

WORKING FOR THE REGION

October 2023 – September 2024

For 77 years, Massachusetts has collaborated on clean water issues with other states in the region through its membership with NEIWPC. Established in 1947, NEIWPC [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.



MASSACHUSETTS

NEIWPC HEADQUARTERS

Thirty-seven employees work out of NEIWPC's headquarters in Lowell, including programmatic staff and others in the Business Operations, Finance, Human Resources and Communications and Outreach Divisions.

INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

NEIWPC collaborated with partners in Rhode Island to oversee the planning and organizing of four events in June and July, in which volunteers hand-pulled invasive water chestnut from waterways in Southeastern New England. In total, 332 community members removed more than 33 cubic yards of the plants. NEIWPC also developed water chestnut management materials to support local government and nonprofit organizations in better educating the public about the invasive plant.

LONG ISLAND SOUND STUDY WORKGROUP

NEIWPC hosts the Long Island Sound Study's Nitrogen Coordination Workgroup, which regularly has participants from Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut, Vermont and New Hampshire. These states all have residents who are a part of the Long Island Sound watershed due to their proximity to the Connecticut River. The meetings allow 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, NEIWPC 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, NEIWPC 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 (TCHs).

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

NEIWPC offered 149 courses to a total of 1,351 operators based in Massachusetts.

WASTEWATER OPERATOR CERTIFICATION

NEIWPC 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 4,019 operators, issued 474 new licenses and granted 14 state reciprocities, 19 upgrades and 130 status changes. There are 3,254 active wastewater operators and 1,557 inactive operators in the state.

SEPTIC SYSTEMS

NEIWPC administers a training and certification program for the soil evaluators and system inspectors who design, install and regulate septic systems in Massachusetts. This year, 92 professionals participated in our soil evaluator certification training course, while 89 professionals participated in our system inspectors training. We also renewed or newly certified more than 165 soil evaluators and more than 248 system inspectors.



YOUTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

Seven high school students completed paid internships at wastewater treatment plants in the cities of Lowell and Lawrence through the Youth and the Environment Program (YEP). Funded through the Environmental Protection Agency, YEP provides young adults with hands-on experience in the environmental field through a six-week schedule that includes working alongside professionals, educational lessons and field trips.

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.

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

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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 Massachusetts a member of NEIWPCC's commission.

MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSIONERS

(as of Sept. 30, 2024):

Kathleen Baskin, representing DEP Commissioner Bonnie Heiple

Margaret Blanchet, representing DPH commissioner Robert Goldstein

Steven McCurdy, Milton

John Sullivan, Dorchester

F. Adam Yanulis, Duxbury

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 **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.

NEIWPCC held the **Northeast Aquatic Biologists Conference** in Vermont, in February. Topics covered the impacts of climate change, macroinvertebrate indices and monitoring efforts. 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." Presentations included dam removal, classroom engagement and cranberry bog restoration, and local town engineers provided a hands-on look at innovative stormwater management practices such as permeable parking lots and catch basins.

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) continue to present critical environmental challenges. NEIWPCC and partners established a Biosolids Technology Hub, an information clearinghouse providing published literature, technology vendors and project summaries for regulators and clean water practitioners to find solutions for PFAS in municipal biosolids or sludge. Our staff also planned and moderated sessions at the Northeast Conference on the Science of PFAS.

The **Clean Water Success Stories Project** shared the accomplishments of total maximum daily loads (TMDLs), or pollution budgets, from across the country. NEIWPCC produced three TMDL case studies, infographics, a StoryMap and a social media campaign. In addition, the second season of the Clean Water Pod podcast explored successes of TMDLs for nutrients.

NEIWPCC coordinated a **national webinar series** which delved into developing and implementing a TMDL, and incorporating climate change impacts.

NEIWPCC hosts more than 20 **workgroups and collaboratives** to improve regional communication and state-federal engagement on critical water-related topics. The meetings, held virtually and in-person, gave participants a forum to discuss numerous issues including 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 invasives 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.