

**S**ince 1955, Maine 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. In Maine, NEIWPCC has coordinated training and certification for environmental professionals since 1985.

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, Maine 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 Maine and its other member states.

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

## 2019 Selected Highlights: Maine

**A** Where ice, cold, and extreme weather are factors, water and wastewater treatment facilities need extra care and preventive maintenance. Early in the fiscal year, thirty-five wastewater and drinking water professionals attended a training at the Mars Hill Fire Station to learn about best practices for “Facility Operations in Cold Climates.” Participants praised the class for offering helpful tips for treatment in winter months and for the opportunity to network with other operators.

Through a contract with the Maine DEP, NEIWPCC staff members have run the Joint Environmental Training Coordinating



Committee (JETCC) office in Maine since 1985. Wastewater, drinking water, and other environmental professionals in the state receive training and accreditation through JETCC. NEIWPCC also offers some classes in Maine through its regional training program that services all the New England states and New York. Classes, some multi-day, range from basic skills to specialized learning opportunities and are held at various locations across the state.

In Maine during the fiscal year, NEIWPCC held twenty-seven classes through JETCC and four through its regional program, totaling fifty training days, 921 participants, and 7,266 training contact hours (TCHs). In all across the Northeast, NEIWPCC offered 110 classes to 2,443 environmental professionals, with 29,910 TCHs awarded.

Through JETCC, NEIWPCC also administers Maine’s Wastewater Operator Certification program. Certified Maine operators must renew their license every two years and receive 18 TCHs during that period. In fiscal 2019, NEIWPCC’s JETCC staff certified 39 new operators, 5 via reciprocity, and recertified 283 operators.

**B** To reach all ends of Maine, every two years JETCC runs the North Country Convention in Presque Isle. In April 2019,

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wastewater and drinking water operators, and students of the professions, made the most of a new laboratory space at Northern Maine Community College.

Over the event's two days, they had the opportunity to attend up to eight sessions in the laboratory, where they could practice measuring pH, chlorine, suspended solids, and other water quality parameters.

The convention included training sessions on a variety of topics, a trade show, and regulatory updates from state-agency personnel, including keynote remarks from Maine DEP Commissioner Jerry Reid.

The North Country Convention is designed to meet the training needs of environmental professionals who live and work in Maine's remote Aroostook County. Participants could opt to earn wastewater or drinking-water training credits for most sessions. More than 185 people participated in the event, and a total of 1,119 training contact hours were awarded.

## Regional Events

Conferences are one way that NEIWPCC supports the work of state agencies and others working for clean water in the region. In addition to the North Country Convention in Presque Isle, NEIWPCC held several regional events that Maine environmental practitioners attended last fiscal year.

The triennial Onsite Short Course, which took place April 2019 in Connecticut, is at once a conference, a school where wastewater professionals can earn credit hours, an exhibit of the latest technology, and a celebration of the profession. The focus is on decentralized wastewater treatment. That includes septic tanks and larger-flow onsite systems at places such as schools, shopping malls, and condominiums. Participants included onsite system designers and other engineers; installers; maintenance providers; local, state, and federal regulators; wastewater operators of decentralized systems; and product manufacturers.

At the Northeast Aquatic Biologists Conference in New York, scientists and policymakers learned about research methods, monitoring programs, restoration projects, and citizen science strategies from across the region. Of the event's sixty presentations, topics included harmful algal blooms, freshwater mussel restoration, road salt pollution, fish monitoring, and macroinvertebrate assessments. Three Maine DEP scientists gave presentations.

Also in New York, NEIWPCC co-hosted a meeting of its New England Biological Assessment of Wetlands Workgroup with the group's mid-Atlantic counterpart. The Northeast was represented by wetlands professionals from Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont. These practitioners had the opportunity to draw knowledge and resources from each other and from outside their region. The event featured more than twenty presentations on wetland assessment and protection, and included field trips to local wetland reserves.

Maine environmental practitioners were also among the 150 attendees at NEIWPCC's regional conference on nonpoint source pollution in New Hampshire. Many presentations looked at the challenges posed by storms made more intense and frequent by climate change.

## Maine 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 Maine's delegation on the Commission, including a representative for the head of the state's health department.

### Maine Commissioners at the start of 2020:

Brian Kavanah, representing Gerald Reid • Nancy Beardsley, representing Jeanne Lambrew • Travis Noyes • David Van Slyke • Brian Tarbuck

**C** Each year the Maine Management Candidate School offers technical and leadership training to a group of about twenty wastewater and drinking water professionals looking to advance their careers. NEIWPCC's JETCC staff coordinates the program, which ran for its tenth consecutive year in fiscal 2019.

Management school participants met for their first class in November 2018 at the Bangor Water District facility. Over the course of the eleven-month program, classes covered a wide variety of topics—rules and regulations, engineering basics, asset management, and communication skills among them. Participants had the opportunity to earn training contact hours and network with peers from across the state. In September 2019, the group graduated from the management school during a ceremony at the Maine Water Environment Association's annual convention. There, the school's class of 2020 was also introduced.

**D** Five NEIWPCC environmental analysts in Augusta support the Maine DHHS Drinking Water Program's work to implement the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and other source water protection regulations.

One analyst helps to ensure that public water systems comply with state and federal regulations. Public water systems—defined as systems providing water to at least twenty-five people daily over sixty days out of the year—are in place in some municipalities, mobile home parks, schools, campgrounds, and factories. These systems must regularly test for bacteria and a host of other potential contaminants.

The NEIWPCC analyst serves as a rules specialist, checking that drinking water samples are meeting standards, ensuring that systems are monitoring for contaminants on the required schedule, and issuing any necessary violations. She also communicates regulatory requirements to the DWP staff and public water systems through trainings and outreach.

The same analyst helped the DWP respond to a May 2019 legislative mandate to develop rules for implementing lead testing in all Maine schools. The state legislature will review the draft rules in early 2020. Going forward, the DWP will be responsible for tracking which schools have tested for, and made efforts to mitigate, lead contamination in their tap water. The agency will also provide guidance to schools as needed.