NEIWPCC [NÕ-Ē-PĬK] is a regional commission that helps the states of the Northeast preserve and advance water quality.

**Mission**
To advance clean water in the Northeast through collaboration with, and service to, our member states.

**Vision**
Clean and sustainable water throughout the Northeast.

**Values**
Leadership • Collaboration • Education • Service • Science
This was a year for the ages. Like the rest of the world, NEIWPCC and its member states had to adapt to the myriad challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

NEIWPCC was already preparing to make some major changes by the time the coronavirus was spreading across the country. On Earth Day, NEIWPCC released a new strategic plan and a new look and feel—a project that was more than two years in the making. At the end of fiscal 2020, NEIWPCC established five program priorities for the next five years, with the aim of incorporating climate change and environmental justice across all our work.

Staff and commissioners now have new tools to guide their work and to talk about NEIWPCC’s role in the clean water field.

However, we had to test out those new guides during a year of social distancing, closed businesses and labs, remote work, public health crises, and new environmental issues. We found they held up. In fiscal 2020 we did exactly what the new strategic plan says NEIWPCC does best and made headway on our priorities and goals.

The staff continued to serve as conveners and facilitators, albeit remotely and virtually, for water quality professionals to discuss environmental and public health challenges, and for wastewater and water operators to continue to receive crucial training.

NEIWPCC responded to ongoing clean water issues on behalf of its member states, as well as to the unique challenges that arose due to the pandemic.

NEIWPCC continued to support on-the-ground research, environmental restoration projects, and education and outreach efforts across the Northeast, especially as those programs adapted to the circumstances of the year.

As more Americans get COVID-19 vaccinations, more businesses reopen, and the weather grows warmer, many things will go back to the way they were before the pandemic. But we’ve learned a lot from the experiences of 2020 that we will take with us into the future. I look forward to seeing how NEIWPCC will continue to adapt in order to meet the needs of the region.

Mark Klotz, Chair
WHERE WE SERVED

We conduct research into water-related topics, monitor environmental factors, and fund such work by others.

We implement and fund environmental restoration and other on-the-ground projects. And we fund and/or staff programs that engage the public through events, exhibits, web and print publications, and other outreach activities.

While our operations are based out of Lowell, Massachusetts, we work with program partners and state environmental programs across the Northeast, providing staff and other support, and connecting them to others working for clean water in the region.

A team of NEIWPCC analysts helps execute New York’s source water assessment and protection program, a joint initiative between the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and Department of Health (NYSDOH).

The NYSDEC/NYSDOH team created a guidance document to help municipalities develop and update their source water assessment and protection plans.

Ashley Inserillo (NYSDOH) received NEIWPCC’s 2020 Annual Staff Achievement Award. Her colleagues recognized her as a strong leader and collaborator, who went above and beyond to form connections to further New York’s drinking water protection efforts.

Two NEIWPCC employees provide business operations support to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s Division of Water.

NEIWPCC employs independent environmental monitors who support New York City’s combined sewer overflow abatement projects.

In fiscal 2020, NEIWPCC executed 129 new agreements to fund research, monitoring, assessment, outreach, and other environmental initiatives around the region, totaling $6,697,760.

STRATEGIC GOAL:
Translate scientific research into environmental applications.

The Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee (JETCC), a project of NEIWPCC’s South Portland satellite office, provides training for wastewater and drinking water operators in Maine.

NEIWPCC analysts support the Maine Department of Health and Human Services’ Drinking Water Program. The analysts provided guidance for schools and daycares that must test for lead and copper in their drinking water.
The Hudson River Estuary Program (HREP) and the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve (HRNERR) work together to protect their estuary. The Estuary Program helps people enjoy, protect, and revitalize the Hudson River and its valley. The Reserve emphasizes education, outreach, training, stewardship, and restoration.

The 17th Annual “Day in the Life of the Hudson and Harbor” took place in October 2019. NEIWPCC staff at our Hudson program partners supported the effort that brings thousands of students from New York Harbor to Troy and beyond to participate in collecting scientific information to create snapshots of the river at dozens of locations. Their data was shared online so communities can better understand how their piece of the river fits in the larger Hudson estuary ecosystem.

