WORKING FOR THE REGION

October 2024 – September 2025

For 74 years, Vermont 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.

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LAKE CHAMPLAIN BASIN PROGRAM

The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) restores and protects the water body, which is facing serious environmental threats including nutrient pollution, harmful algal blooms, aquatic invasive species, increased flooding, and extreme weather events. This year, 22 staff executed contracts for 143 projects, amounting to more than $13.07 million which was distributed to organizations in the Basin.

Since 1992, LCBP has operated a long-term water quality and biological monitoring project which provides insight into the overall ecosystem health of the lake. Other research monitors the presence of invasive zebra mussels, and public health concerns such as cyanobacteria blooms and mercury in game fish. LCBP also conducted soil health assessments in the Missiqoui watershed to assess phosphorus concentrations from agricultural runoff.

Through the Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act, LCBP restored approximately 31.3 upstream miles of habitat at seven project sites for aquatic organism passage by removing dams and resizing culverts. Additionally, a total of $317,132 has been awarded for five projects that support aquatic invasive species management infrastructure.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

NEIWPCC staff operate the Resource Room at the ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain in Burlington, offering programs, exhibits, hands-on activities, and a library of materials for visitors to learn about the lake and the surrounding area. This year, we welcomed 33,852 visitors to the room and assisted in developing an "Into the Lake" exhibit that provided information on the lake's food web and important aquatic species.

Eleven educators participated in the Champlain Basin Education Initiative's Watershed for Every Classroom, a three-credit professional development experience for K-12 educators in the Basin. LCBP also held several events for the public, including a celebration of World Water Day and a "Love the Lake" speaker series that teaches residents about issues facing the lake.

The Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership hosted its 16th Annual International Summit in Plattsburgh, New York. The event featured presentations on the Champlain-Adirondack Biosphere Network, which aims to build a thriving, equitable and resilient society; and of the upcoming 250-year anniversary of the American Revolution.

CLEAN WATER CHALLENGES

- PFAS/emerging contaminants
- Nutrient pollution
- Extreme weather events
- 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

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

Lake Champlain currently has 51 known aquatic invasive species (AIS), with the constant threat of more entering through nearby waterways. Some pose serious threats by outcompeting native species for resources and overcrowding certain areas.

Seven invasive plants and animals have been identified as a high priority by the Lake Champlain AIS Rapid Response Task Force, including the round goby which was detected in the nearby Hudson and Mohawk Rivers. A volunteer through the Champlain Aquatic Invasive Monitoring Program discovered the presence of a golden clam, which is an invasive species that had not previously been reported in the Basin. The task force is assessing if the clam has established a significant population and is determining the next steps to prevent further spreading.

During the summer, NEIWPCC hired 24 boat launch stewards who delivered AIS spread prevention messages to more than 56,000 people launching boats from the lake. Stewards conducted more than 22,000 watercraft inspections at 15 sites around Lake Champlain in Vermont,

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Quebec, and New York, with 11% of the surveyed watercraft carrying aquatic hitchhikers.

TRAINING WASTEWATER OPERATORS

For more than 50 years, NEIWPCC has offered wastewater operator training and certification preparation. Classes, which are available in-person, online, or in a self-paced format, cover all aspects of the job, from wastewater treatment chemistry and microbiology to equipment safety and lab procedures. This year, 13 operators based in Vermont participated in a total of 11 courses throughout the region.

Additionally, we offer training and technical assistance for rural, small, and tribal wastewater treatment plants to help them achieve and maintain regulatory compliance. Our staff provided tailored assistance to help communities identify and prioritize solutions to challenges within their collection systems. NEIWPCC also began developing six comprehensive self-paced online training courses that will provide nationwide access to much-needed education and training resources.

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 Clean Water Act Section 401 certification process, federal budget requests, water-related state revolving fund programs, PFAS human health water quality criteria, and the definition of Waters of the United States.

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. They 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 implementing strategies, projects and programs; and formulate a regional response to environmental policies.

A committee of staff and commissioners developed a new **Strategic Plan** for fiscal years 2026-2030. It outlines four priorities focused on inspiring action, scientific monitoring and data collection, workforce development, and ensuring financial resources. Supporting goals provide a roadmap for achieving our mission to advance clean water in the Northeast.

In October, NEIWPCC hosted the **12th U.S. Symposium on Harmful Algae** in Portland, Maine. More than 500 participants discussed harmful algal bloom management and mitigation, emerging toxins, predictive modeling and public health threats. The annual **Northeast Aquatic Biologists Conference**, which took place in February in New Hampshire, covered topics such as chloride impacts on streams, cyanobacteria, and long-term monitoring networks. NEIWPCC held the **35th Annual Nonpoint Source Conference** in Freeport, Maine with sessions focused on water pollution reduction success stories, watershed restoration, and aquatic ecosystem management.

The **28th National Tanks Conference** brought nearly 700 professionals to Spokane, Washington to collaborate on timely issues facing the underground storage tanks (UST) industry. NEIWPCC also manages **two workgroups** that prevent leaking underground storage tanks and **publishes LUSTLine**, a newsletter that promotes the exchange of information in the UST community.

The third season of the **Clean Water Pod podcast** highlighted stories from across the country that showcased innovative approaches with the Clean Water Act 303(d) program. NEIWPCC also coordinated a **national webinar series on total maximum daily loads** for professionals who regulate and monitor water quality.

NEIWPCC revised the **Technical Report 16: Guides for the Design of Wastewater Treatment Works** manual. The revisions include updates to align with current industry technology and practices, eliminate out-of-date materials, and add new concepts such as alternative forms of procurement and contaminants of emerging concern.

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.

In response to the Vermont 2023 floods, NEIWPCC was asked to investigate mechanisms to assist wastewater and drinking water facilities in responding to severe weather events. NEIWPCC has been working with our partners in the Water and Wastewater Agency Response Networks (WARN) and Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) to increase awareness about these **state and federal mutual aid response networks** and help utilities fill the gaps in their capabilities.

NEIWPCC hosts more than 20 different **workgroups and collaboratives** to improve regional communication and state-federal engagement on critical topics related to water.

0.12%

That is how much of NEIWPCC's funding comes from the annual dues paid by our member states: a combined $151,561 out of the total available funding to NEIWPCC during fiscal year 2025 in the amount of $128,975,971. 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 Vermont a member of NEIWPCC's commission.

VERMONT COMMISSIONERS

(as of Sept. 30, 2025):

Peter LaFlamme, representing DEC Commissioner Misty Sinsigalli

Lori Cragin, representing DOH Commissioner Rick Hildebrant

Dennis Lutz

Two vacancies