For 75 years, Connecticut has collaborated on clean water issues with other states in the region through its membership to NEIWPCC.

Established in 1947, NEIWPCC [NŪ-Ē-PĬK] is a regional commission that helps the states of the Northeast preserve and advance water quality.

We engage and convene water quality professionals and other interested parties from New England and New York to collaborate on water, wastewater and other environmental science challenges across shared regions, ecosystems and areas of expertise.

LONG ISLAND SOUND WATERSHED

The Connecticut River, spanning more than 400 miles in length, travels through six states and a portion of Canada before reaching Long Island Sound. In total, the Connecticut River, along with other nearby rivers, lakes and streams, connects almost nine million people to the Long Island Sound watershed. Human activity in the area has resulted in nutrient pollution, habitat loss and improper trash disposal, which has impaired the health of the Sound.

The Long Island Sound Study (LISS) is a cooperative effort involving researchers, regulators, user groups and other concerned organizations and individuals, who work together to protect and improve the health of the Sound.

LISS, designated as a National Estuary Program by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is a NEIWPCC program partner. We provide staff and administrative support for the program and connect LISS to water professionals in the Northeast.

IMPROVING WATER QUALITY

NEIWPCC leads several efforts to help reduce nitrogen pollution in the Sound. Hypoxia, or oxygen-depleted “dead zones,” are caused by excess nitrogen and have been identified as the issue of greatest concern for water quality. We facilitate the Nitrogen Coordination Work Group for the states in the watershed to monitor nitrogen regulations and water quality improvement projects.

A NEIWPCC environmental analyst supports the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP) project by creating initiatives to lower the levels in surface and ground waters around the Sound. LINAP resumed this year after being paused in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Long Island Sound Seaweed Bioextraction Symposium was held virtually in May 2022. The event brought together national and international experts to share information and discuss how bioextraction — the practice of farming kelp and shellfish to remove excess nutrients from the water — can be successful in removing nitrogen and other nutrients from coastal waters.

CLEAN WATER CHALLENGES

- PFAS (“forever chemicals”)
- Nitrogen pollution
- Climate change impacts
- Source water protection
- Wetlands protection
- Habitat restoration
- Harmful algal blooms
- Invasive species
- Leaking underground storage tanks
- Road salt/chloride contamination
- Outdated water infrastructure
- Barriers to fish passage
- Addressing environmental justice
- Modernizing the Clean Water Act
- Aging workforce

TRAINING WASTEWATER OPERATORS

For more than 50 years, NEIWPCC has offered training for some of our nation’s most essential workers: wastewater operators. We offer basic, intermediate and advanced courses to train all levels of operators and prepare them for certification exams. Classes cover all aspects of the job, from wastewater treatment chemistry and microbiology to equipment safety and lab procedures.

This year, NEIWPCC offered 138 courses and 541 Training Contact Hours (TCH) to a total of 345 operators based in Connecticut. Of these, 134 courses were held virtually, while four were conducted in-person.
ADVANCING STATE INTERESTS

Working closely with our member states, NEIWPCC represents a regional perspective on proposed water policies to federal parties such as the U.S. EPA or Congress. This past year, we provided comments on regulatory issues such as implementing temporary waivers for the Build America, Buy America Act, revising the definition of “Waters of the United States,” and regulating PFAS.

COLLABORATION ACROSS STATE LINES

In 2022, NEIWPCC celebrated its 75th year of clean water work in the Northeast, as well as the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act (CWA). In commemoration of these milestones, NEIWPCC produced a series of multimedia content including print publications, videos and a timeline that shared the reflections, experience and expertise of our leadership and commissioners. The series explores the many successes of NEIWPCC over the years and the need to modernize the CWA to meet the challenges of the present day. The state of Connecticut awarded NEIWPCC a proclamation in honor of this occasion.

In the spring, more than 100 people attended the annual Northeast Aquatic Biologists (NAB) Conference, which focused on aquatic invasive species, climate change and fish monitoring. At the 32nd Annual Nonpoint Source Conference, 110 attendees participated in sessions with themes ranging from environmental justice, modernizing water quality and adapting to climate change.

0.3%

That’s how much of NEIWPCC’s funding comes from the annual dues paid by our member states: a combined $163,719 out of the total $53,457,955 directed to NEIWPCC in fiscal 2022.

Most of our funding comes from Clean Water Act appropriations or through grants and contracts with federal, state and other entities, but this small contribution makes Connecticut a member of NEIWPCC’s commission.

CONNECTICUT COMMISSIONERS

NEIWPCC is governed by 35 commissioners, consisting of five highly experienced environmental and health professionals from each of our seven member states. Our executive committee, a subset of that delegation, consists of the heads of our member states’ environmental agencies, or their representatives. Representing Connecticut (as of Sept. 30, 2022):

Jennifer Perry (vice chair), representing DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes
Lori Mathieu, representing acting DPH Commissioner Manisha Juthani
Denis Cuevas, city of Waterbury
Jane Stahl, Jane K. Stahl Environmental Consulting
Michael Bisi, town of Glastonbury

NEIWPCC held the National State Revolving Fund Workshop, where 75 attendees partook in sessions on nonpoint source pollution, environmental justice and source water protection. Participants also had the opportunity to visit the recently upgraded Peirce Island Wastewater Treatment Facility in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

In September, 600 people from around the country gathered at NEIWPCC’s largest event of the year, the biannual National Tanks Conference in Pittsburgh. Panels were divided into four main categories: release prevention, release cleanup, funding and cross-program issues. The conference sparked discussion of how to transfer industry knowledge to younger staff as veteran employees begin to retire. Other topics included staffing shortages, aging infrastructure, supply chain shortages and natural disasters.

In partnership with the EPA, NEIWPCC established a Chloride Resources Clearinghouse. This searchable database, housed on the NEIWPCC website, compiles resources on related topics including water softening, chloride reduction, winter maintenance and residential salt usage guidelines.

NEIWPCC staff developed two biosolids surveys which collected data about the amount and disposal methods of sewage sludge produced annually from wastewater treatment plants in all member states. In total, 122 surveys were completed using data from 2018 and 2019 sludge reports. The findings were analyzed and presented at several conferences, as well as shared through our e-newsletter and on our website and social media channels.

Per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) continue to present critical environmental challenges. NEIWPCC staff have been monitoring the latest research on PFAS pollution and holding regular discussions with our states, helping them coordinate efforts to monitor, regulate and remove these “forever chemicals” that persist in our waterbodies, wastewater and drinking water. Much of the effort this year has focused on PFAS in wastewater residuals, as states are working quickly to respond to the fast-paced changes in regulations and public perspective.