

## WORKING FOR THE REGION

October 2023 – September 2024

For 75 years, New York has collaborated on clean water issues with other states in the region through its membership 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.



# NEW YORK

### PROTECTING WATER RESOURCES

The **Hudson River Estuary Program** and the **Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve** are staffed in part by NEIWPC employees. We awarded \$384,000 for two shoreline design projects in the communities of Hudson and Bethlehem. Funds will be used for shoreline stabilization projects to prevent erosion and damage to nearby land. An additional \$343,000 was awarded for two culvert design projects in the towns of Garrison and Stephentown, to reduce flooding and restore habitats.

Fifteen high school students and three college students participated in The Institute Discovering Environmental Scientists' paid summer research program along the banks of the river. Additionally, "A Day in the Life of the Hudson and Harbor" event introduced more than 5,000 students and educators to field-based sampling in the estuary. NEIWPC provided staff and funding for both programs.

The **Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP)** is an initiative to restore and protect the water body, which is facing serious environmental threats including nutrient pollution, harmful algal blooms, aquatic invasive species, increased flooding and climate change. This year, 23 NEIWPC staff worked on the LCBP initiative, including executing contracts for 159 projects, amounting to more than \$11.3 million which was distributed to on the ground organizations in the basin.

In June, LCBP published the "State of the Lake Report" to inform citizens and resource managers about the health of the lake. The most recent report documents the impacts of water quality concerns, like climate change and nutrient pollution, and positive findings, such as decreasing mercury levels in monitored sport fish.

LCBP hired 21 boat launch stewards who delivered aquatic invasive species (AIS) spread prevention messages to more than 40,000 people launching and retrieving boats from the lake. Stewards conducted more than 20,000 watercraft inspections at 14 sites around Lake Champlain in Vermont, Quebec and New York. AIS were intercepted more than 900 times during watercraft inspections.

The **Long Island Sound Study**, a NEIWPC program partner, is a cooperative effort involving researchers, regulators, user groups and other concerned organizations

### 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

and individuals, who work together to protect and improve the health of the Sound. NEIWPC facilitates the Nitrogen Coordination Workgroup to monitor regulations and water quality improvement projects.

NEIWPC supports the **Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan**, a transformative multi-year effort to make meaningful reductions in nitrogen levels, by developing implementation plans for surface and ground waters around Nassau and Suffolk counties.

The **Long Island Garden Rewards Program** offers homeowners up to \$500 to offset the expense of installing green infrastructure, such as rain barrels, native plant gardens and rain gardens. In 2024, more than 160 homeowners received grants to cover the maintenance of their stormwater mitigation projects.

NEIWPC employs several environmental analysts for the state's **Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2)**. They run programs for communities to track the quality of waterbodies, identify and investigate sources of pollution and develop strategies to address threats. To date, the DWSP2 program has 102 municipalities participating in the program, which impacts 136 sources of drinking water, and serves approximately 2.5 million consumers.

NEIWPC environmental analysts assist the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) in **water quality monitoring** of lakes, rivers and

streams across the state. They perform sampling activities, record and analyze data, coordinate citizen science programs, monitor harmful algal blooms and identify priority source waters.

A team of NEIWPCC environmental analysts assist NYSDEC with permitting through the **State Pollution Discharge Elimination System (SPDES)** program, designed to maintain the highest quality of water possible. SPDES requires permits for new constructions that discharge more than 1,000 gallons of wastewater per day into surface or ground waters.

## WASTEWATER TREATMENT

In partnership with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, NEIWPCC supports 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 program is currently upgrading two existing regulatory projects, one of which transitioned to the construction phase in March.

For more than 50 years, NEIWPCC has offered wastewater operator training and certification preparation. 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 for operators to develop skills needed in career growth, and a new self-paced course, "Wastewater Ethics." NEIWPCC offered 136 courses to a total of 24 operators based in New York.

## 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.

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

## NEW YORK COMMISSIONERS

(as of Sept. 30, 2024):

**Carol Lamb-LaFay** (acting), representing DEC Commissioner Sean Mahar

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

**Patricia Cerro-Reehil**, Cleveland

**Mark Klotz**, Ballston Spa

**Richard Lyons**, Albany

## 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 to discuss water quality-related concerns and offer guidance on implementing strategies, projects and programs. Representatives from the EPA's Regions I and II also attended.

In November, NEIWPCC hosted the **National Nonpoint Source Training Workshop** in Minneapolis. 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. Presentations included dam removal, climate resiliency classroom engagement and cranberry bog restoration, and local 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.

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 gave participants a forum to discuss 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 **paid interns and seasonal staff** across four states. They worked on education and outreach, water quality, water chestnut removal, aquatic invasive species, communications, data collection and contract processing.