Researcher/Impacted Producer Connections

The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) will facilitate the connection of researchers with agricultural producers (producers) impacted by per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on their property. DACF does not guarantee that a connection will be made; it is up to the producers to respond to requests submitted by researchers.

To be considered for connection to agricultural producers, researchers should submit an application, including this request form, a research proposal (see pg. 5), curriculum vitae, and – if the applicant is a student – a letter of support from the student's academic advisor. Please send the application to the DACF PFAS Fund at PFASFund.DACF@maine.gov.

Completed requests will be screened by the PFAS Fund for 1) scientific merit and potential benefit to Maine agricultural producers and 2) farmer protection - defined as follows:

Scientific merit and potential benefit to Maine agricultural producers:

- Access to the DACF researcher/impacted producer program is limited to researchers who are pursuing research relevant to DACF's efforts to understand and manage PFAS in agricultural settings.
    - The research goals should align with established research priorities and have potential benefit to farmers in Maine impacted by PFAS.
    - The research proposal should show that the researcher has clear research questions, expertise in the research field, knowledge of the scientific literature related to their research questions, and that the proposed methods will answer the research questions.
- A researcher can be an individual or a team from an academic, private, public, or business entity, with the following stipulations:
    - Proposals that are essentially business product development or marketing will not be evaluated.
    - The researcher or researcher-affiliated group must have an established research record as documented via the submission of curriculum vitae and/or published works. Independent research proposals from student researchers should have a letter of support (or similar) from their academic advisor.
    - The research entity should be primarily focused on agricultural research or agricultural business.
- The funding source or potential funding source should be disclosed, and the researcher should be clear whether funding is in hand or if they are in the process of applying for it.

- The requested project should be realistic and commensurate with the resources at the requested property.

Farmer Protection:

- The compensation for the farmer should be appropriate for what is being asked. This is especially important for for-profit businesses.
- Any data collected will be shared with the farmer, and the identity of farmer/location of the farm will not be disclosed without their consent.
- The project should have the potential to provide direct benefits, or significant indirect benefits, to the farmer.
- If the project includes farmers collecting samples or other involvement, proper training and health and safety (e.g. exposure) should be considered.
- All regulatory or potential future regulations must be adhered to (e.g. moving waste across state lines)
- Any projects that propose the addition of PFAS to on-farm agricultural systems will not be shared with farmers.

Approved requests will be shared with producers who have indicated to DACF that they are open to hosting research. Producers often receive multiple requests for research connections and may not have the capacity or interest in hosting research at the time a request is sent.

By sending this form to producers who have indicated that they are open to hosting research, the DACF does not endorse or claim any connection to the research described on this form.

In the event of a connection, it is suggested that farmers and researchers enter into a contractual agreement, an example of which is available in the DACF PFAS Fund's PFAS Response Kit, Section IX.

The DACF expects that any PFAS research happening within the State of Maine follows all local, state and federal laws, including, but not limited to, restrictions applicable to the movement and/or appropriate disposal of any PFAS impacted material into or out of the state, labor laws, and animal welfare.

Please let the DACF PFAS Fund know if a successful match is made by emailing the DACF PFAS Fund, at PFASFund.DACF@maine.gov.

Researcher/Impacted Producer Connection Request Form

Name: _____

Institution/Business: _____

Department/Title: _____

Email address: _____

Phone number: _____

Research Project Name: _____

Project Funding Source: _____

Expected Project Start Date: _____

Expected End Date: _____

Please provide a brief description of your research organization, business, or background:

Describe your research goals and any relevant previous work associated with this project:

Are there any **required** aspects or features of the host site/farm? Examples include lactating dairy animals, a plot of land, or a specific volume of soil with PFAS contamination above a certain threshold.

Are there other things the agricultural producer would ideally provide? Examples include time, approximate space of plot, a specified quantity of soil, livestock, equipment, sampling assistance, monitoring:

What will you provide the agricultural producer in exchange for hosting your research or working with your team? Compensation for agricultural providers who host research is not required, but the DACF suggests considering the time and material demands upon host farms.

Are there any potential risks to the farm or agricultural producer from this research project?

Will any PFAS-contaminated waste be generated by this research project, and if so, what would be the plan for this waste (e.g., left on site, destruction on site, removal)?

What is the intended final use of the data that will result from this partnership, and will it be shared with the agricultural producer?

Research Proposal

In addition to the Research/Impacted Producer Connection Request Form, applications should include:

- a research proposal
- documentation of an established research record such as a curriculum vitae or a list of published works
- if the applicant is a student researcher proposing independent research, a letter of support from their academic advisor

If preparing a new document, applicants are encouraged to limit their research proposal to five pages, written for a scientifically literate reader.

Applicants may submit a research proposal created for another purpose (such an application for funding). If submitting a document created for another purpose, attachments may be included to add any missing components.

Proposals should include the following elements.

- The central research question, methods, and primary expected outcomes
- The relevance of the research results to Maine agricultural producers
- A brief summary of the literature relevant to this research question
- Who will carry out the research, their qualifications, and their experience and training in working with PFAS
- Documentation of funding or potential funding to carry out the project
- Site requirements – timing (approximate date range of use, anticipated hours of access, and duration of the project), amount of space or soil, whether PFAS contamination above a particular threshold is needed, where on the site the project will be conducted (if known), any anticipated infrastructure needs, and a sampling plan (if applicable)
- Plans for any changes to the site or soil amendments
- Quality assurance - measures that will be taken to ensure that data or conclusions produced are scientifically valid and reliable
- The project timeline
- Evidence of safety training as applicable
- Plan for distributing the research results.
    - (Note the requirement to provide DACF with publications resulting from the project, as described on page 2)
- If the project involves human subjects or live-animal research, the following must be included as attachments:
    - Institutional Review Board approval if the project involves human subjects
    - Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) Inspection and animal welfare documentation if the project includes live animal research