In the spring, our staff and others who work for the Hudson programs had to count the migration of juvenile American eels in the watershed, without their usual team of student and citizen scientists. They live-streamed the eel count on the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s Facebook page. The staff caught more than 400,000 eels this year, more than any other since the program began in 2008.

“Every place is a puzzle. Working with partners and communities to figure out how environmental resource management fits in with cultural history and priorities for the future is the most challenging and satisfying part of my work. In the past year my work managing shoreline design projects in the cities of Kingston and Piermont and construction of a shoreline/access location in the Town of Stuyvesant have been particularly rewarding. I work with great people at the DEC, NEIWPCC, and in my community—I don’t know how it gets better than that!”

— Dan Miller (HREP), 20 years with NEIWPCC

In lieu of visiting classrooms in 2020, NEIWPCC’s Hudson River staff developed virtual lesson plans and videos that teachers could use to educate their students about the estuary.

The Long Island Sound Study (LISS) and its local and state partners protect and improve the health of the Long Island Sound. LISS’s management plan for the estuary includes research, monitoring, and public education and outreach.

Environmental Analyst Nelle D’Aversa used a geographic information systems program to create an interactive map that can help identify the areas in Long Island Sound most suitable for aquaculture—the goal being to promote shellfish and seaweed farming to remove nutrient pollution from the Sound.

Communications Coordinator Robert Burg helped update the Long Island Sound Study’s website with a fresh design and easier navigation. The site highlights the importance of the Sound and the efforts of LISS and its partners to restore and protect this estuary. Robert spent over a year guiding the re-design, updating and creating content, and working through technical issues during the website transition.
The Peconic Estuary Partnership (PEP) promotes strong partnerships, resilient communities, clean water, and healthy ecosystems to protect and restore the Peconic Estuary and its watershed.

NEIWPCC supported the Peconic Estuary Partnership through the two-year process of updating their comprehensive conservation and management plan, which will guide PEP’s work to restore and protect the Peconic for the next decade. We’re also helping the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program and the Long Island Sound Study develop their ten-year plans.

The Peconic Estuary Partnership regularly holds Citizen’s Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings that are open to the public, in order to educate, engage, and gain support from community members to protect the estuary. PEP found that more community members could attend their CAC meetings when they began holding them virtually.

The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP) is a catalyst for scientific inquiry and collective action that restores and protects water quality, wildlife, and quality of life in the bi-state Narragansett Bay region.

“I am proud to create tangible impacts in the Peconic Estuary and its watershed through projects ranging from habitat restoration to water quality protection and fostering meaningful collaboration with partners to reach mutual goals.”

– Sarah Schaefer (PEP), 5 years with NEIWPCC

Staff Scientist Courtney Schmidt was lead author on a synthesis report of the NBEP’s “State of the Narragansett Bay and its Estuary,” which will inform the development of the estuary program’s “Vision 2032” management plan.

“As the watershed coordinator, I am known as the ‘Jill of all trades’ around the office as I work across many project topics. I enjoy being able to translate science to wider audiences and work with grassroots groups to collaborate on accomplishing goals, like our Blackstone River needs assessment efforts.”

– Julia Bancroft (NBEP), 5 years with NEIWPCC
The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) works with government agencies from New York, Vermont, and Québec, and with nonprofits, local communities, and individuals, to coordinate and fund efforts that benefit the Lake Champlain Basin’s water quality, fisheries, wetlands, wildlife, recreation, and cultural resources.

NEIWPCC, the LCBP, and a partner organization in Québec finalized a binational report on nutrient pollution in Missisquoi Bay, the Northern-most sub-basin of Lake Champlain. The bay is chronically afflicted by phosphorus pollution and algal blooms. Our staff contributed recommendations made to the United States and Canadian governments for improving water quality in the bay.


Ten interns joined the Lake Champlain Basin Program for the 14th summer of their Boat Launch Stewards program. The LCBP held virtual trainings for the boat launch stewards, teaching them how to assist boaters and prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.

