

Since 1947, Massachusetts has coordinated its water-protection efforts with neighboring states through its membership in the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission.

In the Northeast, watersheds cross many political borders. NEIWPCC has long been the means by which its member states pull together to protect their water resources. NEIWPCC convenes water quality professionals to collaborate and share knowledge, conducts or funds research and water-resource-protection projects, and coordinates training for wastewater and other water professionals. NEIWPCC supports place-based education and outreach programs and represents the interests of member states to federal agencies and other organizations.

The Commission is led by its seven member states—the six New England states and New York. Many of NEIWPCC’s activities span several states, or address problems and needs that all the states share.

As a member state, Massachusetts appropriates funds to support NEIWPCC’s work. Every five years the Commission sets state dues. In fiscal 2019 (October 2018 through September 2019), the combined contribution from its states was \$160,053, or 0.4 percent of the total monies directed to NEIWPCC during the fiscal year (\$37,181,846). While the majority of the Commission’s funding, therefore, comes from other sources—primarily federal grants, state contracts, and fees generated by its training and certification programs—the dues paid by states are indispensable to NEIWPCC’s ability to serve Massachusetts and its other member states.

The following are just a few highlights from fiscal 2019 that illustrate the significant return on Massachusetts’s contribution to NEIWPCC.

2019 Selected Highlights: Massachusetts

A Nineteen wastewater professionals attended a training in Westfield this past June on the “Operation and Maintenance of Wastewater Collection Systems.” Collection systems—the network of sewer lines that convey wastewater to municipal treatment plants—require proper care and management to prevent sewer overflows, groundwater contamination, and the spread of disease. The Westfield Department of Public Works contracted with NEIWPCC to offer this three-day training, which included



an optional exam portion for professionals to gain certification in collection systems operation through the New England Water Environment Association.

For more than fifty years, NEIWPCC has offered wastewater training to environmental professionals in the Northeast. This past fiscal year, NEIWPCC offered 110 classes, many over multiple days, ranging from basic skills to specialized learning opportunities. Overall, class enrollments totaled 2,443, with 29,910 total training contact hours (TCHs) awarded. Thirty-two of those trainings were held in Massachusetts, totaling 88 training days, 657 participants, and 10,093 TCHs. Training locations included Amherst, Lakeville, Lowell, Millbury, New Bedford, North Chelmsford, Stockbridge, and Worcester.

In early spring, NEIWPCC also kicked off its 2019/2020 Massachusetts wastewater management training program. The program meets monthly for a year, offering a mixture of classes on technical topics and leadership skills to wastewater professionals in the state seeking to advance their careers. NEIWPCC partners with the Massachusetts DEP and the Massachusetts Water Pollution Control Association to deliver the program.

In addition to training, NEIWPCC is responsible for the wastewater certification and renewal program in Massachusetts, through an agreement with the Commonwealth. Massachusetts operators must renew their licenses by December 31 of odd-numbered years; active operators are required to earn twenty TCHs during that period. NEIWPCC administers renewals for the five thousand or so operators in the state, and every year administers certifications for a few hundred new operators. NEIWPCC maintains a list of certified Massachusetts operators on its website.

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B On a horse ranch in Southamptton on May 14, about forty engineers and health officials met for a Massachusetts Title 5 Soil Evaluator Certification class. Rotating between stations spread across the farm, they scraped soil samples from freshly excavated test pits and identified soil types using sight and touch. This day was one out of an eight-session course that NEIWPCC runs twice a year, to train and certify environmental and health professionals who determine a site's suitability for septic system installation.

Since 2004, NEIWPCC has coordinated the state's Title 5 training and certification programs on behalf of the Massachusetts DEP. The programs train and certify designers, engineers, members of local boards of health, and others to make decisions regarding onsite septic systems in accordance with Title 5 of Massachusetts law. In 2019, NEIWPCC entered into another five-year contract with the state to continue running these programs.

