



Ragged Lake

WORKING FOR OUR REGION

# Working for Maine

January 2018

Since 1955, Maine has coordinated its water-protection efforts with other states in the region through its membership in the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission. Starting in 1947, when Congress chartered NEIWPCC, the Commission has added member states, professional staff, and training programs. It has coordinated training for Maine’s environmental professionals since 1985.

In the Northeast, where watersheds cross many political borders, cooperation on water issues is a necessity. NEIWPCC has long been the means by which its member states pull together to protect their water resources. Many of the Commission’s activities span several states, or address problems and needs that all the states share.

NEIWPCC 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.

Each year, NEIWPCC coordinates, funds, and assists dozens of research efforts useful to its member states. This includes field research performed by NEIWPCC staff, research coordinated by NEIWPCC but performed by others, and research performed by the recipients of grants awarded or administered by NEIWPCC. Even very local research may have regional implications.

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. Maine’s delegation comprises the heads of the state’s environmental and public-health agencies supplemented by three highly experienced individuals from inside and outside state government, providing Maine with diverse expert representation. As a member state, Maine 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 NEIWPCC during the year (\$25,949,094). While the majority of the Commission’s funding, therefore, comes from other sources—primarily federal grants, state contracts, and fees generated by our training and certification programs—the dues paid by states are indispensable to NEIWPCC’s ability to serve Maine and the other member



states. The following highlights are just a few of the achievements in 2017 that illustrate the significant return on Maine’s contribution to NEIWPCC.

## 2017 Selected Highlights: Maine

**A** To reach all ends of Maine, NEIWPCC’s Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee organizes a biennial North Country Convention in Presque Isle. This two-day educational conference and trade show is the “must-attend” event for environmental professionals in “the County.” It is designed to provide a range of services and training opportunities to wastewater professionals in the North Country.

Last year’s event, held on April 26 and 27, drew more than 150 attendees from the far corners of the state. The lures were educational and networking opportunities for environmental professionals who have difficulty traveling to training opportunities in the southern part of the state. In addition to the keynote address by Maine’s Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection, Paul Mercer, participants were able to select from fourteen classes covering all aspects of wastewater training.

Many participants choose this event to earn up to twelve of the eighteen training hours required to renew their wastewater operator license. This year’s training classes included a math review,

*continued on reverse side*

multiple courses in microbiology, supervisory controls and data acquisition, laboratory ethics, maintenance plans, pumps, drives, community collaboration, and public engagement. Three courses in microbiology (wastewater bacteria and pathogens, process control, and odor production, prevention and control) were taught by the internationally recognized microbiologist, Michael Gerardi.

First offered in 1990, the North Country Convention today is held in odd-numbered years. The Maine Water Environment Association, Maine Water Utilities Association, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services helped to make this year's North Country Convention a success.

**B** A small team of NEIWPCC employees works with and at the state's Department of Health and Human Services' Drinking Water Program. In fiscal 2017, the staff members continued to help develop compliance requirements, including sampling schedules, for water systems. They also tracked compliance-related information from water systems and labs, such as public notifications and the results of sampling. At the end of each compliance period, this team sent violation notices to suppliers as needed. In addition, the team continued to provide database and information-technology support as well as public outreach for the Drinking Water Program.

**C** On September 20, JETCC's Management Candidate School graduated its Class of 2017. The rigorous eleven-month curriculum has been preparing new candidates to step into management positions each year since 2009. Coursework includes management and administration, personnel and budget management, the reading and interpretation of blueprints, and best practices for communicating with regulatory agencies, coworkers, supervisors, and subordinates. The program follows a popular cohort model, in which candidates take classes and graduate together.

This year's graduation ceremony, with fourteen men and five women, took place during the Maine Water Environment Association's annual convention at Sunday River in Newry.

Alumni of the management school now total 152 men and women, many of whom are realizing the benefits of the program through promotions or positions of greater responsibility. Throughout its nine-year history, the Management Candidate School (MCS) has drawn professionals from all parts of the state. JETCC strives to make the training accessible by offering the MCS in different communities each year.

At the end of the fiscal year, the tenth cohort of management candidates, which includes twenty-two men and two women, was forming up. The class of 2018 is shaping up to be largest ever.

**D** Maine's wastewater training program has long offered courses for operators at all levels. This year NEIWPCC's Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee (JETCC) tried something new. The program organized classes into a six-month, twelve-session program designed for novice to intermediate operators. The pilot program ran from January to June of 2017.

This program provided in-depth training to entry-level operators, technicians and others seeking to increase their understanding of biological wastewater treatment concepts. The new school uses the same cohort model that has proved popular

and durable for Maine's management training. In the program, a group of students progresses through a series of classes together. For its inaugural year, twenty-one students participated, graduating from the program in June. The traditional option of working independently to choose individual classes to build a foundation in industry topics is still available.

The unified introductory program included classes on collection systems, clarifiers, nutrient removal, lab, and hands-on testing. Classes met twice a month. The format enabled participants to cover some material not otherwise available via individual courses. While most classes occurred at Portland Water District's large Portland facilities, tours and classes also took place in Lewiston, Saco, and Kennebunk as well as at PWD locations in Westbrook and Cape Elizabeth.

**E** On a seasonally brisk blue-sky day in February, 2017, twenty-one wastewater operators attended an interactive training session on "PVC Valves, Connections, and Joining" at the Kennebunkport Fire Station. The class was taught by long-time and popular JETCC instructor, Charlie Jennings, who has since retired from teaching.

The fast-paced interactive class covered chemical resistance issues, safety and proper preparation, and handling of PVC and chlorinated PVC. Participants also reviewed basic chemistry, highlighting the effects on PVC of sodium hypochlorite as it is used in water and wastewater treatment. Due to its popularity and practical applications, this class was also offered earlier in the month in Waterville and in April during the North Country Convention.

Since 1985, wastewater operator training in the state of Maine has been provided by the Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee (JETCC). JETCC is the product of an agreement between NEIWPCC and the Maine Department of Environment Protection. Its role is to administer a wastewater and drinking water training program serving all parts of Maine. This comprehensive training program provides those seeking to enter the field or maintain their certifications with the means to fulfill their training requirements.

Across the Northeast, NEIWPCC offered 159 classes in fiscal 2017 to 2,782 participants. The training program awarded 27,310 credit hours to students. Of that student body, 791 participants attended 45 JETCC training classes—be they traditional one-day classes (22) or through the Management Candidate School (11) or the new Wastewater Operator School (12). Twenty students also participated in NEIWPCC's Operations & Management of Wastewater Collection Systems class held in November, 2016, at the Portland Water District. More than 7,000 training credit hours were awarded to the participants of Maine classes.

**F** The staff at NEIWPCC's South Portland office works diligently to process and maintain all records and correspondence related to the certification and recertification of wastewater treatment operators in Maine. In fiscal 2017, the staff recertified 268 applicants, and certified 32 for the first time. Maine's certified wastewater operators must renew by March 1 every two years. Renewal requirements for operators include eighteen contact hours of continuing education over the two-year window. There were 802 licensed operators in 2017, including 88 who are licensed as inactive.