Meg Modley (LCBP) was interviewed by Mountain Lake PBS for a segment called “Lake Invaders,” about an Army Corps of Engineers’ upgrade to a breakwater in Grand Isle, Vermont and the LCBP’s ongoing efforts to protect Lake Champlain from invasive species.
Every single day, I have been impressed with the dedication, drive, energy, and commitment of our staff, colleagues, and partners. While this was a challenging year, it was also full of opportunities that NEIWPCC and our member states navigated through.

NEIWPCC is committed to delivering programs and services that attract and retain a diverse, talented group of professionals both to our staff and the environmental field as a whole. Our staff works across the Northeast, running or supporting various programs that preserve and advance clean water. One of my aims with our rebrand and our new strategic plan has been to create a sense of “One NEIWPCC”—to draw upon our organizational values to strengthen our culture and sense of community for staff no matter where they are located.

With most of our offices and much of the country shut down to in-person gatherings, I know that this year has presented unique challenges in that respect. However, this year has pushed us to collaborate and stay connected in new ways while we work remotely—whether that has meant holding work group meetings or trainings on virtual conferencing platforms; introducing our pets and families over video chat; scheduling virtual coffee breaks with coworkers; or sharing podcasts, recipes, or professional development resources with each other over email and other team platforms.

Moving further into the virtual world has broken down many of our traditional barriers, including the barriers of place that may have impeded our collaboration on issues affecting multiple watersheds, or our ability to form connections with peers working in different states. If there is one positive that has come out of this pandemic, it is that our staff around the region have felt more included in the larger NEIWPCC family.

Throughout this report we aim to highlight work that reflects progress on our strategic goals. We also recognize some of our staff’s achievements. Many represented NEIWPCC and the Northeast on clean water issues at national meetings and conferences or in publications. Many went above and beyond in their duties, stepping up in exceptional ways to help our member states through the COVID-19 crisis. Some celebrated important milestone years of work with us.

My heartfelt thanks goes out to all of our staff and partners: your efforts make NEIWPCC, NU-É-PĬK. I also continue to express my gratitude to our essential workers, including those hard working people who ensure our water and wastewater systems continue to function properly. Few years have taken the twists and turns of 2020, but we have persevered. We are a stronger NEIWPCC today than we were yesterday.

In service to you all,

Susan J. Sullivan, Executive Director
EXPERTS IN OUR FIELD

- Jen Lichtensteiger (Lowell) moderated a regulatory roundup discussion at the New England Water Environment Association’s Northeast Residuals and Biosolids Conference.

- Jim Ammerman (LISS) chaired a session and presented at the Association of National Estuary Programs conference. He co-moderated a session at the Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation meeting.

- James Plummer (Lowell) joined the board of the New Hampshire Rivers Council.

- Peter Zaykoski (Lowell) represented NEIWPCC’s member states at the EPA’s national water reuse meeting.

- Meg Modley (LCBP) co-chaired the annual North American Lakes Management Society conference.

- NEIWPCC Executive Director Susan Sullivan moderated a Water Environment Federation roundtable discussion on “Clean Water Act Regulatory Issues in a Pandemic.”

- Courtney Schmidt (NBEP) received the Stratification Award from the New England Estuarine Research Society (NEERS), given to members who go above and beyond, during the Society’s virtual 50th Anniversary Conference. Schmidt serves as treasurer for NEERS.

- Audra Martin (Lowell) presented in a national webinar hosted by the Association of State Wetland Managers on the impacts of COVID-19 on state wetland programs.

- Joyce Novak (PEP) was appointed adjunct assistant professor in the Marine Atmospheric Sciences Department at Stony Brook University.

- Victoria O’Neill and Jim Ammerman (LISS) moderated sessions for the Restore America’s Estuaries virtual summit.

COMMENT LETTERS

We provided comment letters to federal parties such as the EPA and Congress, representing a regional perspective on proposed water policies. Topics included:

- Water quality certification
- Harmful algal blooms
- Water quality trading
- Water reuse action plan
- EPA Region 1 laboratory
- Lead and Copper Rule
- Personal protective equipment for water workers
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- Lake numeric nutrient criteria
- Water infrastructure

In comments provided to the Northeast congressional delegation, NEIWPCC explained that a proposed amendment to the INVEST in America Act—an omnibus infrastructure bill—would decrease Clean Water State Revolving Fund allocations to most of our member states.

