

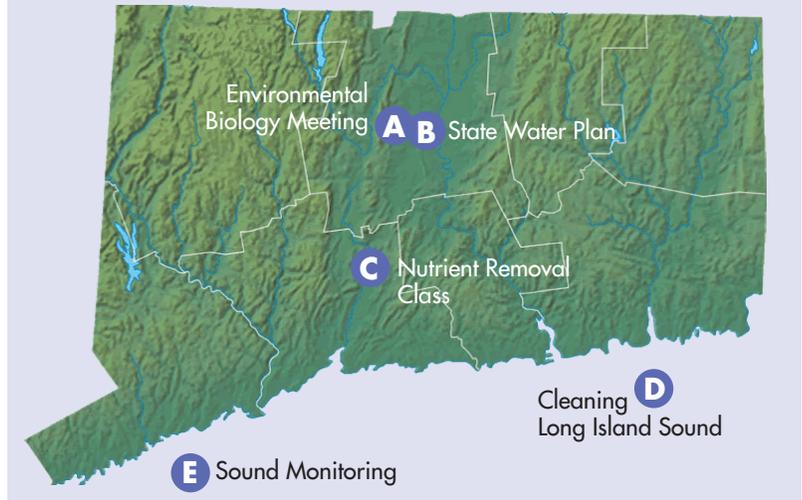
Since 1947, Connecticut has coordinated its water-protection efforts with neighboring states through its membership in the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission. Congress chartered NEIWPC in that year. Since then, the Commission has added states, staff, and support for place-based programs such as the Long Island Sound Study.

In the Northeast, watersheds cross many political borders. The Connecticut River draws its waters from many states and the Province of Quebec. NEIWPC has long been the means by which its member states pull together to protect shared water resources.

NEIWPC coordinates forums and events that encourage cooperation among the states, develops resources that foster progress on water issues, represents the region in matters of federal policy, trains environmental professionals, manages programs and grants, initiates and oversees scientific research, educates the public, and provides overall leadership in water management and protection.

Apart from the Commission's formal meetings, perhaps no single part of NEIWPC embodies better this mission of regional collaboration and state-federal engagement than the Commission's nineteen active workgroups on such critical topics as harmful algal blooms, climate change, underground storage tanks, and non-point source pollution. At meetings, typically twice annually, the state-agency staff members who are tasked with these issues sit down with their peers from other states in the region and with federal officials, NEIWPC staff members, and other practitioners to grapple with the ongoing and latest issues and trends in the field.

The agency is led by its seven member states (the six New England states and New York). State governors each appoint five of the Commission's thirty-five members. Connecticut's delegation comprises the heads of the state's environmental and public-health agencies supplemented by as many as three experienced individuals, providing Connecticut with expert representation. As a member state, Connecticut appropriates funds to support the Commission's work; the Commission sets state dues every five years. In fiscal 2017 the combined contribution from our states was \$153,833 or 0.6 percent of the total monies directed to NEIWPC during the year (\$25,949,094). Most of the Commission's funding comes from federal grants, state contracts, and fees generated by our training programs, but the dues paid by states are indispensable to NEIWPC's ability to



serve Connecticut and the region. Below are just a few of the achievements in 2017 that illustrate the significant return on Connecticut's contribution to NEIWPC.

2017 Selected Highlights: Connecticut

A Hartford was the location for the annual conference of the New England Association of Environmental Biologists. NEIWPC and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection co-coordinated the late-winter conference, which pertained to biological aspects of the region's aquatic environments. Talks and posters addressed a wide array of topics, including invasive aquatic plants and water-chemistry suitability for coldwater fisheries. The day before the conference, a professor of Aquatic Biology from Southern Connecticut State University led a full-day workshop on aquatic insects commonly used to monitor ecosystem integrity. The conference was held on March 14-16.

B The multi-year process of creating a Connecticut State Water Plan was nearing its final phase at the end of fiscal 2017.

In 2014, the Legislature called for a statewide water plan that would address the quality and quantity of water for drinking, ecology, recreation, industry, agriculture, energy, and wastewater assimilation. NEIWPC's role has been to procure and oversee an engineering consultant tasked with developing the plan. In this capacity, NEIWPC advised the Connecticut Water Planning Council, the agency charged with delivering the plan.

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Through eleven meetings and workshops around the state in fiscal 2017, the engineering consultants engaged representatives of a variety of water interests and the public in the development of the plan. The Connecticut Water Planning Council released a draft version of the State Water Plan on July 20 for further review and comment. At the end of fiscal 2017, the consultants were preparing for the last round of public meetings about the plan, with the goal of submitting a final report to the General Assembly in January of 2018.

