

WORKING FOR THE REGION

October 2023 – September 2024

For 69 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.



SOUTH PORTLAND OFFICE

NEIWPCC's South Portland office leads our work in Maine. We support the Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee (JETCC), wastewater certification efforts, erosion control training and certifications and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services' Drinking Water Program (DWP).

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION

A team of NEIWPCC environmental analysts in Augusta support the DWP. They implement the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and other source water protection regulations in the state by updating and assessing data – such as water sampling results or permit records – to ensure compliance throughout the state with drinking water regulations. We also oversee the subsurface wastewater permitting process.

Our staff contributes to the DWP's communications and public outreach efforts, by managing the website and developing and distributing media and other materials.

Additionally, NEIWPCC provides assistance with compliance efforts, offering technical assistance to public water systems, adding and maintaining databases and overseeing the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.

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 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 (TCHs).

JETCC's training program includes single-day classes, a six-month and a 12-session wastewater operator school.

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

NEIWPCC offered 141 courses to a total of 248 operators based in Maine. Of these, 25 courses were provided through JETCC.

JETCC operates Maine's Management Candidate School, an 11-month training program aimed at mid-level operators with management potential. Throughout the year, participants attended monthly classes where they gained advanced skills through professional development activities, coursework and training exercises. At the end of the program, 18 students received certificates of completion and a full renewal period of TCHs.

WASTEWATER OPERATOR CERTIFICATION

NEIWPCC's South Portland staff are also responsible for certifying and renewing certification for Maine's wastewater workforce, on behalf of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. Operators must earn 18 training credits every two years as part of the renewal process. This year, South Portland renewed certification for 265 operators, issued 44 new certificates and granted three state reciprocities. There are 609 active wastewater operators and 119 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, 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 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.

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 Maine a member of NEIWPCC's commission.

MAINE COMMISSIONERS

(as of Sept. 30, 2024):

Brian Kavanah, representing DEP Commissioner Melanie Loyzim

Amy Lachance, representing acting DHHS Commissioner Sara Gagné-Holmes

Brian Tarbuck, Readfield

Stacy Thompson, South Portland

David Van Slyke, Yarmouth