In May, NEIWPCC wrote to the Federal Emergency Management Agency requesting they provide N95 masks to protect essential water and wastewater utility workers from COVID-19 infection.
As a regional commission, one of NEIWPCC’s most important roles combines that of facilitator and coordinator, serving the network of water quality professionals working in the Northeast.

We engage and convene environmental professionals to collaborate on clean water and environmental science challenges.

**NEW COLLABORATIVES**

**Tracking and Accounting Collaborative, or TACo**

NEIWPCC began facilitating a new regional effort to help our member states track and account for nonpoint sources of pollution. Members of our nonpoint source pollution and total maximum daily load work groups, as well as other researchers and practitioners in the region, met regularly to share knowledge, find data gaps, and plan long-term initiatives.

**Merrimack River**

NEIWPCC weighed in during meetings of Massachusetts’ newly formed Merrimack River District Commission, which is developing an integrated decision framework for managing the watershed, as well as a pilot program for a bacteria alert system in Newburyport.

We held meetings with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, establishing a small committee of environmental regulators to discuss concerns in the bi-state watershed. The committee decided on three key issues to focus on: chloride pollution, nutrient loading, and combined sewer overflows.
Responding to COVID-19

Our executive committee is comprised of the heads of the water divisions in each of our member states’ environmental agencies, and typically meets about once a month to discuss clean water issues. But in March, NEIWPCC began holding weekly or biweekly calls and virtual meetings with our executive committee to help them respond quickly to COVID-19 challenges. As a result, the executive committee met 34 times in fiscal 2020, versus 12 times in fiscal 2019.

Topics discussed during those meetings included:

- Personal protective equipment distribution for wastewater operators.
- Transitioning paper-based environmental permitting to electronic systems.
- Emergency response plans for staffing shortfalls at drinking water and wastewater treatment facilities.
- More frequent sewer blockages caused by non-flushable materials during the country’s toilet paper shortage.
- Tracking COVID-19 in wastewater.

NEIWPCC also held a call for more than 40 scientists in the region to discuss how to safely conduct summer water quality monitoring programs.

Many of our work groups, comprised of environmental officials in our member states, met more frequently, virtually, in the second half of the fiscal year to address COVID-19 and other issues.

In April, NEIWPCC helped the Lake Champlain Basin Program distribute more than $50,000 in emergency support grants to 14 partner organizations in Vermont and New York. The groups, many of which rely on field-based outreach work for annual revenue, faced operating shortfalls due to COVID-19.

NEIWPCC employees supported New York’s COVID-19 response efforts by staffing call centers and assisting at virus testing sites.

OUR WORK GROUPS
• Contaminants of Emerging Concern
• Massachusetts Training and Advisory Committee
• National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
• New England Biological Assessment of Wetlands
• Nonpoint Source Pollution
• Northeast Aquatic Biologists
• Onsite Wastewater
• Wastewater Residuals
• Source Water Protection
• Stormwater
• Total Maximum Daily Loads
• Underground/Leaking Underground Storage Tanks
• Volunteer Monitoring
• Wastewater Certification
• Wastewater Trainers Forum
• Water Quality Standards
• Water Resource Adaptation and Climate Change
• Wetlands

STRATEGIC GOAL:
Establish initiatives and partnerships that anticipate or react quickly to rising environmental issues.
TRAINING AND EVENTS

We develop, coordinate, and conduct training courses that serve water quality professionals regionally and nationwide.

State Revolving Fund
NEIWPCC began a new contract with the EPA to provide a national training program for environmental officials on the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF). The SRF program helps states finance water infrastructure improvement projects.

While we had to postpone our in-person workshop, we hosted a webinar on August 4 focusing on SRF programs in the Northeast: “Climate Resiliency and Adaptation for Water Infrastructure.”

Northeast Water Quality Standards Training
NEIWPCC facilitated a training that acted as a regional supplement to the EPA’s national Water Quality Standards Academy, diving into the nuances of how different states in the Northeast codify, promulgate, and implement water quality standards.

