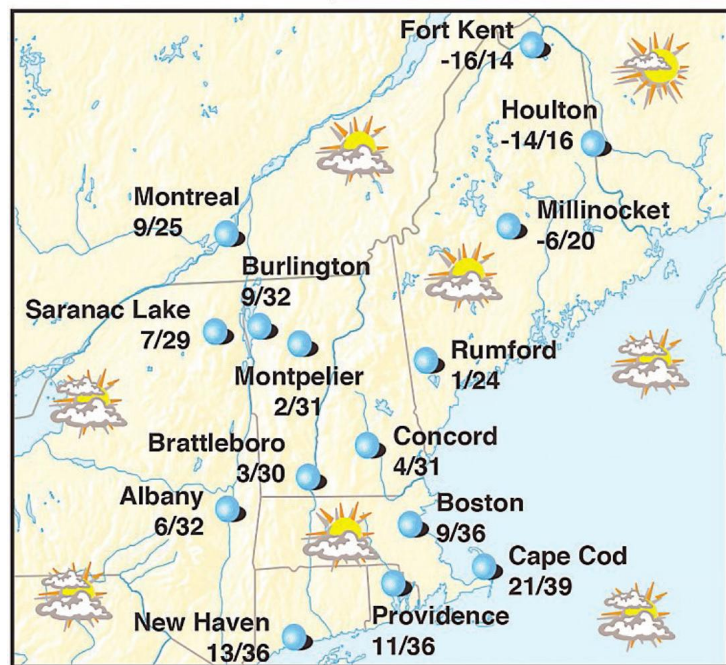
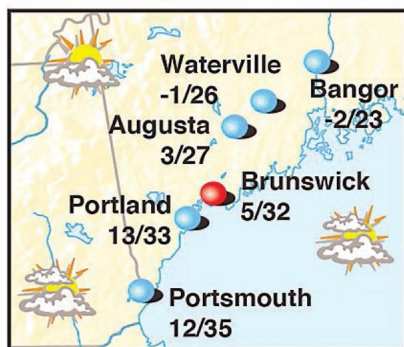
Sun and Moon

Sunrise and Moonrise data for Tuesday and Wednesday. Includes moon phase icons for New, First, Full, and Last.

Tides

Tide schedule for Wiscasset, Bath, Brunswick-Topsham Bridge, Richmond, Harpswell Harbor, Middle Bay, and South Freeport.

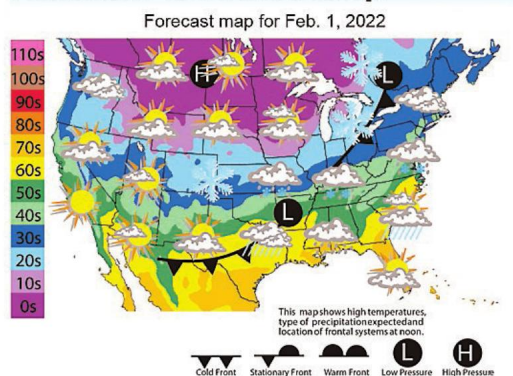
Local Map



National Cities

Table of weather forecasts for major national cities including Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, Grand Rapids, Honolulu, Houston, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, Nashville, New Orleans, New York, Orlando, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Raleigh, St. Louis, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Tampa, and Washington, DC.

National Weather Map



National Weather Summary

The Northeast will see mostly cloudy skies with isolated rain, highest temperature of 52 in Jeffersonville, Ind. The Southeast will experience partly to mostly cloudy skies with isolated rain, highest temperature of 74 in Bonita Springs, Fla.

Marine Forecast

Rockland to Kennebunkport. Tonight: NW winds 5 to 10 kt. Seas 2 to 3 ft. Light freezing spray. Tomorrow: NE winds 5 to 10 kt. Seas 2 to 3 ft. Light freezing spray.

Regional Cities

Forecast table for regional cities including Albany, Augusta, Boston, Buffalo, Burlington, Concord, Danbury, Hartford, Montpelier, New Haven, New London, Portland, Providence, and Springfield.

Synagogue

From Page A1

this place going all these years. The Jews in Bath have been extremely fortunate and have persevered through thick and thin for over 100 years.

"It's an amazing story that, in such a small town in Maine, Jews came and were welcomed here and have continued to live here for more than 100 years," said Lon Povich. "It's an American story."

Congregants Irwin Brodsky, Peggy Brown, Shira Gersh and Marty Fox carried the synagogue's chuppah, a holy canopy couples stand under during their wedding ceremony, in the parade.

Some people also waved small American flags in the parade, as the original congregation members did to show "they were so proud to be Americans," said Marilyn Weinberg, a member of the Beth Israel congregation.

