

WORKING FOR THE REGION

October 2022 –
September 2023

For 68 years, Maine has collaborated on clean water issues with other states in the region through its membership with NEIWPCC. Established in 1947, NEIWPCC [NŪ-Ē-PĪK] 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.



NORTH COUNTRY CONVENTION

In April, NEIWPCC hosted the North Country Convention, a biannual two-day educational event and trade show held in Presque Isle. The convention is designed for wastewater and drinking water operators from northern Maine and features a variety of technical sessions, exhibitor interaction, speakers and networking opportunities. In total, the 26 different training sessions were attended by 96 operators.

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION

Nine NEIWPCC environmental analysts in Augusta support the Maine Department of Health and Human Services' Drinking Water Program. Of these, four of the positions were newly created over the last year. The analysts help implement the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and other source water protection regulations in the state. Much of their work involves updating and assessing data, such as water sampling results or permit records, to ensure compliance throughout the state with drinking water regulations.

Two of the new staff provide assistance to the Maine Drinking Water Program's rules and regulations compliance efforts. Another delivers technical, operatorial and compliance assistance to the Public Water System inspection team through field inspection visits, research and data improvement projects.

The fourth new employee supports Maine's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, focused on ensuring safe drinking water and providing essential public health protection. This role is responsible for overseeing the compliance of project applications with state and federal laws, rules and regulations; determining the eligibility of grant and loan proposals; and drafting regulations and policies for a variety of programs.

WASTEWATER AND DRINKING WATER 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,

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

from wastewater treatment chemistry and microbiology to equipment safety and lab procedures. In 2022, NEIWPCC also developed a new online self-paced course on Wet Weather Operations, which allows operators to earn six training contact hours (TCHs) on their own schedules.

Our staff in South Portland run the Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee (JETCC), which offers training for Maine wastewater and drinking water operators. The JETCC training program includes single-day classes, a six-month, 12-session wastewater operator school and an 11-month Management Candidate School.

This year, NEIWPCC offered 127 courses and 660 TCHs to a total of 2,758 operators. Of these, 24 courses and 101 TCHs were provided through the JETCC program.

WASTEWATER OPERATOR CERTIFICATION

NEIWPCC's South Portland staff is also responsible for certifying and renewing certification for Maine's wastewater workforce, on behalf of the Maine DEP. Operators must earn 18 training credits every two years as part of the renewal process. This year, South Portland renewed certification for 253 operators, issued 54 new certificates and granted five state reciprocities. There are 662 active wastewater operators and 123 inactive operators in the state.

MAINE



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 and Congress. We provided comments on regulatory issues such as the unintended consequences of directed spending on state revolving funds, revisions to water quality standards to protect tribal reserved rights, and the EPA's proposed maximum contaminant levels for six PFAS compounds.

COLLABORATION ACROSS STATE LINES

NEIWPCC is governed by its **Executive Committee and Commission**, consisting of five highly experienced water quality professionals from each of its seven member states, who collaborate across state lines to guide our agenda and identify new priorities. They are leaders in the states' environmental and health agencies and experts from the private sector. This year, NEIWPCC and the full Commission held three multi-day meetings and an additional four with the Executive Committee, with representatives from the EPA Region I and II in attendance.

The meetings provided a forum for the commissioners to identify and discuss water quality-related concerns; guide NEIWPCC strategies, projects and programs; and formulate a regional response to environmental policy initiatives. In particular, the commissioners focused on numerous challenges common to all of their states, including: chloride impairment, PFAS and biosolids, cyanobacteria, staffing shortages, permit programs, climate change and flooding, and invasive species in water bodies.

.13%

That's how much of NEIWPCC's funding comes from the annual dues paid by our member states: a combined \$151,381 out of the total \$117,277,377 directed to NEIWPCC in fiscal 2023. 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 Maine a member of NEIWPCC's commission.

MAINE COMMISSIONERS

(as of Sept. 30, 2023):

Brian Kavanah, representing DEP Commissioner Melanie Loyzim

Michael Abbott, representing DHHS Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew

Brian Tarbuck, Readfield

Stacy Thompson, South Portland

David Van Slyke, Yarmouth

NEIWPCC would like to thank Peter LaFlamme for his year of service as the chairperson of the Executive Committee and Commission.

In the fall of 2022, NEIWPCC hosted the **11th U.S. Symposium on Harmful Algae**. More than 450 participants engaged in conversation around topics such as bloom control and mitigation strategies, public health concerns, and public outreach and communication.

NEIWPCC held the **Northeast Aquatic Biologists Conference** in February in Plymouth, Massachusetts, focused on topics such as the aging Clean Water Act, river and stream monitoring, nutrient and sediment-loading, and environmental justice.

During the spring, the **33rd Annual Nonpoint Source Conference** was held in Saratoga Springs, New York and addressed environmental justice concerns, with specific panels on topics such as harmful algal blooms, dam removal and nature-based solutions.

In July, NEIWPCC hosted the **National State Revolving Fund Workshop** in Raleigh, North Carolina. Panel discussions and case studies examined nonpoint source pollution, green infrastructure, environmental justice and technical assistance.

NEIWPCC issued an **updated source water protection toolkit** for use on its website for municipal and regulatory officials throughout the region. The document provides information and resources on how to better protect drinking water sources in their communities, covering issues such as climate change, PFAS, stormwater, septic systems, land use and funding resources.

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), often called "forever chemicals," continue to present critical environmental challenges. NEIWPCC hosted meetings with stakeholders to brainstorm a path forward for establishing a regional BioHub facility that would provide testing of new residual destruction technologies. Much of the effort this year has focused on regulations and removal of PFAS in wastewater residuals, as states work to respond to the fast-paced changes in regulations and public perspective.

NEIWPCC continued to take a lead role in working to reduce the number of underground storage tank (UST) releases, hosting **two UST workgroups**, meeting three times to share updates and collaborate on issues, including environmental justice, brownfields program collaboration and regulatory revisions. NEIWPCC also published **two issues of LUSTLine**, which is the publication of record for UST matters nationwide.

NEIWPCC coordinates a **national webinar series on total maximum daily loads (TMDLs)**, or pollution budgets for water bodies, to help states regulate and monitor water quality. One webinar focused on working collaboratively across sectors and political boundaries to develop TMDL implementation plans, and the second presented a watershed prioritization tool. NEIWPCC also held two webinars focused on treatment options for leaking underground storage tank sites and an overview of certification programs for UST service providers.

