

## WORKING FOR THE REGION

October 2022 –  
September 2023

# MASSACHUSETTS

For 76 years, Massachusetts 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.



### INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

NEIWPCC collaborated with partners in Rhode Island to oversee the planning and organizing of 10 events last June and July in which volunteers hand-pulled invasive water chestnut from Massachusetts waterways. In total, 133 community members removed more than forty-six cubic yards of the plants. NEIWPCC also developed materials to help communities better manage the invasive plant.

### YOUTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

Young people from Lowell and Lawrence gained hands-on experience in environmental work through the EPA-funded Youth and the Environment Program. The program provided participants with paid positions to learn how wastewater treatment facilities operate and explore other environmental careers during regional site visits.

### LONG ISLAND SOUND STUDY WORKGROUP

NEIWPCC hosts the Long Island Sound Study's Nitrogen Coordination Workgroup, allowing water professionals from the states to coordinate ongoing nitrogen reduction efforts including TMDL implementation, ecosystem restoration and infrastructure upgrades.

### 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. 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.

This year, NEIWPCC offered 127 courses and 660 TCHs to a total of 2,758 operators.

### 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

### WASTEWATER OPERATOR CERTIFICATION

NEIWPCC is also responsible for certifying and renewing the licenses for Massachusetts's wastewater workforce, on behalf of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. We renewed certification for 175 operators, issued 352 new licenses and grant 11 state reciprocities, 20 upgrades and 95 status changes. There are 2,519 active wastewater operators and 1,340 inactive operators in the state.

In collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, NEIWPCC helps run a year-long wastewater management training program that is designed to develop essential skills that propel candidates into wastewater management positions. The program enrolled 25 candidates this year.

### SEPTIC SYSTEMS

NEIWPCC administers a training and certification program for the soil evaluators and system inspectors who design, install and regulate septic systems in Massachusetts. This year, 126 professionals participated in our soil evaluator certification training course, while 97 professionals participated in our system inspectors training. We have

renewed or newly certified over 200 soil evaluators and over 200 system inspectors.

## 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.

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 and 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** on the 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 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.

## .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 Massachusetts a member of NEIWPCC's commission.

## MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSIONERS

(as of Sept. 30, 2022):

**Kathleen Baskin**, representing DEP Commissioner Bonnie Heiple

**One vacancy**, representing DPH commissioner Robert Goldstein

**F. Adam Yanulis**, Duxbury

**John Sullivan**, Dorchester

One vacancy

We thank Paul Hogan (Woodard & Curran) for his 11 years of service to the region as a NEIWPCC commissioner.

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