According to a Feb. 9, 1922 article from the "Bath Independent," the original dedication ceremony garnered a crowd of 250 "local Hebrews and many out-of-town guests." The ceremony also included a few prayers, holy readings and hymns inside the synagogue, but the centennial celebration was held entirely outdoors due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

David Freidenreich, chair of the Jewish Studies Department at Colby College and associate director of the Center for Small Town Jewish Life, said the 1922 newspaper article calling the Beth Israel congregation "Hebrews" speaks volumes about how Jews were viewed and treated 100 years ago compared to today.



KATHLEEN O'BRIEN / THE TIMES RECORD

Children enrolled in the Beth Israel Hebrew school closed the ceremony with a prayer.

"Jews have not referred to themselves as 'Hebrews' for about 25 to 3,000 years, but the author of the story didn't think to ask," said Freidenreich. "Today, there's much more sensitivity and interest in recognizing and respecting the identities of all sorts of minority communities."

According to the Maine Jewish Museum, Jews have been living in Maine for 200 years. The first Jewish family arrived in Bath in 1886. By the early 1900s, the city's Jewish population grew to include a wave of settlers, many of whom came to work as peddlers.

The Beth Israel synagogue was founded on Jan. 29, 1922 by eastern European immigrants,

many of whom had fled persecution and found they were welcomed by the Bath community, according to Weinberg.

Before Beth Israel was built, Bath's Jewish families would travel to Portland to attend religious services and find kosher food until Bath had enough Jewish families to warrant their own house of worship according to Dorice Povich Mensh.

After gathering in borrowed spaces around town, Weinberg told the story of how Jews in Bath scraped together money, took out a loan and gathered donations from the community to buy property in Bath, then build the synagogue. Weinberg spoke of the synagogue's first days after it opened,

even though the building wasn't entirely finished, when the congregation didn't have chairs, and there was one small wood stove inside to keep them warm.

"Today we honor our founders for having the will and determination to create this space for us to gather as a Jewish community," said Weinberg. "We're also here to honor each and every one of you. You make this a place of faith, community, and love for all and we hope we're here for another 100 years."

Congregation member Rachel Connelly, spoke at the synagogue doors of the "chutzpah and humility" the original founders had to create the synagogue with the few resources they had. "They had the chutz-

pah to walk down Washington Avenue — 250 people in 1922," said Connelly. "Antisemitism was raging in the United States, and it was raging in Bath too despite the welcome. They did not just open the door, walk in and pretend they weren't there. They walked down Washington and said, 'We're here, we're part of you.' That's chutzpah."

Connelly said the synagogue is in the midst of a \$1 million centennial campaign to fund and maintain the synagogue for another 100 years, which has already raised \$650,000 in pledges and donations.

When Beth Israel was founded in 1922, Bath had an estimated Jewish population of just under 100, according to

the Maine Jewish Museum. By the early 2000s, Bath's Jewish population had risen to about 400.

Beth Israel is one of the state's 15 remaining Jewish congregations, though Maine used to have double that number, according to the Maine Jewish Museum. The Beth Israel congregation has about 100 members — individuals and families — scattered around the Midcoast from Yarmouth to Damariscotta, according to Weinberg.

David Freidenreich, chair of the Jewish Studies Department at Colby College and associate director of the Center for Small Town Jewish Life, said he believes Beth Israel is "thriving in ways that it often wasn't during its 100-year history" because it has both grown in population and integrated into the larger Maine population.

Isaac Ensel, a member of the Beth Israel Congregation, told a story of how his neighbor, who brings him homemade cookies every Saturday, began decorating cookies with blue and white candies instead of red and green during the holidays after seeing Hanukkah lights in Ensel's windows.

"This reflects the respectful coexistence of our community," said Ensel. "He made sure he was understanding our way of life, but it never made us different from each another. This is how our congregation was born. Although it was different, people accepted such diversity 100 years ago. This is why this community is special."

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Conceptis Sudoku Puzzle answer

9x9 grid containing the numerical solution to a Conceptis Sudoku puzzle.

Answer to puzzle from Calendar Page

Chemicals

From Page A1

to send some of its trickier samples to Canada for testing.

Absolute has been in business for almost 30 years, but it didn't open its PFAS testing division

until two years ago — partly due to increased demand associated with growing public awareness of the chemicals, but also because PFAS testing has uniquely high start-up costs, according to partner Cliff Chase.

Forever chemicals are found in most industrial settings, Chase said, even

within the hoses, casings and linings of most traditional water testing equipment. To avoid cross-contamination, these parts must be replaced with PFAS-free components, and the equipment used only for PFAS testing.

Customers must also take steps to avoid cross-contamination by com-

ing into contact with other sources of PFAS, like waterproof jackets or fast-food wrappers, when collecting the tap water sample they either ship, or often drive, to the Portsmouth lab for testing, Chase said.

Residential PFAS testing with Absolute costs \$250 and usually has a

one- or two-week turnaround time.

DEP will brief the Maine Legislature's environment committee on the latest PFAS developments Monday.

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