Northeast Aquatic Biologists Conference
Scientists, environmental officials, and other practitioners attended our annual Northeast Aquatic Biologists Conference. Topics included estuary monitoring, modeling for Clean Water Act assessments, and harmful algal blooms. The conference took place in Newport, Rhode Island in early March and was our last in-person event of the year.

Massachusetts Title 5 Septic System Programs
NEIWPCC facilitated our fall soil evaluator and system inspector certification training programs for engineers, health inspectors, and other environmental professionals who install or regulate septic systems in Massachusetts. We canceled the spring session due to COVID-19.

Maine Nonpoint Source Training Center
NEIWPCC’s South Portland staff supported the Maine Department of Environmental Protection’s Nonpoint Source Training Center, facilitating five in-person and four online courses on best practices for erosion and sediment control.

WEBINARS

NEIWPCC’s Lowell staff facilitated several webinar series of regional or national reach for environmental officials:

Total Maximum Daily Loads
- Data Visualization
- Social Media Outreach
- Making the Most of Mass Media Outreach
- Approaches to Temperature TMDLs

Wetlands
- Effects of Solar Development on Wetlands
- New Hampshire’s Development of Biocriteria to Assess Wetland Condition
- Massachusetts’ In-Lieu Fee Wetland Mitigation Program
- Navigable Waters Protection Rule

Underground and Leaking Underground Storage Tanks
- Spill Bucket/Containment Sump Testing and Repair
- Evaluating Remediation Workplans
- Lessons Learned from High Resolution Site Characterization Used at LUST Sites
- Emergency Power Generator UST Systems
- Collaborating Across Regulatory Programs to Achieve Shared Goals
WASTEWATER TRAINING IN A PANDEMIC

In the wake of COVID-19, NEIWPCC revolutionized our regional and JETCC training programs, launching live, remote classes where wastewater (and, for JETCC, drinking water) operators could earn training contact hours towards maintaining their licenses.

We awarded a total of 12,798 training contact hours to operators in the Northeast.

NEIWPCC supports the Massachusetts Wastewater Management Training Program and the Maine Management Candidate School for wastewater and drinking water professionals. Through a blend of technical and leadership trainings, these programs prepare operators for management roles in the water industry. The Massachusetts program ended before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 21 students graduating. The Maine program, which has 23 students enrolled, went on hiatus until in-person meetings could resume.

JETCC supports the Maine Wastewater Operator School, which teaches new and novice operators the basics of wastewater treatment. Nineteen students completed the program, held through a mix of in-person and virtual instruction in 2020.

When much about the spread of COVID-19 was still unknown and access to personal protective equipment (PPE) remained limited, NEIWPCC hosted an informational webinar for wastewater operators and collection system staff. The webinar, in early May, reviewed equipment and practices operators should use to keep themselves, their coworkers, and their families safe.

Wastewater Operator Certification and Renewals

In Massachusetts, we renewed certification for more than 4,300 operators and certified 380 new operators. In Maine, we renewed more than 300 operators and issued 38 new licenses.

Leeann Hanson (South Portland) helped make the Maine Wastewater Operator School virtual, incorporating online training tools and YouTube video lessons from instructors into the program.

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Offer online continuing education courses to support the needs of rural member states and to expand national reach.

Michelle Jenkins, Wastewater and Onsite Systems Division
NEIWPCC’s Quality Management Program—a requirement of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Quality Program— safeguards the scientific integrity of all of the environmental data projects we support.

Projects collecting or analyzing data for decision making are required to have an approved quality assurance project plan to help ensure high-quality data yielding reliable and useful results.

In fiscal 2020, a record 48 quality assurance project plans were approved:
- Thirty Lake Champlain Basin Program projects.
- Six Narragansett Bay Estuary Program projects.
- Four Hudson River Estuary Program projects.

