

## WORKING FOR THE REGION

October 2022 – September 2023

For 74 years, New York has collaborated on clean water issues with other states in the region through its membership with NEIWPC. Established in 1947, NEIWPC [NŪ-Ē-PIK] 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.



# NEW YORK

### DRINKING WATER PROGRAM

NEIWPC employs several environmental analysts as drinking water specialists for the state's Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2). These staff members are responsible for running various programs that help communities track the quality of waterbodies, identify and investigate sources of pollution, and develop strategies to address threats. The DWSP2 program currently has 74 municipalities participating in the program.

### NITROGEN IN LONG ISLAND

NEIWPC's efforts to help reduce nitrogen pollution in Long Island include an environmental analyst who supports the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP) by creating initiatives to lower nitrogen levels in surface and ground waters around Nassau and Suffolk counties.

NEIWPC also leads several efforts to help reduce nitrogen pollution in Long Island Sound. Our role includes facilitating the Nitrogen Coordination Work Group to monitor regulations and water quality improvement projects.

### HUDSON RIVER PROGRAMS

The Hudson River Estuary Program and the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve are staffed in part by NEIWPC employees. This year saw the continuation of the "Women in Science" speaker series, and "The Day in the Life of the Hudson and Harbor" educational program.

The website for the Hudson River Environmental Conditions Observing System was redesigned to allow for quick access to water quality and weather data in real time, including an interactive user-friendly dashboard.

### NYC CAPITAL REPLACEMENT PROGRAM

In partnership with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, NEIWPC supported the replacement of capital equipment at non-city-owned wastewater treatment plants in the upstate watershed and the ongoing maintenance of wastewater treatment equipment.

### THE LAKE CHAMPLAIN BASIN PROGRAM

This past fiscal year, NEIWPC executed contracts for 107 Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) projects and

### 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

17 non-LCBP projects, amounting to more than \$7.8 million distributed to on-the-ground organizations in the basin. The projects centered around clean water, healthy ecosystems, thriving communities, and an informed and involved public.

### YOUTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

Youth from New York City had the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in environmental work this summer through the EPA-funded Youth and the Environment Program. This year, eight participants learned how wastewater treatment facilities operate and explored various environmental careers through this paid opportunity.

### LONG ISLAND GARDEN REWARDS PROGRAM

During the inaugural year of the Long Island Garden Rewards Program, more than 200 homeowners received grants to help cover the cost and maintenance of stormwater runoff mitigation projects on their property. The program provided up to \$500 to each homeowner to offset the expense of installing green infrastructure — including rain barrels, native plant gardens and rain gardens — on their property.

## 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.

## 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. 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.

# .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 New York a member of NEIWPCC's commission.

## NEW YORK COMMISSIONERS

(as of Sept. 30, 2023):

**Carol Lamb-LaFay** (acting), representing DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos

**Daniel Lang**, representing DOH Commissioner James McDonald

**Patricia Cerro-Reehil**, Cleveland

**Mark Klotz**, Ballston Spa

**Richard Lyons**, Albany

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

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, 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 **National Aquatic Biologist 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, 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 our website for municipal and regulatory officials throughout the region. The document provides information and resources on how they can better protect drinking water sources in their communities, covering contemporary issues such as climate change and PFAS; and other topics including stormwater, septic systems, land use and funding resources.

**Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)** continue to present critical environmental challenges. NEIWPCC began hosting meetings with stakeholders to brainstorm a path forward for establishing a regional BioHub facility, which would provide testing of new residual destruction technologies. Much of the effort this year to regulate and remove these "forever chemicals" that persist in our waterbodies, wastewater and drinking water has focused on 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 in reducing 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 was focused on working collaboratively across sectors and political boundaries to develop TMDL implementation plans and the second identified a potential screen tool that could be used for watershed prioritization. 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.