

Maine man sues paper mill over levels of ‘forever chemicals’

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By The Associated Press

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Nathan Saunders of Fairfield filed the lawsuit Friday against Boston-based Sappi North America. The lawsuit concerns per- and polyfluoroalkyl compounds, which are also called PFAS and are sometimes referred to as “forever chemicals.”

The lawsuit makes the claim that the chemicals in water sources in Somerset County came from biosolids from the mill’s wastewater treatment

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plant, the Morning Sentinel reported. An attorney for Saunders, Brian Mahany, told the Sentinel that the damages “will be in the tens of millions of dollars.” He said homeowners have suffered from elevated levels of PFAS in their water.

Sappi North America told the Morning Sentinel it “strongly disputes” the allegations. The company touted its record of environmental stewardship.

State officials have found dozens of wells in Fairfield had higher levels of the compounds than the federal limit.

The Maine Department of Environmental Protection does not have enough information at the moment to identify parties that are responsible for elevated PFAS levels, said David Madore, the department's acting deputy commissioner. The department has "remained focused on providing safe drinking water," he said.

The lawsuit is a class action lawsuit and is open to residents of Somerset County, Saunders' lawyer said. The chemicals don't break down easily in the environment, and have been linked to human health problems in some scientific studies. ■