NEIWPCC staff members carried out five quality assurance field assessments during the fiscal year. Four of the five were completed in the fourth quarter, in adherence with COVID-19 safety protocols. The field assessments ensure that all approved procedures outlined in a quality assurance project plan are being followed. This year’s assessments included projects covering:
- The planning and design of a bog restoration project in Freetown, Massachusetts.
- A municipal road stream crossings resiliency project in Saugerties, New York.
- The development of a data collection and management protocol for potential restoration sites in Bethlehem, New York.
- Invasive mussel impact on native freshwater mussel communities in Lake Champlain (Vermont).
- An aquatic invasive species survey, map creation, management plan, and boat steward initiative in Bristol, Vermont.

“As grant coordinator, I love seeing all of the good work accomplished as a result of the projects we fund. It is very rewarding to be a part of the progress being made to improve and protect the environment in the Hudson River watershed, and in my own community.”

— Susan Pepe (HREP), 5 years with NEIWPCC
FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

The assets of NEIWPCC exceeded its liabilities at the close of the most recent fiscal year by $3,693,691. Financially, fiscal year 2020 was successful as revenue exceeded operating expenses. As a result, total net position increased by $192,300 for the year ended September 30, 2020.

Lucia Walker, CPA
NEIWPCC Comptroller

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This annual report is a product of NEIWPCC, Suite 410, 650 Suffolk Street, Lowell, MA 01854
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Amy Magin, communications director | Kale Connerty, managing editor
Michelle St. John, contributing editor | Graphic design: Newcomb Studios

Credit goes to NYSDEC for the two photos on page 5 of people in masks; to PEP for the photo of Sarah on page 6; to the NBEP for the photo of Julia on page 6; to RIDEM for the invasive-species-pulling photo on page 7; and to Tim Newcomb for the Lake Champlain photo on page 7.

OUR COMMISSIONERS

Chair: Mark Klotz
Vice Chair: Peter LaFlamme • Treasurer: Harry Stewart

Connecticut
Katie Dykes, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Commissioner
Representing Ms. Dykes: Yvonne Bolton, Bureau of Materials Management and Compliance Assurance
Deidre Gifford, Department of Public Health Acting Commissioner
Direct Appointment of the Governor: Michael Bisi, Denis Cuevas, Jane Stahl

Maine
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Representing Mr. Reid: Brian Kavanah, Bureau of Water Quality
Jeanne Lambrew, Department of Health and Human Services Commissioner
Representing Ms. Lambrew: Nancy Beardsley, Division of Environmental Health
Direct Appointment of the Governor: David Van Slyke, Brian Tarbuck, Travis Noyes, Stacy Thompson, Michael Abbot

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Representing Mr. Suuberg: Kathleen Baskin, Bureau of Water Resources
Monica Bharel, Department of Public Health Commissioner
Representing Ms. Bharel: Jana Ferguson, Bureau of Environmental Health
Direct Appointment of the Governor: Paul Hogan, John Sullivan, F. Adam Yanulis

New Hampshire
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Representing Mr. Scott: Thomas O’Donovan, Water Division
Direct Appointment of the Governor: Thomas Ballestero, Frederick McNeill, Nelson Thibault, Robert Varney

New York
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Representing Mr. Seggos: Mark Klotz, Division of Water
Howard Zucker, Department of Health Commissioner
Representing Mr. Zucker: Roger Sokol, Bureau of Water Supply Protection
Direct Appointment of the Governor: Richard Lyons

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Janet Coit, Department of Environmental Management Director
Representing Ms. Coit: Sue Kiernan and Angelo Liberti, Office of Water Resources
Nicole Alexander-Scott, Department of Health Director
Representing Ms. Alexander-Scott: June Swallow, Office of Drinking Water Quality
Direct Appointment of the Governor: Janine Burke-Wells, Russell Chateauneuf, Amy Parmenter

Vermont
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Representing Mr. Walke: Peter LaFlamme, Watershed Management Division
Mark Levine, Department of Health Commissioner
Representing Mr. Levine: Lori Cragin, Environmental Health Division
Direct Appointment of the Governor: Dennis Lutz

Commissioners at the end of fiscal 2020
Denise Ruzicka (CT), Renée Coleman-Mitchell (CT), Alicia Good (RI), and Emily Boedecker (VT) also served as commissioners in the fiscal year.