In total for the fiscal year, NEIWPCC provided classes, seminars, field sessions, and examination days towards Title 5 training for more than two hundred individuals. This includes the soil evaluator certification course, a system inspector certification course, a public health inspector training, and a technical seminar.

Title 5 soil evaluators and system inspectors must renew their certifications every three years. This fiscal year, NEIWPCC renewed certification for 920 soil evaluators and 886 system inspectors. In addition, 82 and 71 candidates became newly certified as evaluators and inspectors, respectively. The program awarded 345 training contact hours to 72 participants who attended soil evaluator refresher training.

C Rapid development and global warming are two trends identified in a recent study of the Narragansett estuary. This year, the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP) took these and other challenges on the road, holding workshops with partners in Fall River and Worcester. NEIWPCC is the institutional host of the NBEP, providing managerial and other support to the Estuary Program's staff and projects.

The NBEP's landmark *State of the Narragansett Bay and its Watershed* technical report is having an impact as practitioners and activists use it to guide their work to protect the bi-state watershed. Sixty percent of the watershed is in Massachusetts.

The Fall River event celebrated decades of progress in the Taunton watershed and the encompassing Narragansett Bay watershed, in which the forty-mile Taunton River is the single greatest freshwater source.

The Worcester event focused on the challenges and successes in the Blackstone River watershed, and featured keynote remarks from Martin Suuberg, Commissioner of the Massachusetts DEP, and Rhode Island DEM Director Janet Coit.

D Eight inner-city teenagers from Lowell and Lawrence spent their summer vacations learning about the environment, hiking through wooded wetlands, touring freshwater bodies on boats, farming, and working at wastewater and drinking water plants.

For almost thirty years, NEIWPCC's Youth and the Environment Program has provided summer employment to inner-city Lowell high-schoolers at the city's wastewater treatment facility. This year, NEIWPCC also ran the program in Lawrence for

Massachusetts Commissioners

The governors of the seven member states each appoint five of the Commission's thirty-five members. The heads of the states' environmental agencies or their representatives comprise NEIWPCC's executive committee. Four other highly experienced individuals make up the rest of Massachusetts's delegation on the Commission, including a representative for the head of the state's health department.

Massachusetts Commissioners at the start of 2020:

Kathleen Baskin, representing Martin Suuberg • Jana Ferguson, representing Monica Bharel • Paul Hogan • John Sullivan • F. Adam Yanulis

the first time.

The goal of the programs is to expose these teens to environmental careers. In Lowell, four high-schoolers shadowed operators, lab technicians, and other employees at the Lowell Regional Wastewater Utility. They also completed maintenance tasks like weeding or hosing down settling tanks. In Lawrence, four students split their time between the Greater Lawrence Sanitary District in North Andover and Lawrence's drinking-water plant. On top of their work at the treatment plants, the high-schoolers learned about environmental issues through hands-on lessons and field trips, taught and coordinated by college interns working at NEIWPCC.

The Commission collaborated with summer youth employment programs in each city, which hired and payed the teens. The programs are run in partnership with EPA Region 1. Both are slated to run again in July 2020.

E In June 2019, NEIWPCC's five years of support for the Massachusetts DEP's drinking water programs reached its anticipated end. During the contract, NEIWPCC staff members managed databases, provided technical and administrative assistance, and updated website content for various programs that track, enforce, and educate about drinking water quality in Massachusetts. One initiative they supported helped schools and childcare facilities test for and manage lead and copper contamination.

F A team of four scientists waded into the Shingle Island River in Dartmouth on August 28 to sample macroinvertebrates and assess the health of the river habitat. In total, scientists surveyed fifty-four non-tidal streams and rivers in Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts.

By comparing the health of different species of such animals as mayflies, dragonflies, and slugs with the observed health of each habitat, this project will create an index of biotic integrity for the region. This index will allow state agencies and others to infer stream health by sampling macroinvertebrates alone.

With sampling completed in fiscal 2019, this project has entered its analysis phase. It is being managed by NEIWPCC with technical support from the Massachusetts DEP and funding from the EPA's Southeastern New England Program.