C The Meriden Water Pollution Control Facility was the setting for “Hands-On Wastewater Nutrient Removal” featuring process control simulators. The class, which was held on April 27, included training using a cutting edge technology to simulate multiple process control scenarios.

Operators who took the class, the first of its kind to be offered by NEIWPC, found it to be highly valuable. Reviews were favorable with many participants leaving the course eager to apply their knowledge at their respective treatment plants.

NEIWPC provides training to wastewater and drinking water professionals in its member states and to individuals aspiring to join the wastewater field. For 2017, NEIWPC delivered eleven classes to 396 participants in the state of Connecticut. These participants were awarded a total of 4,410 credit hours.

Across the Northeast, NEIWPC offered 159 classes to 2,782 participants. The training program awarded a total of 27,310 credit hours to students in fiscal 2017.

D Connecticut and its cities and towns reached a milestone in 2017 with the completion of wastewater projects to meet regional limits on nitrogen discharged into the Long Island Sound. The improvements and additions at wastewater treatment plants cost hundreds of millions of dollars. They satisfy permits designed to meet nitrogen targets established in 2000.

The goals are included in a December 2000 total maximum daily load analysis for dissolved oxygen in the Sound, which also called for reductions in nonpoint-source pollution such as urban stormwater runoff.

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Nutrients in runoff and sewage-plant discharge feed the biological processes that deplete dissolved oxygen in the Sound and contribute to other water-quality impacts such as loss of eelgrass. Commission staff at the Long Island Sound Study (LISS) support nitrogen reduction through outreach about the Long Island Sound Nitrogen Reduction Strategy, an EPA project to establish nitrogen thresholds and allowable loads. LISS operates the web pages that serve as the public face of the strategy by hosting information and documents and by providing a portal for public comments. A NEIWPC employee participates in the strategy’s Technical Stakeholder Group.

The wastewater improvements and similar fixes in Connecticut and New York are designed to decrease the annual discharge of nitrogen to the Sound by 23,344 tons per year. A nonpoint-source-reduction goal of 478 tons per year remains partially unmet, and the sound faces other water-quality

challenges. The improvements include construction of new structures at some wastewater plants to house tanks for a new chemical or biological phase in the treatment process.

The construction program is paid for in part with grants and loans from the federal Clean Water State Revolving Fund and with state monies, with most of the costs ultimately recouped through water rates.

E The issue of greatest environmental concern in the Long Island Sound is hypoxia, or low dissolved oxygen. This condition is caused by the decay of algae or plankton blooms that are fed by excess nutrients, chiefly nitrogen, from human activity. Hypoxia is associated with habitat impairment; at its most extreme, hypoxia leads to mass fish die-offs.

Monitoring of oxygen levels in the Sound by Connecticut’s Department of Energy and Environmental Protection is supplemented by monitoring in the far western Sound by the Interstate Environmental Commission (IEC), currently a NEIWPC program. The two agencies last year published a review of the 2016 hypoxia season. Both monitoring programs also measure other parameters of estuarine health.

In addition to its monitoring program, the IEC operates a lab on Staten Island and performs discharge inspections, sometimes on short notice, of municipal and industrial facilities. NEIWPC’s IEC staff inspected thirteen municipal and eleven industrial wastewater plants in Connecticut in fiscal 2017, collecting samples to test for such parameters as pH, temperature, residual chlorine, fecal coliform, metals, and nutrients. The staff also performed one storm-system inspection in Stratford.

For the past five years, NEIWPC has provided an institutional home for IEC while it rebuilds its own organizational capacity. By the end of fiscal 2017, the IEC was preparing to resume its traditional role as an autonomous interstate commission. NEIWPC is pleased to have been able to assist the IEC and the states it serves.

A Voice for Connecticut

When the EPA announced plans to close its regional laboratory in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, the Commission responded with a unified statement of opposition from all seven member states. The Commission, in its comments, cited “financial consequences for the New England states and delay [in] the rapid response needed to safeguard human health and the environment in the region.” The ability of the lab’s mobile facilities to travel to any New England location within five hours is especially important in emergencies.

NEIWPC provides a united voice for its compact states on national and regional matters. In fiscal 2017, in addition to the issue of the Chelmsford lab, the Commission wrote comments about plans by the U.S. EPA and Army Corps of Engineers to scrap the Clean Water Rule and to restrict the scope of enforcement of the Clean Water Act. NEIWPC also commented on the EPA’s draft field-based methods for developing aquatic-life criteria for specific conductivity, a measure of salinity.

The Commission cannot guarantee that the views of the states will prevail in these and other matters. However, the states are stronger when we all speak together.