WORKING FOR THE REGION

October 2023 – September 2024

For 77 years, Connecticut has collaborated on clean water issues with other states in the region through its membership with 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.

CONNECTICUT

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 river, along with other nearby lakes and streams, connects almost nine million people to the sound. Human activity in the area has resulted in nutrient pollution, habitat loss and improper trash disposal, which has impaired the quality of the water.

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, is a NEIWPCC program partner.

NEIWPCC assisted in the writing and review process of the 2025 Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) update. We also served in implementing the LISS Communications, Outreach and Engagement Plan, by producing content for public engagement and providing programmatic communication support. In addition, NEIWPCC hosted a meeting for the LISS Citizen Advisory Committee, a volunteer organization which provides advice on policy, management, restoration and public education activities. The committee met during the summer to review and provide feedback on the CCMP.

IMPROVING WATER QUALITY

NEIWPCC leads several efforts to reduce nitrogen pollution in the sound. Hypoxia, or oxygen-depleted "dead zones," are caused by excess nitrogen from wastewater treatment facilities, septic systems, fertilizers and stormwater runoff. We facilitate the Nitrogen Coordination Work Group to monitor regulations and water quality improvement projects across the Long Island Sound watershed.

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 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 launched a virtual management training series, designed to help operators develop advanced skills to grow in their positions. And, a new self-paced course, "Wastewater Ethics," allows operators to earn six training contact hours.

NEIWPCC offered 144 courses to a total of 145 operators based in Connecticut.

NEIWPCC also supported the Connecticut Water Environment Association's 10-month wastewater management leadership program by providing financial management assistance. The program began in February with 16 participants enrolled.

CLEAN WATER CHALLENGES

- PFAS/emerging contaminants
- Nutrient pollution
- Climate change impacts
- Source water protection
- Harmful algal blooms
- Invasive species
- Leaking underground storage tanks
- Wetlands protection
- Road salt/chloride contamination
- Habitat restoration
- Outdated water infrastructure
- Barriers to fish passage
- Stormwater runoff

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, including the unintended consequences of directed spending on state revolving funds, the need for increased funding of state and tribal wetland protection programs, proposed Lead and Copper Rule improvements and the budget for water-related state revolving funds.

NE IW PCC

COLLABORATION ACROSS STATE LINES

NEIWPCC is governed by its **Executive Committee and Commission**, consisting of five water quality professionals from each of its seven member states, who collaborate across state lines to guide our agenda and identify new priorities. These 35 commissioners are leaders in the states' environmental and health agencies, complemented by experts from the private sector. NEIWPCC held three multi-day meetings with the full Commission and an additional four with the Executive Committee alone. Representatives from the EPA's Regions I and II also attended.

The commissioners identify and discuss water quality-related concerns; offer guidance to NEIWPCC in implementing strategies, projects and programs; and formulate a regional response to environmental policy initiatives. In particular, the commissioners focused on numerous common challenges, including PFAS and biosolids, cyanobacteria, permit programs, climate change and flooding, and invasive species in water bodies. With this expertise, NEIWPCC is positioned to better serve the states in addressing these issues and administering solutions.

In November, NEIWPCC hosted the four-day **National Nonpoint Source Training Workshop** in Minneapolis. The event brought together more than 300 federal, state, tribal and territorial professionals from across the country. Sessions focused on environmental justice, coastal management, climate change and updates to current guidance. The workshop also included a poster session which featured innovative programs and current research findings.

NEIWPCC held the **Northeast Aquatic Biologists Conference** in Fairlee, Vermont, in February. Attendees included representatives from state, federal, tribal and municipal governments, as well as watershed organizations, the private sector and academia. The conference focused on topics such as the impacts of climate change, PFAS, macroinvertebrate indices and monitoring efforts.

.12%

That is how much of NEIWPCC's funding comes from the annual dues paid by our member states: a combined $160,608 out of the total $129,095,545 directed to NEIWPCC in fiscal 2024. 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

(as of Sept. 30, 2024):

Jennifer Perry (chair), representing DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes

Nisha Patel (acting), representing DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes

One vacancy, representing DPH Commissioner Manisha Juthani

Michael Bisi, Wethersfield

Denis Cuevas, Waterbury

Jane Stahl, West Hartford

The event also offered two pre-conference meetings on coding with R programs and streamgage data.

The **34th Annual Nonpoint Source (NPS) Conference** took place in April, with the theme of "Climate Resiliency Through NPS Outreach and Implementation." The event brought more than 120 attendees to Old Saybrook, Connecticut for presentations covering dam removal, classroom engagement and cranberry bog restoration. Participants also had the opportunity to visit the Hole-in-the-Wall stormwater classroom in East Lyme, where town engineers provided a hands-on look at innovative stormwater management practices like permeable parking lots and catch basins.

Per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) continue to present critical environmental challenges. NEIWPCC hosted meetings with partners that led to the establishment of the Biosolids Technology Hub, an information clearinghouse that provides published literature, technology vendors and project summaries to help regulators and clean water practitioners find solutions for PFAS in municipal biosolids or sludge. Wastewater staff also planned, attended and moderated sessions at the Northeast Conference on the Science of PFAS, which facilitated networking and information-sharing among key stakeholders. Much of the effort this year has focused on connecting and engaging workgroups about notable developments and data, as states work to respond to the fast-paced changes in regulations and public perspective.

The **Clean Water Success Stories Project** shared the accomplishments of total maximum daily loads (TMDLs), or pollution budgets, from across the country. Staff researched and wrote stories focused on three TMDL case studies, and produced multimedia communication collateral materials, including infographics, a StoryMap and a social media campaign. In addition, the second season of the Clean Water Pod podcast explored first-hand accounts of TMDL success stories focused on nutrients.

We also coordinated a **national webinar series on TMDLs** for state, federal and tribal program staff and other stakeholders who regulate and monitor water quality. Topics focused on the process of developing and implementing a TMDL, and incorporating climate change impacts into stream temperature TMDLs.

NEIWPCC hosts more than 20 different **workgroups and collaboratives** to improve regional communication and state-federal engagement on critical topics related to water. These meetings were held virtually and in-person throughout the year and allowed participants from all member states to discuss the ongoing and latest issues with their peers, federal officials, NEIWPCC staff and other practitioners. Topics explored emerging contaminants, harmful algal blooms, stormwater, onsite wastewater and wetlands.

Two workgroups specifically focus on **underground storage tanks (UST)**, which store fuel at gas stations and marinas, and the challenges of leaks contaminating soil and groundwater. NEIWPCC also produced two issues of LUSTLine, the international UST industry publication.

In the summer, NEIWPCC hired 30 **interns and seasonal staff** across four states. The majority served as aquatic invasive species boat launch stewards with the Lake Champlain Basin Program. Others worked on education and outreach, the Long Island Garden Rewards Program, water chestnut removal, communications, data collection and contract processing. These paid positions provided relevant training and career experience for college students.